Beyond Mentoring

A SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM TO IMPROVE WOMEN'S SUCCESS

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WOMEN LAG BEHIND men in all the professions, including academia and science. In academia, women progress through the ranks more slowly, are tenured more slowly, and make less money (American Association of University Professors 2005; Long 2001; National Science Foundation 2004; Valian 1998); those problems are exacerbated at research-intensive institutions. Relative to men, women scientists also publish somewhat less, obtain less information about how to succeed, receive less support for their careers, and get less recognition for their accomplishments (see Valian 1998 and references therein); those problems are exacerbated at the teaching-intensive institutions where women are overrepresented (for the most recent data, see Cataldi, Bradburn, and Fahimi 2005).

At teaching-intensive institutions, both male and female researchers are unlikely to be as productive as their peers at research-intensive institutions: they have high teaching and advising responsibilities, few teaching assistants, few or no graduate students, and, often, substandard research infrastructures. At the City University of New York, for example, of which Hunter College is a part, the contractual instructional workload for full-time, tenure-track faculty in Arts and Sciences is seven courses per year. Nationally, full-time faculty at private baccalaureate institutions—of whom 41% are female—spend 68% of their time teaching and 12% of their time on research; their peers at public master’s institutions—of whom 41% are also female—spend 66% of their time teach-
ing and 14% of their time on research; those at doctoral institutions—of whom only 32% are female—spend 50% of their time teaching and 28% of their time on research (Cataldi, Bradburn, and Fahimi 2005). Although limitations at teaching-intensive schools confront all faculty, gender and minority status intensifies those problems: women and people of color are likely to receive even less information, fewer resources, and lower evaluations than their white male peers.

The Gender Equity Project (GEP) at Hunter College, partially funded by the National Science Foundation’s ADVANCE program, addresses the challenges women face in academia, particularly at teaching-intensive institutions where women and minority scientists are overrepresented and where female, first-generation-college, and underserved minority students are most likely to be educated. The Sponsorship Program was designed for the faculty at Hunter College, but most of its components will work well at any institution.

In this chapter we describe the current form of the Sponsorship Program and how it has developed. The program at present offers a combination of (a) financial support, (b) paid sponsors, (c) workshops, and (d) ongoing consultations with GEP codirectors. Although this combination is especially attractive, the components can be used separately, depending on the features of the institution.

The Sponsorship Program provides participants with time and resources for research, as well as opportunities to (a) pursue new research areas, (b) acquire new research or technical skills, (c) begin different types of scholarship, (d) interact with women scientists from a variety of fields, (e) learn more about developing and advancing their careers, and (f) discover and share successful strategies for academic success.

We present evidence that the program has improved women’s productivity, advancement, and identities as researchers, and we discuss ongoing challenges. We conclude with six principles that have emerged from our work in the GEP in general and the Sponsorship Program in particular.

The Gender Equity Project at Hunter College

The GEP operationally defines a scientist as anyone whose research would be eligible for NSF funding from a research-based directorate. We thus include in our purview five natural science departments and six social science departments within Arts and Sciences. The five departments in natural sciences are Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Computer
Science, Mathematics and Statistics, and Physics. The six departments in social sciences are Anthropology, Economics, Geography, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology.

By many measures, women fare well at Hunter compared to men: they are well represented in the upper administration, among department chairs, and among full professors (in 2004–5, women were 23% of full professors in natural sciences and 27% in social sciences); they are 83% of the Distinguished Professors in the sciences (a rank to which fewer than 2% of CUNY faculty are appointed); their salaries are equivalent to men’s. At the same time, compared to men, women leave more often at the assistant professor level, receive less start-up funding, and spend more time at the rank of associate professor. Informal observations suggest that all three problems are common across US colleges and universities.

The GEP’s Sponsorship Program

The main goal of the Sponsorship Program is to enhance the research productivity and academic stature of women engaged in basic science at Hunter College. The program is open to Hunter women scientists of any rank and at any point in their careers. From June 2002 through May 2006, twenty-six women (38% of all women scientists at Hunter), representing all academic ranks and nine of the eleven departments, have participated in the program as associates. Associates can receive support for a total of three years, which need not be contiguous.

The Application Package

Candidates apply year by year for a maximum of three years. The application process achieves three aims: it identifies strengths and weaknesses in an applicant’s portfolio, it models professional grant writing and thus provides practice for new investigators, and it establishes the program as desirable and selective rather than remedial. Applications require a curriculum vitae, statements of past, present, and future scholarly interests, resources needed for the coming year, research goals and commitments for the coming year, a budget and budget justification, a statement of other sources of funding, a description of the ideal sponsor(s), and a letter of support from the department chair. After the first year of participation, applications must include a statement of the benefits of prior
Sponsorship Program participation. The GEP codirectors personally interview all applicants.

Because social science research suggests that written commitments help ensure desired behavior (Levy, Yamashita, and Pow 1979; Wurtele, Galanos, and Roberts 1980), the application package also requires participants to sign a contract committing themselves to a set of goals and activities for their sponsorship year. This includes general goals like attending GEP workshops and colloquia, meeting with the codirectors periodically to refine goals and review progress, and consulting with the sponsor on a biweekly basis, as well as specific goals such as submitting specific grants and papers and acquiring new knowledge or techniques. The GEP codirectors evaluate the proposals on the basis of the intellectual quality of proposed research, the extent to which program participation is likely to increase (or has already increased) scholarly productivity, appropriateness and feasibility of proposed goals and commitments, and suitability of the proposed budget.

The diagnostic and educational value of the application package was clear from the start: we were able to evaluate applicants' grant-writing skills and determine whether they needed more training in this activity; applicants gained valuable experience in grant writing. It was clear from the first set of applications that potential associates needed more guidance in grant writing. We thus introduced changes in the application guidelines. In order to model the desired result, the GEP's director of programs and research, Annemarie Nicols-Grinenko, composed a sample application that covered all the complications of a proposal. The quality of applications improved greatly as a result of this model.

Who Is Served

The Sponsorship Program is both a research project aimed at understanding career trajectories and an intervention aimed at improving women's productivity. In year 1 we accepted all twelve women who applied. Of those twelve, eight were assistant professors and four were associate professors; their dates of degree ranged from 1979 to 2000. In years 2–4, a similar proportion were assistant and associate professors. In year 2, a full professor was accepted into the program. Overall, the program has attracted more women from social science than natural science, but we have found that this difference is less important than the laboratory/nonlaboratory division. One workshop, for example,
covers managing a lab, which is not directly useful for nonlaboratory scientists.

Financial Support

Associates can receive up to $10,000 per year. They may use those funds for release time if their chair agrees, research assistance, teaching assistance, travel, or equipment—anything that is research-related and approved by the GEP. This portion of the Sponsorship Program is the equivalent of an internal grant to the faculty member. It is one way that an institution can indicate its support and commitment to a faculty member. A few external grants, such as one for $15,000 that the Henry Luce Foundation provides to junior women, serve a similar purpose.

First-year associates typically receive the full $10,000. In order to support as many deserving faculty as possible, partial funding often occurs in years 2 or 3. The funding is the biggest attraction of the program, and, in evaluations of the program, associates rate funding as its most valuable aspect. Although the dollar amount is small, it can be used to purchase time, which is the resource most important to faculty with heavy teaching responsibilities.

We have made it explicit that release time can only be used for research purposes, not for outside teaching or consultation. In a few cases, we have made monetary awards for only one semester, with continuation for the entire year contingent upon making progress in specific areas.

Sponsors

Sponsors serve as intellectual sounding boards, provide critiques of papers and grant proposals, make suggestions about where to submit papers and grant proposals, recommend conferences to attend, and provide strategic advice. Sponsors receive financial support (up to a total of $2,500 per associate per semester) for their participation in the program. A GEP codirector speaks once a semester to each sponsor.

We define a sponsor as a successful senior male or female in the associate’s field, but not in her home department. The potential for perceived or actual conflicts of interest during tenure, promotion, or other department proceedings gave rise to this restriction. We continue to think that it is important for faculty to have strong supportive professional relationships with senior people outside their department. Faculty
without tenure must be more circumspect in their dealings with senior members of their department than with someone from the outside.

The sponsor may come from a department other than the associate’s at Hunter, from any of the CUNY colleges or the CUNY Graduate Center, or from other universities in the New York area.

At many institutions, especially those whose primary commitment is to undergraduate teaching, a faculty member might be the only person or one of a very few people in his or her specialty. We have found that most of the research-intensive institutions from which faculty get their degrees or postdoctoral experience do not provide sufficient explicit skills and information about how to succeed in academic institutions or in their disciplines. People leave graduate school not understanding how academia works in general, how gender and race complicate achievement, or how to balance competing calls on their time. Most are also still novices at writing grants and papers, presenting colloquia and talks, and dealing with journal editors and reviewers. Many of their supervisors provided them with a minimum of attention and training.

At large research-intensive institutions, most faculty are in a community of highly productive peers, experience great pressure to become similarly productive, and have colleagues on hand with whom to collaborate or discuss their research. Location—one’s place of work—determines productivity as much as or more than one’s productivity determines one’s location (Allison and Long 1990; Long and McGinnis 1981). Well-financed institutions tangibly and intangibly support the research enterprise.

The majority of institutions, however, are not well financed and provide only limited access to seasoned, senior investigators. Once a faculty member is at an institution with little research support, she or he will find it increasingly difficult to develop or maintain scientific relationships with others in the same specialty. Access to a sponsor can make all the difference between being on the outside and being on the inside.

Once accepted into the program, the associate works with her department chair, other senior colleagues, and the GEP codirectors to identify a possible sponsor. In some cases the associate already knows the possible sponsor and speaks informally to him or her. A GEP codirector officially approaches the sponsor on the associate’s behalf, typically by a letter that describes the program, the sponsor’s responsibilities, and the compensation. The sponsor must commit to a set of goals and activities, including biweekly communications with the associate, and—a recently added feature—one interview per semester with the GEP to discuss the
associate's progress. The sponsor must be physically located within travel
distance of Hunter College, in order to make it more likely that the
sponsor and associate will meet face to face. (Originally, we hoped that
sponsors would attend some of the workshops, and a few did so. The
associates, however, were able to speak more freely when their sponsors
were not present.)

The $5,000 sponsor stipend was estimated as the minimum attractive
dollar amount for an accomplished, busy, senior person. We ask for con-
siderably more intellectual attention than most mentors provide. Com-
penating people acknowledges their expertise and the value of their
time. People take their work more seriously and perform it more reli-
ably when they are paid. When one potential sponsor, who had already
had some contact with an associate to advise her about a book manu-
script, was approached the sponsor said, "Oh, now I'll really need to be
serious about how she revises the manuscript so that the book will be
published." That was exactly the response we wanted. The manuscript
was revised many times and the book has been published by a strong
university press. Other sponsors have also commented on the commit-
ment implied by the financial benefit.

Another reason for our paying the sponsor was that we wanted the
associates to feel entitled to call on their sponsors for substantive intel-
lectual commentary and professional advice. Inculcating entitlement in some
of our associates has been difficult. Some associates find it difficult to
approach their sponsors despite the compensation. For example, one
associate in her second year said that she now felt more comfortable about
approaching her sponsor. She understood that he was being paid, and that
helped, but it was still difficult for her to initiate an interaction. Associates' 
reluctance to take up their sponsors' time continues to be a problem.

Despite the compensation, not all matches work. About one-third of
our sponsors worked out extremely well, about one-third worked out
well, and about one-third did not work out well. We now tell sponsors
at the outset that some associate-sponsor pairings work better than oth-
ers and that at the end of each semester, in our discussion with them, we
will consider whether the match seems to be a good one and should
continue. We accordingly now pay sponsors in two installments.

Although we added the discussion with a GEP codirector with the
intention of providing oversight and accountability, we have learned
that sponsors enjoy and look forward to the discussions. They get new
ideas, pass on their insights and progress, reflect on the structure of their
profession, and feel part of an important project. Several of our sponsors
from research-intensive institutions have commented on the value of the program and noted that their institution does not, but should, provide a comparable program. Pleasurable engagement leads to commitment.

Our construal of the role and importance of the sponsor has changed over time. We have begun developing the implications of our concept of a circle of advisors, also known in the literature under a variety of names—mosaic mentor, composite mentor, and the like. The idea of a circle of advisors is that any individual has a wide range of needs: information, advice, support, challenge, encouragement, critiques, advocacy, and so on. In the ideal case, each individual creates a list of what she needs and for each need tries to identify someone who could fill that need. Today’s circle of advisors is not necessarily tomorrow’s. As one’s needs change, so will one’s circle.

Incorporating this into the Sponsorship Program enlarges the kinds of models we will entertain. For example, we could (a) provide each associate with two sponsors, one for intellectual support and one for psychosocial support, or one for one aspect of the associate’s research and one for another aspect, (b) facilitate collaborations between associates and nonlocal colleagues, (c) provide sponsors for some associates but not others, (d) encourage associates to form a circle of advisors without providing a primary sponsor, or (e) tailor the model to the individual needs of each associate.

The Workshops

New associates receive two days of intensive workshops during the summer after they are accepted into the program. Monthly workshops on issues of continuing interest are held during the fall and spring terms. Workshop topics cover the techniques, skills, strategies, and knowledge necessary for professional success, such as time management, grant writing, paper presentations, negotiation, developing useful contacts with colleagues, developing collaborations, identifying areas where technical skills are necessary, dealing with rejection, and understanding the role of gender as a determinant of professional success.

The workshops are arguably the most visible, transportable, and successful component of the Sponsorship Program. Many faculty, especially women and minorities, are intellectually and socially isolated. The MIT report (Massachusetts Institute of Technology 1999) specifically noted the marginalization that senior women in the school of science per-
ceived. The workshops feed a hunger for information, guidance, and community, and as such have become a major focus of our efforts. We have learned that this hunger is widespread, and exists among men as well as women, nonscientists as well as scientists. We have successfully developed the workshops as a stand-alone feature, compressed them into one-, two-, or three-day formats, and adapted them for different groups within and outside CUNY. Following a suggestion by one workshop attendee, we are in the process of developing a book based on the workshops.

The list of workshop topics has grown over time, but most can be subsumed in a few broad categories:

career development: balancing work responsibilities, making effective public presentations, preparing one’s vita, developing self-presentation skills, building a national reputation, creating a circle of advisors, handling power and politics, teaching effectively and efficiently, increasing negotiation skills, preparing for tenure and promotion, capitalizing gains and maximizing progress in the summer

writing and publishing: managing time and overcoming procrastination, publishing and handling rejection, writing grants

mentoring and leadership: being sponsored and sponsoring others, managing laboratories, research assistants, and students

balancing work and personal life: developing equality in personal relationships, balancing work and personal life

Throughout the workshops, we discuss how gender schemas and the accumulation of disadvantage affect women in the workplace (Valian 1998), and use social science theory and research to support claims and recommendations. Increasingly inspired by the comments of our associates, we also consider how culture and ethnicity play a role in professional success. Workshops are evaluated by all participants, and the evaluations have shaped their evolution.

No aspect of the Sponsorship Program has evolved more fully in form or content than the workshops. They began as twice-monthly meetings among the associates and GEP codirectors and staff. Each workshop was two hours long, and consisted of hour-long presentations by the codirectors (or occasional other experts) followed by open discussions among the entire group. To convey the evidence-based nature of the program, we assigned homework in the form of scholarly readings from the social sciences.
It quickly became apparent that associates wanted fewer scholarly readings, shorter presentations, and more opportunities to engage with their colleagues. We responded by assigning a smaller number and larger variety of readings, including practical guides. We developed “tips” sheets that summarized a great deal of information succinctly. We also assigned some preworkshop activities that set the stage for constructive, informed workshop activities and discussions. We shortened our presentations to no more than twenty-five minutes, and designed structured workshop activities for small groups of two to four so that associates could interact with and learn from each other. These changes have been enthusiastically received.

One workshop that has had a demonstrable impact focuses on tips and strategies for public speaking and presentations. One goal is to improve associates’ presentations—to help them give talks that capture the audience’s attention, clearly state the main points of the research, and explain why the research is important. Although these points are obvious, and already known by the associates, knowing and doing are two different things—as anyone who has sat through dozens of professional talks at conferences knows. We also teach associates how to receive feedback from their audience. A second goal is to improve how the associates listen to others’ presentations and provide constructive commentary.

To prepare for the workshop, associates read a document we have prepared (developed with Nikisha Williams) on what should be presented in the first three minutes of a talk. The document emphasizes trying to find the right example or phenomenon to introduce a topic. Then the associates create their own three-minute opening. At the workshop each person gives her opening, which is timed. The listeners give no more than a minute’s worth of comments.

Some associates “forget” that they were to prepare an opening and come to the workshop unprepared (but must give the opening, anyway). All associates learn something of value about how to improve their organization and delivery from each other’s comments. The light goes on when the right opening fact or example grabs the audience and sets the tone for what follows. Associates also learn how to frame feedback that is specific and useful without being harmful.

Another particularly useful workshop asks associates to plan the summer so that they can take advantage of the absence of teaching and administrative work and make progress on their research. In one activity, associates work with a partner to design a summer research schedule
that works best for them and come up with concrete suggestions for how to put such plans in motion. Would a visit to another lab be useful? What arrangements need to be made? Does a home office need to be equipped or rearranged? What needs to be purchased or borrowed? Are babysitters needed? How can they be lined up early?

A second activity for planning the summer occurs before the workshop. Associates talk with at least one colleague whose work habits and productivity they admire, and ask how they spend the summer: how do they structure their days and weeks; where do they work; what do they do about their research when they travel; how do they balance work with other responsibilities and leisure activities; with whom do they talk about their work during their summer? All of us learn that productive people have a range of strategies. For some, the summer marks a time of more intense research activity, with more interns and others working in the lab. For others, summer commitments differ little from the rest of the year: graduate students and postdocs require continuous supervision; laboratory research is ongoing. Some people work full-time (forty to sixty hours per week) on their research. Some nonlaboratory scientists come to their office every day because they work more effectively at their office than at home. Some have working vacations in which they work in the morning and have fun in the afternoon. Others deliberately do no work at all on vacation. Yet others use part of their vacations and family visits for scholarly reading. Learning what productive people expect of themselves helps associates think about their own productivity and the balance between work and leisure that they want to have.

A constant refrain from our associates is that they wished they had had various forms of information or guidance sooner. In response, we have compressed the workshops for all new associates, and offered all of the basic topics in condensed form in a two-day, intensive format at the beginning of the summer of their first sponsorship year. In this way, we are able to start people's summers off in a productive way. We continue to have more advanced monthly workshops during the fall and spring for all the associates.

Relatively inexpensive and high impact, the workshops are an excellent candidate for institutionalization and dissemination. In May 2004 we offered a three-afternoon set of workshops for women in science across CUNY: it was a resounding success. The only request for change was to add a dinner at the end so that people could talk with each informally. We received a CUNY Faculty Development Award to host a
two-day, sixteen-hour workshop for male and female junior faculty in any discipline across CUNY in December 2004. Once again, the response—both faculty interest (we had a waiting list of twenty-one after our cap of thirty) and evaluations of the workshops—was overwhelmingly positive. We received funding from the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, CUNY, to hold the workshops again in May 2005. Finally, in collaboration with the New York Academy of Sciences in spring 2005, we held three workshops at Hunter for graduate students, postdocs, and junior faculty in natural science. The sixty people who attended came from a wide range of universities in New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey; they too provided glowing evaluations. Colleagues from other CUNY campuses are now training with us to learn to conduct similar faculty development workshops at their home campuses.

Consultations with the GEP Codirectors

A GEP codirector speaks “officially” once a semester to each associate and is also available whenever associates ask for advice on topics that range from preparing tenure and promotion packages to negotiating for better teaching schedules to responding to rejection. We had not anticipated how important the consultations would be. The GEP codirectors act as general advisors to associates on topics ranging from intellectual and scholarly matters to institution and department issues to interpersonal conflicts on the job and work-family conflicts at home. We discuss how they can succeed at Hunter College and in their disciplines. We are generally accessible to associates and regularly communicate with them in person, and via phone and email. In their ratings of the importance of various components of the Sponsorship Program, associates strongly disagreed with the statement, “The Sponsorship Program would be just as valuable without VVV and VCR” (M = 1.73, SD = 1.14, where 1 means strongly disagree and 6 means strongly agree). Our growing role in the advisement of associates has contributed to our understanding of the desirability of a circle of advisors, rather than a single sponsor, to be discussed further below.

Measurement

The major types of measures are evaluations of components of the Sponsorship Program, particularly workshops, associate progress reports, and
associate interviews with the GEP codirectors. Regular measurement serves many purposes in the Sponsorship Program, including education, feedback, and evaluation. The associate progress reports have undergone the most refinement and best illustrate the education, feedback, and evaluation functions of measurement in the Sponsorship Program.

We make use of both qualitative and quantitative progress reports, and ask for some information monthly (scholarship and sponsor interactions), and some three times a year (teaching, service, and student or lab supervision). For monthly reports, we use a comprehensive, quantitative survey of scholarly activities (for example, work on refereed journal articles, internal and external grants, and other writing; professional development and other activities) and sponsor interactions, followed by narratives that cover such topics as what barriers associates have encountered and how things can be improved. The teaching and service survey asks associates to describe the courses taught, people supervised, and service to the profession, the college, and the community.

Over time, we have made the monthly checklist more comprehensive and easier to use. In order to reduce the reporting burden on associates who are no longer funded by the GEP, while still allowing us to track their progress in scholarship, teaching, and service, we recently developed a new checklist. Associates who are not currently funded are asked to complete this checklist three times a year (after each semester and at the end of the summer) for the two years following their GEP funding.

We created an impact survey to capture large program effects. This survey asks associates to tell the GEP about (a) the number of undergraduate, masters, doctoral, and postdoctoral students they have supervised, (b) the professional activities of those students (i.e., conference presentations, manuscript submissions, articles published), (c) collaborations that have developed between associates and sponsors or associates and other colleagues, (d) whether Sponsorship Program participation has affected the associates' relationships with students and their likelihood of serving as an advisor to a student or colleague, (e) whether their participation in the program has resulted in more active participation in departmental, college, university, or discipline-wide activities to increase equity, and (f) their leadership activities. We also created a survey to evaluate the relative importance of various program components (e.g., funding, the sponsor, advice from the codirectors, workshops, interactions with other associates).
Associates are not uniformly vigilant in submitting their monthly reports, especially when they have little progress to report, and we have worked to streamline reporting to remove impediments. But, overall, associates find the process of filling out progress reports instructive and motivating. The reports remind them of their commitments, help them to break down large projects into smaller tasks, identify barriers to achievement, and keep the focus on academic writing.

Evaluation of the Sponsorship Program

Because the chief goal of the Sponsorship Program is to increase scholarly productivity, the crucial test of its effectiveness is whether participation increases paper and grant submissions. Dependent t-tests determined whether associates' paper and grant submissions increased as a result of their participation in the Sponsorship Program. The sixteen associates in cohorts 1 and 2 submitted significantly more papers and grants (internal and external) during their first year in the program \( M = 5.5, \ SD = 3.5 \) than they did during the year before entering the program \( M = 3.1, \ SD = 1.8 \), \( t(15) = 2.32, p < .05 \). The eleven associates in cohort 1 presenting full data also submitted more papers and grants during their second year of the program than they had during the year before entering the program, \( t(10) = 3.2, p < .01 \). Thus, in a relatively short period of time, program associates not only increased their productivity but also maintained it. Similar significant differences exist when only paper submissions are examined.

The positive effects of associates' increased productivity affects others at Hunter, including students. Of the total group of twenty-four associates who have been in the program, eleven have provided information about work with students: they have supervised a total of forty-five undergraduates, thirty-four master's students, and twelve Ph.D. students. The students have presented their research at conferences (22 posters, 23 papers, 3 invited talks, 8 symposia) and have been sole or coauthor on three papers in refereed journals. Eleven of the undergraduates have gone on to M.A. programs; ten of the undergraduates and M.A. students were accepted into Ph.D. programs.

Although we lack desirable data from comparison groups that would allow us confidently to attribute the associates' performance to the Sponsorship Program, the qualitative assessments suggest a causal relation between being in the program and increasing productivity and commitment to research.
Qualitative Assessments

Some types of data can only be acquired through interviews and semi-structured discussions. One of our concerns is how to measure intellectual development, the growth of intellectual aspirations, and increases in intellectual engagement. We want to ensure that women scientists flourish intellectually, that they are able to develop their ideas and get satisfaction from their intellectual work. But what do we know about the intellectual life-cycle? What do we know about what contributes to intellectual growth?

We see women's high intellectual aspirations, their intellectual success, and their influence over the direction their field is taking, as signs that initiatives like the Sponsorship Program are on the right track—but all of these are very hard to measure. We want to understand the nature of intellectual development and intellectual influence. We want to understand what helps someone develop her (or his) intellectual and scientific contributions and what helps someone have an impact on her (or his) field. It is difficult to quantify such changes in an individual and even more difficult to understand what the causal factors are in helping someone bring out her or his best.

Our interviews with associates usually stimulate them to think about their progress—or lack thereof. We include excerpts (edited for clarity, ellipses not included) from letters they have written us.

The first is from an associate who was outside of academia for several years after getting her degree:

Although the "measurable effects" of my participation in the GEP may not seem spectacular measured in terms of publications, I would like you to know that the GEP has played an enormous role in my determination to work to keep this job. I enjoyed working at Hunter my first year, but the next two years were often unpleasant. I questioned whether this was the right "work" given my unhappiness. I was not sure how much longer I wanted to stay.

I cannot fully explain the role [the] GEP played in changing my mind about work, but it was significant. Three elements come immediately to mind. First, simply having to go to the city to attend meetings and report in kept me thinking about my work, when I otherwise might have abandoned it. Second, the GEP sessions encouraged me to focus on what it was about this career that
I did like, and what I would greatly miss without this specific job. Virginia’s article [Valian 1977] on the nature of “work” made a very strong impression. And third, participation in the GEP is how I discovered both that there is a Hunter College community outside my department, and that the outside intellectual community, from which I felt so estranged, would accept me again if I made the effort.

The bottom line is that while I may not do enough, soon enough, to get tenure, I have already enjoyed work more this year than any other.

Another associate who, after a period of inactivity, applied for six grants during her two years in the GEP wrote:

As I look back at the progress I have made since the fall of 2003, I can see that without the GEP I would still be feeling depressed, overworked, and unaccomplished. All these feelings were swept away during the first year of my participation in the GEP seminars. Understanding that my feelings were shared by others, and that they were essentially a result of my having been disconnected from my work, was an immense relief. I would like to thank the GEP for what it has done for me, and helped me to do for myself.

A third associate wrote:

I successfully prepared my promotion package, had my interview, and have been promoted. My promotion process apparently went very well. Furthermore, I now have also finished my part of the tenure process, and gone again successfully through the interview. Although it is early to tell, I know that the endorsement for me was unanimous. I will never be able to thank the GEP program enough for how I approached promotion and tenure, and how well I did through all of it, as well as for the financial support. Most important for me: being part of a program that made me stay “on track” and focused.

A week before I had my promotion interview I had a very nasty rejection of a paper of mine from a journal—that was an incredible setback at the time. I think that my experience with the GEP helped me deal with it in a professional manner and certainly made it easier for me not to let this spill into preparation for the
interview. I put it aside and concentrated on what I had, not what I did not! Then I began the process of thinking about another journal, settled on a top journal, revised the manuscript to meet their main purpose and specifications, and submitted a much better article to this journal, which was accepted with minor revisions.

I have taken more initiatives at the department level and as a result people listen to me more. I was asked to serve as the chair of an important departmental committee. In this committee, one of the persons who had provided the most obstacles for me throughout my years at Hunter now defers to my authority as a chair. I consider this an incredible accomplishment.

We know from our quantitative data and from our interviews that a minority of associates continue to be less productive than they or we hoped would be the case. Nevertheless almost all associates see themselves as further ahead than they were when they started, even if there is little tangible evidence to back that up.

We also see that our associates help other faculty. They pass on to their junior colleagues what they have learned about how the institution works, how their discipline works, how to be more effective within their department, how to improve departmental governance. Because they learn about how other departments are run by trading experiences with other associates, they see that they can have a hand in making their department a better place for faculty.

When queried about the effectiveness of our program, some associates indicate that they principally needed time and money, although they benefited—albeit less directly—from the workshops. Others talk about how important their sponsors have been: direct intellectual feedback, collaborations that have developed as a result of the sponsorship, meetings with other people that have developed. Yet others specifically say that financial support was less important than the other forms of support—support from the codirectors and the GEP as a whole, support from workshop content and discussion, support via an increased sense of belonging, support simply from having been chosen as someone the GEP wanted to invest in. Some mention every aspect of the program and think that the package is important. What we have learned from our interviews, discussions, and correspondence with our associates is how rich—and untapped—an area intellectual development is.

The Sponsorship Program is how the GEP is best known at Hunter,
and the College recognizes and acknowledges its benefits. At College-
wide tenure and promotion proceedings, membership in the Sponsor-
ship Program is frequently credited with contributing to a candidate's
success, and is increasingly touted as one of a candidate's' achievements
in and of itself. This suggests that the program is perceived by depart-
ment chairs and top administrators alike as effective and prestigious.
Through the Sponsorship Program's success, Hunter's president, Jen-
nifer Raab, became convinced of the importance of increased oppor-
tunities for faculty development for scholarly productivity, and is working
with the GEP codirectors to institutionalize the program and develop
future funding. She has also provided "step-down funding" for a subset
of third-year associates who have made demonstrable progress but
require additional funding to complete projects.

Leading Ideas from the Sponsorship Program

The following six principles or leading ideas continue to guide the
refinement and expansion of the Sponsorship Program and other initia-
tives. Grounded as they are in the literature on interventions in organi-
zations and experimental work in the social sciences, especially social
psychology, these principles can be applicable to other programs and
institutions.

1. Gender is a window on institutional effectiveness. When attention is
paid to gender issues and sex comparisons and disparities, problems in an
institution that are totally unrelated to gender become apparent. When
we attended to problems of faculty women scientists at Hunter, it
became clear that there was a general need for faculty development for
research and scholarship.

2. A continuous thread links undergraduates, graduate students, postdocs,
and faculty. The connection between faculty and students is critical for
improving the representation, retention, productivity, and morale of
women in the sciences. Students at all levels benefit from seeing and
interacting with female faculty whose science careers are thriving and
who maintain a desired balance between careers and personal lives.
Female students are more likely to enter and continue in the field if they
see that scientists can "look like them." The increased research activity
of our associates has spilled over to our undergraduate, master's, and
CUNY doctoral students, who now have more opportunities for col-
laboration and support.
3. **Women who profit from initiatives like the Sponsorship Program are carriers of information and strategies to colleagues in their departments and throughout the college.** Women who benefit from program initiatives can become seeds of change in their departments and other groups by sharing materials, increasing their influence, nominating female colleagues for honors, awards, and opportunities, serving as advisors to others, and working with administrators to improve conditions for women. Several associates have started building alliances within their departments and programs, vouching for each other, pooling resources, and collaborating on research and other projects at Hunter.

4. **A circle of advisors is superior to a single mentor.** No one mentor can or should provide the myriad intellectual, professional, and psychosocial supports that junior faculty need, and from which all faculty can profit throughout their careers. A circle of advisors minimizes the nature and extent of any one advisor’s responsibility, makes it more feasible to attract advisors in the first place, and maximizes the chances that faculty will get the help they need from the best possible sources.

5. **Measurements, interviews, and application procedures are interventions.** Targeted interviews can be a more efficient way to collect information than developing comprehensive surveys. Targeted interviews with representative groups can elicit the same information as comprehensive written surveys, and, because they are open-ended, elicit new information not anticipated by researchers. Interviews can lead directly to solutions, as the process of discussing issues causes people to engage more fully and consider topics more thoughtfully (Valian and Fletcher 2004).

6. **Attention to gender encourages distributed leadership.** Long-standing institutional change with regard to gender equity and diversity requires shared goals and the development of consensus on policies and procedures. Enduring change is most likely to happen when leadership is distributed throughout an organization, and people at all levels are, and perceive themselves to be, responsible and effective agents of change.

**REFERENCES**


