Inclusive Mentoring: Avoiding Gender Bias in Mentoring

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The Graduate School's *Faculty Mentoring Guide* suggests that mentors must work to "Understand the diverse factors that influence students' mentoring needs." These factors include, but are not limited to gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, race and ethnicity, age, disabilities, family responsibilities, being from another country, and socioeconomic status.

1. As of 2007, the National Science Foundation, the Office of Research on Women's Health, the National Institutes of Health, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services all corroborate each other in that only 20 percent of full-time, full professors in science and engineering are women.

2. Research suggests that "significant and particular benefits of mentoring for **women, racial and ethnic minorities,** and **first-generation college students,** [included] increased retention and continuing education rates" (Shanahan, 2006).

3. Ishimaya (2007) found that male students listed the following as characteristics of a good mentor: **1. Expert in the Field;** 2. Accessible; 3. Helpful with Project; 4. Communicative about Goals and Plans; **5. Friendly;** 6. Personal Concern. Compare this to the ranking given by female students: 1. Accessible; 2. Helpful with Project; **3. Expert in the Field; 4. Friendly;** 5. Communicative about Goals and Plans; 6. Personal Concern.

4. Read "Science faculty's subtle gender biases favor male students" by Moss-Racusin et al. (2012). Here is the abstract: "Despite efforts to recruit and retain more women, a stark gender disparity persists within academic science. Abundant research has demonstrated gender bias in many demographic groups, but has yet to experimentally investigate whether science faculty exhibit a bias against female students that could contribute to the gender disparity in academic science. In a randomized double-blind study (n = 127), science faculty from research-intensive universities rated the application materials of a student—who was randomly assigned either a male or female name—for a laboratory manager position. Faculty participants rated the male applicant as significantly more competent and hirable than the (identical) female applicant. These participants also selected a higher starting salary and offered more career mentoring to the male applicant. The gender of the faculty participants did not affect responses, such that female and male faculty were equally likely to exhibit bias against the female student. Mediation analyses indicated that the female student was less likely to be hired because she was viewed as less competent. We also assessed faculty participants' preexisting subtle bias against women using a standard instrument and found that preexisting subtle bias against women played a moderating role, such that subtle bias against women was associated with less support for the female student, but was unrelated to reactions to the male student. These results suggest that interventions addressing faculty gender bias might advance the goal of increasing the participation of women in science."

5. Compensate male and female student researchers with the same level of experience equally. This should go without saying, but in reality, many studies persist in revealing that males are compensated at a higher rate for their research work.

6. Offer the same degree of mentoring to both male and female students. Again, this is obvious, but studies suggest that males receive more of their mentor's time than do females.

7. The Office of Research on Women's Health (2012) suggests that you, as a mentor, "Keep in mind that you are mentoring not just a researcher, but a whole person who likely has competing professional and personal priorities. Be sensitive to this complexity, and be prepared to help with time management suggestions or tips for overcoming guilt and anxiety. "

8. Help female undergraduate research students to search out and apply for funding that specifically targets underrepresented groups in undergraduate research.

9. Provide personal support that may relate to the unique demands of family life on female students.

10. Make time to listen.