

TRAINING FUTURE FACULTY IN MENTORING

Sandra E. Loughlin, PhD, Susan Coutin, PhD and Frances M. Leslie, PhD.
University of California Irvine, Irvine, CA

The University of California Irvine's (UCI) approach to increasing engagement and skills of faculty in mentorship relies heavily on training future mentors, supporting diversity and inclusive excellence, and honoring faculty, postdoctoral scholars and graduate students who are outstanding mentors.

The Mentoring Excellence program was designed to train graduate students and postdoctoral scholars in best practices for successful mentoring. Training students and postdoctoral fellows who serve in mentor capacities is a key factor in increasing engagement and skills in modern, evidence-based mentoring. Graduate students and postdoctoral scholars often enter into mentoring relationships with undergraduates, more junior graduate students and others.

Three years ago, UCI began requiring all mentors who were supervised by the Graduate Division to complete our Mentoring Excellence Program. This certificate program consists of six, two-hour interactive sessions designed to develop a personal mentoring style. These sessions cover the steps involved in beginning and building a mentoring relationship; understanding diversity and inclusion; training in communications and interpersonal connections; conflict resolution strategies; thoughtful discussion of relationship ethics; developing and encouraging resilience; and balancing academics and wellness. To date, we have trained over 300 mentors who utilize these skills at UCI and carry them with them to future faculty positions. The Mentoring Excellence Program also teaches participants to be better mentees, which has led to improved relationships between faculty advisors and mentees.

UCI's commitment to diversity and inclusive excellence is supported by our Diverse Educational Community and Doctoral Experience (DECADE) program. Originally funded by the Department of Education FIPSE program, the DECADE program is designed to create and nurture an environment that not only brings diverse students and faculty to campus but encourages them to participate in programs that foster equity and access. DECADE faculty mentors assist the DECADE student council in promoting an affirmative climate for graduate education for all students. The program involves faculty, students and administrators to improve climate, access and inclusion and to support mutual mentoring and support.

UCI also recognizes and honors the importance of mentoring by presenting campus-wide awards to excellent mentors. The Tom Angell Mentor awards funds were endowed by the friends and family of a late colleague who was a highly respected mentor to many at UCI. Each year, honorees are selected from those who have been nominated by faculty, staff and students. At the reception, campus representatives highlight multiple mentoring programs from across campus. A representative from Graduate Division describes one of our many mentoring programs. The Tom Angell faculty, postdoctoral scholars and graduate student honorees are then recognized and given small trophies. This festive, thought-provoking event is designed to increase cultural awareness at UCI of the importance of good mentoring.