

CROSS-RACE MENTORING: BRIDGING THE GAP

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COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES
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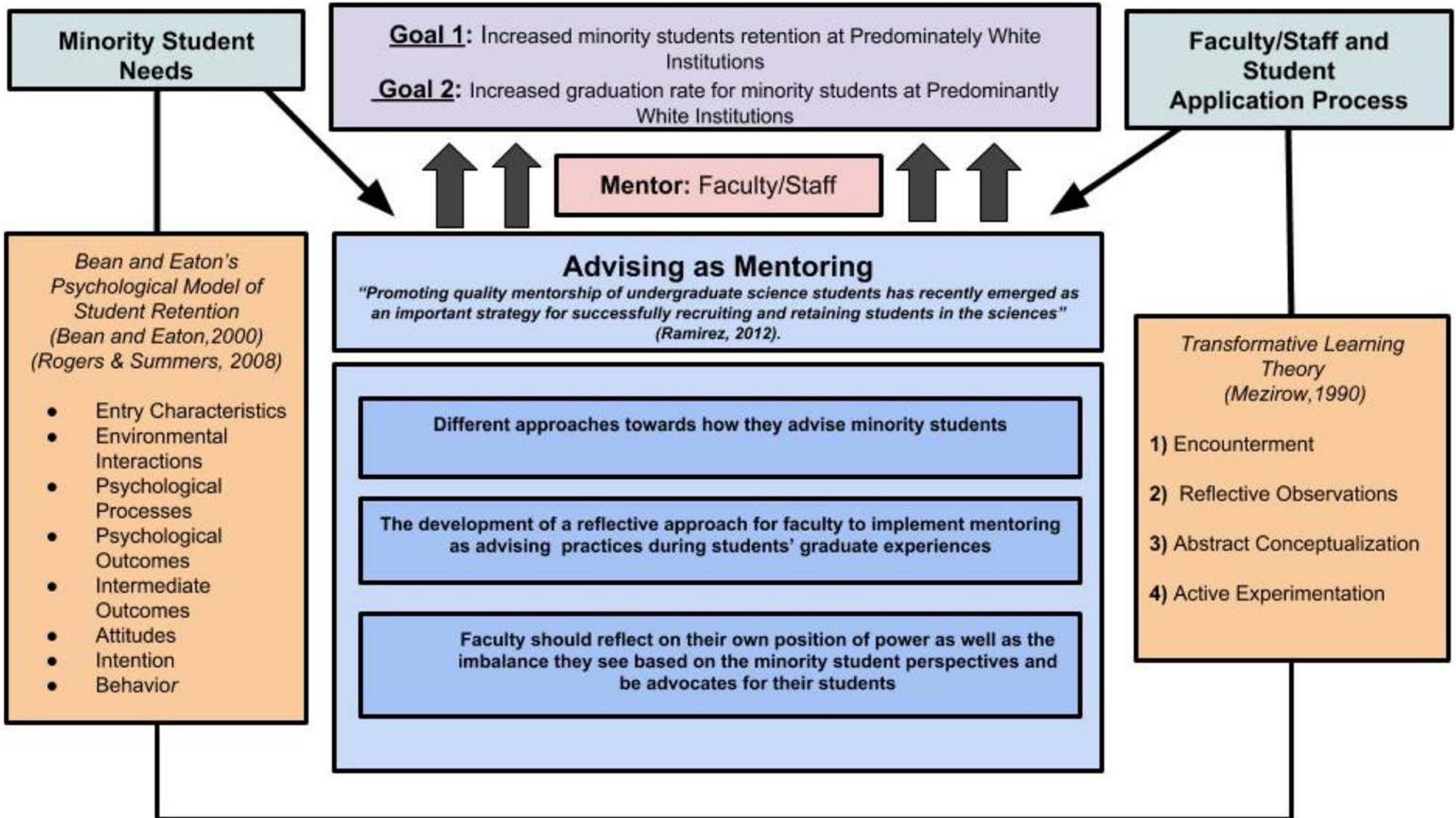
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INTRODUCTION

- The recruitment and retention of underrepresented student populations, both undergraduate and graduate, has become an emerging priority at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) (Bean and Eaton, 2000).
- Rodger and Summers (2008) developed a retention model that has been used by researchers to understand the motivational and self-systems that contribute to the experiences of minority students.
- Quality mentorship relationships play a key role in student retention (Ramirez, 2012). Skills developed and obtained through mentoring include:
 - Personal well being
 - Self-confidence
 - Professional attributions





MENTORING VS. ADVISING

Mentoring

Accepted the responsibility to promote student personal growth and psychological development (Ramirez, 2012).

Advising

“Depending on the institution, academic advisers are typically appointed to their role and students may or may not have a choice of the adviser with whom they work” (Ramirez, 2012).



METHODS

Stage 1: Reflection Protocol Questions Development

Stage 2: “Raw” Conversation 1

Stage 3: Individual Personal Reflection

Stage 4: Transcription

Stage 5: “Raw” Conversation 2 (Themes Developed)

Stage 6: Individual Personal Reflection



RESULTS

Themes

- Cultural shift
- Different scales of transition
- Raising faculty awareness
- Institutional system
- Mentoring the whole student
- Substantive action



CULTURAL SHIFT

“I was talking to [another] Grad student about this...we talked about...having to do [a] shift, like a cultural shift to kind of like feel like you fit in like you integrate into the community where like ***I have to act a certain way so like I can be accepted or feel accepted*** and I feel like...coming from [NC A&T to] here, I definitely had to...I catch myself doing it and I feel like at some point like okay, I don't know how, I don't know if it's 100 percent good or like sometimes I'm like okay am I being myself because you don't want to, like, you don't ever want to give off the wrong perception or like ***you don't wanna come off like that person who is so radical***...so...I catch myself, like check if that makes sense.” - Kayla (Conversation 1)



DIFFERENT SCALES OF TRANSITION

“A big part of mentoring in Kayla’s mind is about navigating the transition not just from grad school, but also from an HBCU to a PWI – ***this was a difficult part of her journey and advisors need to understand this and address it.***” - Hannah (Reflection)

“I knew it would be a transition, I thought it was going to be easier compared to what it was. But it was, ***it was definitely a little bit harder.***” - Kayla (Conversation 1)

“It makes me feel great that she wants to be an advocate for her students to make sure that they [are] beyond successful ***not only in their classes but also socially*** within the environment that educators create for them.” - Kayla (Reflection)



RAISING FACULTY AWARENESS

“I think an important piece that could be eye-opening for faculty is that whatever the intent, there are attitudes and actions that are being perceived by black students as discriminatory. I think that white faculty have a lot of work to do to acknowledge how what they do and say impacts students. We also ***need to acknowledge the extra burden that students of color are carrying in their everyday interactions*** and that this impacts their ability to perform as a graduate student – in my mind it’s not fair not to.” - Hannah (Reflection)

“Another point of reflection is that this is emotionally hard work. I’m processing a lot of feelings right now...this idea of “white guilt” is definitely relevant here in the sense that ***I know that I can navigate the world more easily, which just sucks.***” - Hannah (Reflection)



INSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM

“A lot of what she talked about comes back to this idea of **power (who has it) and structure (who does it serve) in the system** and the difficulty in navigating it along with a desire to change it.” - Hannah (Reflection)

“As a graduate student I have really learned the importance of diversity and I think it is critical that within an educational setting **there should be diversity not only among the students but the faculty as well**. I will be honest, it is hard at times not having a faculty and staff around to go to when it might be difficult to express to others as well go to for professional advice as someone who has walked the road you plan on walking one day. I am not saying they have to be African American but more diversity effort need to go towards academic hiring.” - Kayla (Conversation 1)



MENTORING THE WHOLE STUDENT

“Kayla also talked about mentors *inspiring students to persist and succeed*...helping them ...experience success in a way that they want to continue to engage.” - Hannah (Reflection)

“My relationship with Dr. Scherer is something genuine and as I have matriculated through various victories and obstacles ...*I have been able to reach out to her in all the different various aspect of my life*. Whether it has been my personal experience or situations that I may be dealings as well as my academic or career aspirations.” - Kayla (Reflection)

“When I think about my ideal adviser I do not channel in race, ethnicity, or gender; what I focus on is the character of that individual and whether I can truly connect with them beyond the required [advising]...*someone that will not use the idea of me being a minority against me but instead support me* to achieve what I have set forth to accomplish.” - Kayla (Reflection)

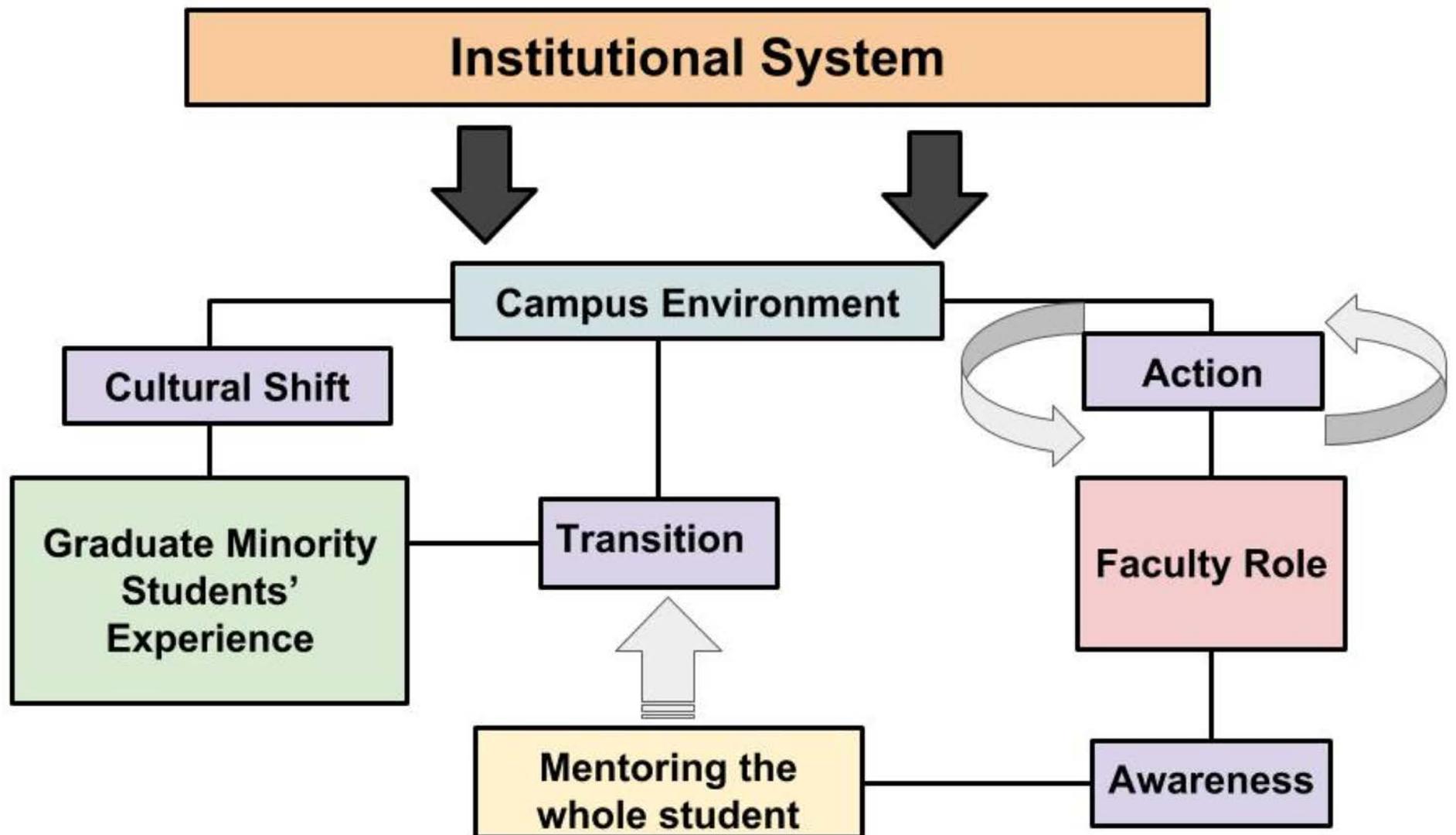


SUBSTANTIVE ACTION

“As a minority graduate student I have learned that ***I should never second guess any feelings of prejudice***. It is hard because at my undergraduate institution, which was a Historically Black University, I never really encountered those experiences. I feel like no student should have to suppress their feelings when encountering prejudice. I think ***administrators, faculty and staff need to do a better job handling prejudice and doing more minority training*** rather than just sweeping issues under the rug as if they did not take place.” - Kayla (Reflection)

“As advocates, we need to ***create spaces where student voices are heard*** and, more importantly, students know that they are heard. Another key part of this that Kayla talked about is ***making sure that there are actions that result from these “raw conversations”*** – students need to see that decisions, policies, etc. reflect the needs of students of color and that they feel heard.” - Hannah (Reflection)





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CLOSING THOUGHTS



THANK YOU

