A Learning Community for Success in Research and Leadership
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Learning Community Facilitators:
Dr. Summer Odom, Dept. of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications
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Graduate Teaching Assistant

What is a Learning Community?
(from http://cirtl.net/pillars_LC.html)
Learning Communities bring people together for shared learning, discovery, and the generation of knowledge. Learning communities stimulate the process by which individuals come together to achieve learning goals. These learning goals can be specific to individual students or activities, or can guide an entire teaching and learning enterprise. The following four core ideas are:

- Shared discovery and learning
- Functional connections among learners
- Connections to other related learning and life experiences
- Inclusive learning environment

Objective: A two-year learning community for diverse populations focusing on retention and success in graduate school by learning the expectations of graduate students, culture of the various fields of research, timely progress in degree and developing leadership, team and mentor/mentee skills.

Learning Outcomes:
- To understand the culture of graduate school, expectations of graduate students and taking ownership of one’s graduate program.
- To understand the unique challenges facing diverse graduate students.
- To develop an appreciation for different research culture, approaches and expectations.
- To develop leadership, team and mentor/mentee skills based on fundamental principles.
- To enhance one’s personal development though professional development activities.

Programming-Year 1
Fall
The Cohort will kick-off the fall with a social function and forming activity. There will be three formal meetings that address three target areas.

a. Retention and Integration into Graduate School
   - Unique challenges of diverse graduate students
   - Work ethic and culture of graduate school; considerations for success; the written and unwritten expectations of graduate students
   - How culture and expectations differ by fields of study and type research.

b. Academic Career Competencies
   - Appreciation of different research approaches, ex. quantitative vs. qualitative, wet bench vs. field, biological vs. social science, etc.

c. Assessment of Self

For information on joining the Learning Community Contact
Theresa Nemec, tnemec@tamu.edu, and copy David Reed, dwreed@tamu.edu
• Introduction to self-assessments and SWOT personal career analysis
• Introduction to the the Gallup StrengthsFinder assessment and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI).

**Spring**
The spring activities will focus on self-development.

a. **Leadership Development**
   • Analyze StrengthsFinder and MBTI personality type and relate to self-efficacy and a foundation for leadership development.
   • Life visioning exercises; create personal goals using social cognitive career theory.
   • Learn about effective teams and participate in a team building activity.

b. Introduce training on effective mentoring processes; students will identify a mentor.

**Programming-Year 2**
Year 2 will continue personal development and leadership building, continue development of mentor/mentee skills, and implement skills by working with the new cohort of students.

**Fall:**
Mentoring new co-hort

- Peer Mentor the new cohort for a “graduate student’s eye view” on culture and expectations
- Develop and deliver one of the fall programs to the new cohort.

**Spring:**
Personalized Career Interventions

- Focus on individual development: Each student identifies a specific area to pursue their personal development; ex. policy, teaching, international, research, POWER writing, etc.
- Targeted modules will focus on career development, ex. enter the Professorate, Federal agencies, International development, industry, etc.

**Evaluation:** Dr. Summer Odom will evaluate the program via formative and summative evaluation processes. Learning outcomes will be evaluated through qualitative and quantitative data both as the project is implemented and after its completion.

**Targeted Professional Development**

Self-Study: The spring of the first year focuses on identifying strengths and personality type, and self-reflection will allow each student to develop personal, career and life goals.

Leadership, Team and Mentor/Mentee Development: The fall of the second year will allow each student to work with the new cohort to develop their leadership, team and mentor/mentee skills.

Professional Development Grants: Each spring students can apply for a $1,000 professional development grant to be used for a unique 1st and 2nd year high impact personal development experience such as attend their first scientific conference or methodology workshop, visit an external faculty member’s research lab, etc.

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Sloan Program for Exemplary Mentoring
Mentoring for Success in Research and Leadership

MODEL

Sloan Mentoring for Success in Research and Leadership Learning Community
Dr. Summer F. Odom
Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications
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Model

Cohort 1

Fall Year 1
Retention, Integration and Success

Spring Year 1
Leadership Development

Cohort 2

Fall Year 2
Implement Leadership Training & Mentoring

Spring Year 2
Personalized Career Interventions

Fall and Spring Year 2
Individualized Programming: Professorate Federal International Development Industry

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