

# MENTORING FIRST GENERATION, UNDERREPRESENTED, AND INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENTS

This document focuses on recommendations for mentoring three groups of graduate students: **first generation, underrepresented, and international graduate students**. Given the specific and common experiences that graduate students from these populations face, the following are recommendations to those who are mentoring them to better support their needs.

## DO YOUR RESEARCH.



- Read literature on the experiences of social groups to which your students belong.
- Talk with other mentors about the practice.
- Look for online resources and webinars that might expose you to new ideas.
- Engage in conversations with those of different backgrounds/experiences than yourself.

## EXAMINE YOUR BELIEFS, VALUES, AND POTENTIAL BIASES.



Examine the way you view your mentee in light of their social differences. There may be implicit values, biases, and beliefs that you are unaware of that could adversely impact the relationship. If you discover something, seek out resources to help you move forward.

## ENGAGE IN FREQUENT CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR MENTEE.



This is the most effective way to understand the unique circumstance of your mentee. These need not be long meetings (although some may be). Frequent contact will help to develop rapport and the level of trust needed to encourage open and frank conversations about the student's experiences.

## BELIEVE YOUR MENTEE.



When your mentee shares something about their experience, believe them. While it might not be your experience, it does not mean it is not true. Help your mentee think about ways to address the situation. When appropriate, follow up with your mentee to see if their circumstance has changed to build trust and confidence.

## ENGAGE IN INDIVIDUAL AND JOINT REFLECTION ON THE PROCESS.



Regularly, both singly and jointly with your mentee, reflect on your current mentoring experience. This will allow both of you to examine what works, what isn't working, and if there needs to be an adjustment in the relationship. You might consider changes in behavior, additional skill development, modification in communication, etc.

This document was designed to help mentors begin to understand the unique and common experiences of the first generation, international, and underrepresented graduate students and to develop practices that might help build more successful mentoring relationships.

## REFERENCES

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