Chapter 11
Intricacies of Cross-Cultural Mentoring:
A Case of International Faculty and Scholars

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes how novice international faculty and scholars in American universities may face formidable challenges related to their new responsibilities and the cultural demands as they begin their tenure-track careers in the academe. Upon completion of the doctorate programs, some find themselves in organizations that have unfamiliar cultures and expectations. Regardless of their background, nationality or experience, they are expected to maintain the trademarks of teaching, scholarship, advisement, and community service in order to survive the rigor of academe. Unfortunately, the reality is often more overwhelming for international faculty and scholars because of multifaceted acculturation issues that are related to their new country and organization. Mentors can serve as facilitators for novice faculty. Through teamwork, mentors and novice faculty members can construct knowledge and create a culture of collaboration. It is envisioned that cross-culturally sensitive mentoring can help to ease the challenges of the new faculty as they navigate their unfamiliar environment in the academe.

**INTRODUCTION**

Mentoring is not a new concept; in fact, the word ‘mentor’ originates from Homer’s *Odyssey* in Greek mythology. In this story, Ulysses asked his friend, Mentor, to provide education and caring for his child while Ulysses traveled. In this instance, a mentor would be described as an experienced adult who tutors his/her protégé (or mentee) in professional and/or perhaps personal situations (Oswell & Irby, 2014). Another way to describe mentoring is to define it as a power-free partnership between two individuals who desire mutual growth (Weinstein, 1998).

Within the context of the academe, mentoring has become the trademark for helping novice faculty members meet expected standards necessary to obtain tenure and/or promotion (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). It is perceived to be a process through which a senior, tenured faculty member provides guidance and support for a junior, non-tenured faculty member (Beech, Calles-Escandon, Hairston, Langdon, Latham-Sadler & Bell, 2013). It generates a feeling of being connected and empowered (Zajac, 2011). Mentoring in academia is based on the information used by the Career Group LLC (Abbajay, n.d.). Based on this group:

Being a good mentor requires more than just experience. It requires a willingness to reflect and share on one’s own experiences, including one’s failures. Great mentors are often those who are constantly trying to learn themselves. Essential qualities for an effective mentor include:

1. A desire to develop and help others. A good mentor is sincerely interested in helping someone else without any “official” reward. Good mentors do it because they genuinely want to see someone else succeed.
2. Commitment, time and energy to devote to the mentoring relationship. Current and relevant knowledge, expertise, and/or skills.
3. A willingness to share failures and individual experiences. Mentors need to share both their “how to do it right” and their “how I did it wrong” stories. Both experiences provide valuable opportunities or learning.
4. A learning attitudes. The best teachers have always been and always will be those who remain curious about learning (Abbajay, n.d., p. 2)

**ISSUES/CHALLENGES**

**Mentoring for Minority and International Faculty**

Research has shown that, despite the several years of formal education and professional preparation, most novice faculty members experience the “sink or swim” career
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