SEEDS YouChoose Leadership Proposal 2015

Advancing Mentor-Mentee relationships at RSMAS

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Abstract
One of the most important leadership roles for faculty at RSMAS is as good mentors to our graduate students. Mentoring is especially important to female and other minority students who lack role models and value psychosocial support (e.g. Johnson, 2007). We propose a mentoring workshop designed to identify common issues from the perspective of both graduate students and faculty and then provide powerful strategies for improving mentor-mentee relationships. We have developed the goals and content of the workshop in collaboration with Merlin Walberg, a professional consultant in coaching and leadership training (Pheonix Consultancy). A skilled facilitator is crucial to the success of an event like this, where we have only a day to make a difference, yet it is a significant commitment for busy faculty.

Activity Goals
Graduate students at RSMAS have expressed a need for improved mentoring from their faculty advisors. They initiated an anonymous mentoring survey in 2014 and again in 2015 which showed about one quarter of students are dissatisfied with the level of engagement they receive from their faculty advisors and many wished for faculty to have better communication skills. In fall 2014 we held a half-day mentoring workshop, led by Brad Johnson (author, *On Being a Mentor*), which acted to increase awareness of the benefits of good mentoring among faculty. For their part, faculty would like to see students develop more independence and become more proactive and productive in their final years as an outcome of better mentoring.

Together, these initiatives have generated much informal discussion, among students and faculty alike, on what are the common issues for the mentor-mentee relationship, and on strategies for improvement. Our goal is to hold a workshop, led by a skilled and charismatic facilitator, which focusses on both the theory and practices of mentoring for both faculty and students and can take mentoring to the next level at RSMAS. If successful, we hope to make this an annual event which over time will lead to cultural transformation at RSMAS, as regards attitudes and efforts in the student-faculty mentoring relationship.

Goals of the workshop
1. To build relationships and understanding between faculty and students
2. To identify issues and strategies related to mentoring
3. To provide practical skills and tools for mentoring
4. To identify ways to continue the momentum for further improvement

Workshop Outline
9:00 Introduction to the day, overview, goals, creating ground rules for engagement, introductions of delegates.
10:00 What is mentoring? (discussion of pre-reading, and individual thoughts in mixed trios (faculty, students, postdocs), plus debrief and facilitator input)

11:00 First skill: Listening on Three Levels – theory and practice

12:00 Focus groups (student and faculty groups discussing targeted questions about mentoring at the Rosenstiel School with the goal of understanding all perspectives)

12:30 Report to full cohort of group work, debrief and comments

1:00 Lunch and Interactive Theater skit on Graduate Student Mentoring

2:15 Second skill: Coaching and Mentoring Behaviors – theory and practice

3:15 Debrief and comments

3:30 Group work: Strategies to enhance mentoring across RSMAS (mixed groups discussing practical next steps)

4:00 Report to full cohort

4:30 Looking at priorities and next steps

5:00 Close

**Preparation**

A total of up to 40 participants will be able to attend the workshop. More than 50% will be advanced (third year and up) graduate students. Department Chairs will be invited to reach out to students and faculty in the first instance. This should be done in the autumn and registration confirmed before the end of the fall semester.

**Follow Up**

This event will lead to the creation of a group that will continue the work on mentoring, creating a handbook of best practices. Further follow up may be a session on mentoring at the annual student Awards ceremony. Further ideas will be discussed to continue the improvement of mentoring at the Rosenstiel School.

**Budget and Budget Justification**

The total fee from Phoenix Consultancy is $3,000. We estimate we will need an additional $1,000 to cover refreshments and lunch. We ask for $2,500 from SEEDS and will seek the remaining from the RSMAS Dean.

The right facilitator is crucial to the success of an event like this! Merlin Walberg has the facilitator skills we need to be able to extract information efficiently from the group and then follow up with effective skills training. She was the outstanding facilitator for the NSF ADVANCE program MPOWIR. Ultimately, we hope to gain faculty buy-in for the long-term and effect cultural transformation at RSMAS!

**References:**