Effective Mentors and Mentoring: Insights from the Faculty Inclusion Study of Underrepresented Faculty

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Motivation for Study

• 2009 Faculty Work Environment Survey
  • Low response rate for faculty of color
  • More negative responses for Black, Hispanic, and American Indian faculty than White faculty

• Goal: Gather more information about experiences of faculty of color
Study Design

- Qualitative Study: 1-2 hour interviews
- 118 Participants
- Phase 1: Black, Hispanic, American Indian faculty
  - Invited all faculty to participate in interviews
  - N = 62, 35% response rate
- Phase 2: Asian faculty
  - Stratified Purposeful Sampling
    - Sampled to get a range of responses based on faculty gender, nativity, STEM or non-STEM
    - N = 56, 23% response rate
Sample Characteristics

- **Sex**: 57 Females (48%), 61 Males (52%)
- **Race**: 30 Black (25%), 25 Hispanic (21%), 6 American Indian (5%), 57 Asian (48%)
- **Nativity**: 91 U.S. Citizens (77%), 26 non-U.S. Citizens (22%)
- **Rank**: 42 Assistant (36%), 35 Associate (30%), 41 Full (35%)
- **STEM**: 76 STEM-related (64%), 42 non-STEM (36%)
Mentoring Questions

• Do you have someone who mentors you formally or informally?
• Is this mentoring effective?
  • What makes them good mentors?
• Do you have any mentors who differ from you along gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, or citizenship?
  • How would you describe those mentoring experiences?
• What type of mentoring would you most like to receive? What type of mentoring would you find most helpful in your career?
Effective Mentoring Themes

- Traits and Skills of an Effective Mentor
- Effective Mentoring Relationship
- Mentoring Challenges
- Cross-Group Mentoring
Effective mentor skills and traits

- 38% - Respected scholar/successful in field
- 34% - Skilled at navigating and understanding the academic system
- 23% - Wise or insightful
- 17% - Good listeners
- 12% - Communicate well
Effective Mentoring Relationship

• 31% - Mentor acts in the participants’ best interests
• 26% - Mentor provides honest feedback
• 15% - Mentor is trustworthy
Mentoring Challenges

• 27% - Problems in relationship with mentors
  • Poor advice
  • Conflicting advice
  • Lack of involvement by mentors

• 23% - Mentoring not formalized and not valued
  • Mentoring not present
  • Need for mentor training
  • Funding of mentoring activities
Mentoring Challenges

• 21% - Difficulty finding mentors
  • Identifying mentors
  • “Making the approach”

• 19% Lack of fit between mentor and protégé
  • In research topic
  • In mentoring style
Cross-Group Mentoring

• 32% - No impact on mentoring
• 15% - Described positive aspects of cross-group mentoring:
  • Exposure to diversity of perspectives
  • Gain unique skills
  • Making the relationship work
• 14% - Described problems associated with cross-group mentoring:
  • Lack of understanding in research
  • Lack of understanding of difference in backgrounds
  • Limited questions
Same-Group mentoring

- Ability to talk about minority group issues
- Higher quality of relationship
Differences Across Groups: Gender

- Women emphasized:
  - Need to formalize/value mentoring
  - Difficulty finding mentors
Differences Across Groups: Race

• Asian participants were less likely than others to say:
  • Effective mentors give honest feedback
  • Effective mentors are respectful
  • They had poor mentoring relationships
  • They had difficulty finding appropriate mentors
  • Formalization/valuing of mentoring is needed
  • That cross-group mentoring matters
  • Same-group mentoring relationships are higher quality
Differences Across Groups: Race

• Black participants felt effective mentors:
  • Were skilled at navigating the academy
  • Are respectful

• Hispanic participants:
  • Had more trouble finding appropriate mentors
Differences Across Groups: Citizenship

• US Citizens were more likely to say:
  • Effective mentors are skilled at navigating academia
  • Mentoring needs to be formalized and valued
  • Same-group mentoring relationships were higher quality

• Non-US Citizens were more likely to say:
  • Effective mentors act in the protégés best interests
  • Cross-group mentoring does not matter
Differences Across Groups: Rank

• Assistant professors were more likely to say:
  • They had negative mentoring relationships
  • There were limited questions they could ask cross-group mentors

• No STEM vs. non-STEM differences in these areas
Suggestions from Results

• Mentor training should focus on:
  • Helping protégés meet their personal career goals
  • How to deliver feedback respectfully
  • Mentoring across difference
  • How to discuss protégé with others

• Not everyone should be a mentor
  • Valuing mentoring by those who do it well

• Programs to aid in matching protégés with mentors
Thank You!

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