Improving Culture and Inclusion in Berkeley CBE Through Mindful Redesign and Expansion of New Student Orientation

Journal Club

Mentoring Beyond Hierarchies: Multi-Mentor Systems and Models (PNAS 2021)

"Classical forms of mentoring are often about conveying information from a top-down mode, which are generally closely linked to advancing individuals along institutionally-defined paths of success."

"...such hierarchical relationships are associated with power differentials that can serve to maintain 'business as usual' or status quo."

Mentorship Behaviors and Mentorship Quality Associated With Formal Mentoring Programs: Closing the Gap Between Research and Practice (Journal of Applied Psychology 2006)

Surveys of ~200 mentees and mentors in organized professional mentorship programs

"Given our pattern of findings, we tentatively suggest that formal mentoring theory focus more on the role of creating voice and high-quality role preparatory opportunities to ‘align those understandings with key components of mentoring processes.’"

Transforming Mentorship in STEM by Training Scientists to be Better Leaders (Academic Practice in Ecology and Evolution 2018)

Mentors “frequently” experience poor mentorship, but mentors “rarely” mentor poorly

Mentorship is a key factor determining educational experiences. Effects are amplified for mentees from underrepresented groups. Mentorship is not recognized as an important factor in faculty hiring.

IMCB Conference

Background/Goals

- CBE climate survey reports indicate that students want:
  - Increased departmental action towards inclusivity
  - More interdepartmental engagement, especially with non-STEM fields

- Inclusive Molecular and Cell Biology (iMCB)
  - Graduate student initiative
  - Organizes an annual conference with keynote speakers and community discussion groups
  - Focused on improving DE&I/sense of belonging and mentorship

iMCB Conference 2021: Strengthening your Roots and Growing Together

Day 1:
- Keynote #1: Prof. Beronda Montgomery, Michigan State University “Lessons from Plants”
- Pod meetings
- Keynote #2: Prof. Karletta Chief, University of Arizona
- Pod meetings

Day 2:
- Panel: Leaders in the Community
  - Dr. Aron Kamajaya, Pierce College
  - Maria Chavez & Max Ferrin, Open Insulin Project
  - Dr. Lisa Eshun-Wilson
  - Affinity Group meetings

Grad Student and Postdoc Affinity Groups

Goals:
- Build sense of belonging across labs/disciplines/career levels
- Provide space for discussion and sharing of resources/mutual experiences

Program Overview:
- Weekly meetings with small groups of 3-10 members (5-8x)
- Group facilitated, with provided guidelines/resources
- Large group meetings (2x) to explore intersectional identities
- Assessment surveys administered pre- and post-program (npre=40, npost = 18)

Example groups:
- African, African-American, and/or Black
- API
- First generation Immigrant experience
- Latinx
- Mixed race and multiracial
- Parent and/or caregiver
- Queer & LGBT
- Woman

Future Work: Mentorship Program

CBE climate survey reports indicate:
- Students, particularly women, feel uncomfortable disclosing mental or physical health issues to advisors
- Gender and Sexual Minority students are less likely to have mentors other than their research advisors
- Black, Latinx, and multiracial students are less likely to feel valued and included in the department

Takeaways from Journal Club, Affinity Groups, and the IMCB Conference:
- Connecting students to peers with shared identities improves sense of belonging and helps develop personal insights
- Expanding academic mentorship outside of traditional hierarchies provides better support for students from marginalized groups

- We want to match graduate students with mentors separate from their primary advisors
- Program structure and faculty buy-in is essential
- Ensure long-term adoption and sustainability
- It will be important to effectively train mentors and set up shared expectations
- Formal structures for inter-cohort mentorship, not just faculty
- Focus on building structures to support students from underrepresented groups