Supervising Diversity: Tips for Supervisors

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The starting point

• What are the markers of success in your field?
• How do you typically prepare your students to be successful? For example--
  • Brainstorming sessions
  • Independent research (as your assistant and their own work)
  • Conference presentations
  • Publishing
  • Grant writing
  • Applying for jobs, preparing the curriculum vitae
    • Application letters and reference letters
    • The job talk
Mentoring students for success

• Given those markers, where are the points of stress and strain for students from under-represented groups?

  • How do you create opportunities for success?

    • Recognizing cultural differences affecting the supervisor-student relationship
    • Recognizing cultural differences affecting relationships among peers
    • Recognizing and addressing Isolation

• What are the structural barriers students may encounter?
• What social constructions and attributions about under-represented groups may hinder their progress?
Recognizing structural barriers and social constructions

- Assumptions that the typical educational model is the only route available and valued
  - The hidden curriculum – making the invisible visible
  - Are your expectations clear?
- Language barriers
- Financial barriers
- Gender, race and class in the classroom
- Gender, race and class in the research environment
Strategies for success

• Encouraging students to have multiple mentors
• Identifying effective mentoring styles and approaches
• Recognizing and reducing isolation
  • Recruiting and building cohorts
  • Network building – both within and outside your field and your university
  • Writing groups
• Recognizing and reinforcing the value of diverse perspectives
• Recognizing community, religious, family, and other cultural demands and commitments as valid
  • Time constraints and conflicts
• Providing a safe environment
Sustaining diversity programs

• Model I - University or college-wide interdisciplinary research seminar for graduate students:
  • Readings and discussion about value of diversity for everyone in universities, industry/business, government/public sector
    • Diverse communities
    • Global leadership
  • Students’ research presentations (two or three per seminar)
    • Mentors are expected to attend
  • Open forum on challenges encountered
    • Safe space to air concerns, but focus is on suggesting potential responses, ways to problem solve and move forward
  • Information about upcoming workshops, conferences, funding opportunities
Sustaining diversity programs, cont.

• Model II - National early career researcher program within a broadly-defined discipline
• 3 week summer institute focused on completion of a publication or grant proposal in progress
  • Internal and external mentor
  • Seminars on succeeding as members of under-represented groups in the discipline/university setting
    • Promotion and other academic reviews
    • Unpacking the publishing process
• Larger working group meeting (2 days) including senior scholars and alumni
  • Early career researchers present their work to the larger group
  • Panel presentations on an issue of concern (e.g., book publication process, revise-and-resubmitting your work)
  • Identifying substantive/methodological issues of general interest and strategies for moving those to publication
  • Celebrating successes
• Mid-year dinner at annual meetings
• Website, email updates
In sum: useful tools

- Developing roadmaps with clearly defined short and long term objectives
- Checking in with your students to make sure the research and learning environment is optimal
- Assigning peer mentors (slightly more advanced in program)
- Providing networking and mentoring opportunities inside and outside your university
Thank you!

- Comments?
- Questions?