MENTORING AT CRITICAL TRANSITIONS

A UC DAVIS INITIATIVE

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WHAT SHOULD GRADUATE STUDENTS EXPECT?

• Welcoming Environment
• Investment in the intellectual growth and development of all students
• Commitment to Academic Rigor leading to Scholarly Expertise
• Work with UC Davis Graduate Faculty Scholars on Research
• Opportunities to develop scholarly research skills
• Opportunities to engage with others within the teaching and learning environment
• Professional development guidance
The University of California, Davis, is first and foremost an institution of learning, teaching, research and public service.

UC Davis reflects and is committed to serving the needs of a global society comprising all people and a multiplicity of identities.

We acknowledge that our society carries within it historical and deep-rooted injustices and biases.

We confront and reject all manifestations of discrimination, including those based on race, ethnicity, gender and gender expression, age, visible and non-visible disability, nationality, sexual orientation, citizenship status, veteran status, religious/non-religious, spiritual, or political beliefs, socio-economic class, status within or outside the university, or any of the other differences among people which have been excuses for misunderstanding, dissension or hatred.

Note: The Principles of Community are not official University of California Davis policy; nor do they replace existing policies, procedures or codes of conduct.

Because the core mission of the University of California is to serve the interests of the State of California, it must seek to achieve diversity among its student bodies and among its employees. The State of California has a compelling interest in making sure that people from all backgrounds perceive that access to the University is possible for talented students, staff, and faculty from all groups. The knowledge that the University of California is open to qualified students from all groups, and thus serves all parts of the community equitably, helps sustain the social fabric of the State. REGENTS POLICY 4400: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA DIVERSITY STATEMENT Adopted September 20, 2007; Adopted as Amended September 15, 2010
GRADUATE MENTORING

The Office of Graduate Studies at UC Davis values a diversity of viewpoints, backgrounds, and experiences among its students as this diversity strengthens and enriches our research, scholarship, and teaching. A diverse graduate student population enhances the academic experiences for all students. We are committed to a multicultural academic environment that supports the success of all graduate students. Diversity among students, faculty and staff is a key, integral factor in graduate education at UC Davis, to achieve an equitable, hospitable and inclusive educational environment. (Statement taken from Office of Graduate Studies website)
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR EFFECTIVE MENTORING

Mentoring is a personal relationship in which a more experienced (usually older) faculty member or professional acts as a guide, role model, teacher, and sponsor of a less experienced (usually younger) graduate student or junior professional.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF SUCCESSFUL GRADUATE STUDENT MENTORING

- Successful completion of graduate course work
- Mastering of disciplinary theories, concepts, methods of research and analysis
- Rigorous review of current and emerging scholarship related to research focus
- Successful construction and defense of research arguments
- Effective and efficient feedback throughout dissertation research and writing
- Effective and efficient communication with dissertation committee members
- Opportunities to present research
- Networking opportunities
- Guidance with negotiating the space of the Academy
- Exposure to opportunities for funding and research support
- Guidance with post-graduate placement including job talk preparation
How do perceptions about students of color and first generation students impact teaching, learning, and mentoring engagement experiences?

- Is it possible that some graduate students of color and/or first generation students perceive that a commitment to their intellectual growth, development, and ascension through the Academy is not evidenced by the graduate institutional settings they occupy?
- Does stereotype threat impact graduate students’ interactions with faculty mentors?
- Do graduate faculty need more than subject matter expertise to serve as effective mentors?
CAN IMPLICIT BIASES INFLUENCE MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS?

- Preconceived notions about underrepresented students
- Lack of exposure to underrepresented groups (students, faculty, friends/associates)
- Contested Institutional policies governing/acknowledging presence of underrepresented groups
- Preconceived notions about the preparation of students of color who have attended historically black colleges
- Preconceived notions about undergraduate institution pedigree
- Institutional climate for underrepresented groups
- Societal climate for underrepresented groups
IMPLICIT BIAS

A Few Key Characteristics of Implicit Biases

• Implicit biases are pervasive. Everyone possesses them, even people with avowed commitments to impartiality such as judges.

• Implicit and explicit biases are related but distinct mental constructs. They are not mutually exclusive and may even reinforce each other.

• The implicit associations we hold do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs or even reflect stances we would explicitly endorse.

• We generally tend to hold implicit biases that favor our own in-group, though research has shown that we can still hold implicit biases against our in-group.

• Implicit biases are malleable. Our brains are incredibly complex, and the implicit associations that we have formed can be gradually unlearned through a variety of debiasing techniques.

Kirwin Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, Implicit Bias Review, 2015
EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES SUPPORTING GRADUATE STUDENTS OF COLOR AS THEY NAVIGATE THE PH.D. PIPELINE

- Mellon Mays Undergraduate Research Fellowship Programs
- Mellon Mays Graduate Initiatives- Social Science Research Council
- Leadership Alliance Model
- MARC Program Models
- UC Davis Office of Graduate Studies
QUESTIONS FOR UC DAVIS FACULTY

• Does the race, class and/or gender of the mentor matter?
• Who is responsible for mentoring students of color and first generation students?
• Are there specific challenges with cross-racial mentoring?
• How do white professors best mentor young scholars of color?
• Does cross-racial mentoring require more work than same-race mentoring?
• Are there effective strategies for reducing hyper-sensitivity on the part of the mentor and the graduate student?
STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL MENTORING

- Establish common ground i.e., undergraduate experiences, regional backgrounds, socio-economic background, family, social concerns
- Identify other graduate students with similar interests and make connections
- Discuss current topics within the field that may not be directly related to one’s research, but of general interest.
- Invite Ph.Ds. of color from other institutions as colloquium speakers, guest lecturers, and/or visiting scholars
- Connect students to opportunities, programs, and special initiatives sponsored by the Office of Graduate Diversity
- Sponsor discussions of scholarship focusing on diversity within higher education
QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, DISCUSSION