Part I: Describe

Workshop Title: OPT-ED Mentoring Workshop for Current and Future Faculty  
Date: 03/31/2008  
Location: McKimmon Center  
Attendance: approx 80 - 100  
Presenters: various administrative and faculty personnel from multiple universities

Purpose Statement and General Overview:  
The goal of this workshop was to bring together faculty, administration, and graduate students to talk about the importance of mentoring in higher education. The workshop had a more particular focus on fostering a diverse culture.

The workshop was broken into four sections each with a focused agenda. The first section was a general introduction and a formal welcome to all the NSF presidential awardees in attendance as well as recognition of the NSF for their support of OPT-ED (opportunity through education).

The second and third sections were tightly coupled. In the second section they separated the graduate students and post-docs from the faculty and had them answer specific questions in a forum style setting. As a graduate student we covered topics like what is expected out of someone who wants to be mentored. Also covering things like how to recognize and handle situations where diversity (race, culture, gender, etc…) is present.

In the third section they brought everyone back together and had us discuss the answers to our questions together. This brought about some great and sometime spirited discussion by the participants.

Finally in the forth section we were able to listen and present questions to a panel of faculty who had received a presidential NSF award for their work in mentoring diverse and under-represented students. The faculty members were from universities all over the nation and their experience and insight was particularly thought provoking.

Part II: Analyze

The skills and concepts that I learned in this workshop may not directly apply to teaching within the classroom but will definitely impact my ability to teach outside the classroom. The things that I learned were applicable both as a mentor and as one being mentored.

Attending a workshop with so many faculty who were distinguished for their abilities as mentors was great. I was able to hear firsthand what approaches worked for them and what things to avoid as a mentor. I learned things like every mentor – mentee relationship is unique and as a mentor you have to recognize and adapt to that. I also learned that there comes a point as a mentor when your mentee becomes your peer and you have to prepare yourself for that so you don’t stunt their growth by confining their progress. The final major point I learned as a mentor is that you don’t have to have all the answers so don’t be afraid to tell them you don’t know (same as in a classroom).
The other great aspect of this workshop is that I was able to also receive instruction on how to become a better mentee. This was emphasized as being extremely important for not only students but also new faculty needing to be mentored by more senior faculty. The most important point made here was that mentoring is a two-way street and the mentee bears a lot of the burden of responsibility. The other point that was stressed almost as much as the first was that the mentee needs to set goals on what the expect to get out of this mentoring relationship and attempt to guide the relationship to achieve those goals.

The information I learned about being both a mentor and a mentee will be invaluable in my teaching. I’ve already taught one course and I look back and see how I have missed opportunities to apply these principles with my students and hope that next time around I don’t make the same mistakes. This applies both to me mentoring my students and to me being mentored by a faculty member on how to improve my teaching.

* Mentee is the term they used for the one being mentored.