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Mentoring as a tool for academic and personal development in the Mellon Mays undergraduate program.

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2012-01-09
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/10928

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Abstract

This research project investigated how students and mentors in the 2008 Melon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship experienced the benefits and difficulties of the mentoring relationship. With the help of the mentor students appeared to excel both academically and personally.

A qualitative research paradigm was used and unstructured interviews were conducted with five mentors and five students in the first cohort of the MMUF at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Mentoring reports completed by mentors were analysed and validated the content of the interviews.

Both mentors and mentees confirmed that mentoring was indeed a powerful tool for academic and personal development. They maintained that there was no way that one could develop academically and not develop personally. Mentoring relationships that did not succeed were attributed to no effort on the part of either the student or the mentor.

The mentors and mentees agreed that the benefits were mutual; they all learned from each other. Student development was observable and students reported that they were beginning to feel part of a community of scholars.

Keywords and phrases

- Mentoring
- Mentoring relationship
- Academic development
- Personal development
- Community of practice
- Undergraduate students

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.

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MATSIE REBECCA MABETA

21st day of September 2011

Dedication

I dedicate this work in memory of my late mother Dikeledi Elizabeth Mabeta whom I regarded as my coach, guide, tutor and friend. Unfortunately she died while I was collecting data. She will be sorely missed.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of this work: the MMUF fellows and their mentors for agreeing to be interviewed, having to think back to 2008; the 2010 MMUF cohort for their input; and the EDUC 7016 group, who also helped with the shaping of this report.

Most of all, my heartfelt appreciation goes to Professor Jane Castle, my supervisor, for her invaluable support during hard times when I couldn't cope with life. Your patience, understanding and hospitality during this research were highly appreciated.

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Abbreviations

MMUF Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship

PAI Previously Advantaged Institutions

SRC Student Representative Council