MENTORING AND NETWORKING ROUNDTABLE

Mentoring—What We Learned (and What We Wished We had Known at the Start)

Lessons learned from the ADVANCE Program at the University of Colorado, Boulder (LEAP – Leadership Education for Advancement and Promotion):

Presenter: Ann E. Austin, Michigan State University, and Evaluator for University of Colorado at Boulder. Presenting on behalf of Tricia Rankin, University of Colorado (who was presenting in another session)

Developing a Mentoring Program

- Make the coaching/mentoring opportunity available to a wide array of faculty, so that individuals in underrepresented groups have the opportunity but are not specifically targeted.

- Provide mentoring as a voluntary opportunity, not a requirement.

Coaches

- Attract faculty to the opportunity to be a coach for early career colleagues by talking with individuals one-on-one to encourage their interest.

- If Deans are requested for nominations, the Director will want to retain the responsibility to select among those nominated.

- Faculty who will serve as coaches (mentors) need to be prepared through explicit training. Key topics for training include: how to set mutual goals with the partner, how to have “difficult conversations” (i.e., to deliver critical feedback). Other useful components of coaches’ training includes examples of productive difficult conversations and discussions of tenure cases that highlight issues of what can be done early in a faculty member’s career to encourage success.

- Coaches should be encouraged to see the importance of a “systems approach.” That is, the goal of ADVANCE programs is address the many factors in the broad institutional system that create challenges for the advancement of women. Focusing on how the individual women should change is often less productive than focusing on structural, procedural, and cultural issues and helping women faculty learn to negotiate and navigate these issues.

- Coaching teams (which include at least one faculty mentor within the early career colleague’s department and one out of the department) can be productive. Early career faculty members often prefer to talk with someone outside the department about challenges or tenure processes. Yet a mentor within the department can help
with specific matters close to the work of the new faculty member. Thus a team with an outside member and inside member can be helpful.

Other Issues

- Mentoring teams often benefit from choosing a project to work on together, such as learning about technology in teaching, exploring a certain resource in the institution, etc.