Mentoring Doctoral Students to Take the Reins in Engaged Scholarship

Shirley Matteson, Sarah Louis, & Tricia Pal
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Background & Context

- Three cohorts of PhD students (19 in all) completed a series of Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) projects evaluating a regional STEM degree accelerator grant
- Under faculty mentorship, doctoral students created research questions with grant partners; the findings from each previous phase informed the study focus for following cohorts.

Methods

- Descriptive case-study: Exploring the role of faculty mentorship in training engaged scholars (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)
- Participants: 9 doctoral students and 3 faculty mentors
- Survey data and open-ended responses were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965).
- Addressed credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

Findings

Student Researchers

- Participant access was extremely challenging
- Faculty mentors provided publication/ presentation experience, built confidence, and refined several research skills
- The encouragement of the students:

"I really appreciate mentors who share their expertise in ways that provide the mentee with an understanding of process. This was especially the case in the course - the instructor was great at helping the members of the course understand the process of research design."

Faculty Mentors

- Listening is a key component to being a mentor – to ameliorate concerns
- The need to help students appreciate their development through these projects
- The need for professional development to help facilitate CBPR: leadership development, relationship building, and research methods.
- Faculty reward systems should commensurately recognize the time spent working on engaged scholarship projects/ publications/ manuscripts

Discussion & Implications

- Qualitative research methods focus: faculty mentors must be knowledgeable on methods and CBPR
- Level of faculty buy-in affects student perceptions, products of the project, and perceptions of CBPR
- Co-teaching model: improving the effectiveness of the instructor and development of student skills
- Peer mentoring: helps advanced doctoral students hone skills and supports struggling students

References

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