



Building a cadre of minority scientists in the area of Childhood obesity prevention: A mentoring initiative

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Summary

Objectives

To mentor early career minority investigators to develop their research agenda in the areas of childhood obesity

Methods

The mentoring program was three pronged that included a pre-conference workshop on designing a research proposal, the formation of self-selected mentor mentee groups, and monthly webinars for the whole group for 12 months.

Results

Eight minority investigators and 5 mentors participated in this mentoring program. The projects undertaken under the mentorship included, revisions of previously rejected grant proposals, publication projects, and review of grant proposals. A systematic review was completed, extension educational materials were prepared and a dossier for tenure was prepared under the guidance of the mentors.

Conclusion

The three pronged approach of a workshop, tailored mentoring and group webinars has a broad impact for professional development and promoting diversity in our profession.

Background

Despite the fact that there is disproportional prevalence of childhood obesity among minority population compared to their majority counterparts, limited federal funding goes to minority investigators compared to their majority counterparts. In an effort to narrow that disparity gap, developing a mentoring program with mentors that have a clear understanding of the obstacles faced by minority scholars is promising. Mentoring offers an opportunity for knowledge exchange and integration, with the mentee investigators sharing their novel ideas and culture, while the mentor provides the technical knowledge, experience, and implementation of a grant project. The reciprocal dynamic relationship between mentor and mentee has the potential to produce a shared vision, healthy outcomes, and resources including funding.

Objective

The objectives of this initiative were: 1) to mentor early career minority investigators; 2) to develop their research agenda in the areas of childhood obesity; and 3) to increase collaboration in applied, and translational research in childhood obesity arena.

Methods

- The mentoring program was three pronged that included a pre-conference workshop on designing a research proposal.
- The formation of self-selected mentor mentee groups, and monthly webinars for the whole group for 12 months.
- The individual meetings focused on helping the mentees with their grant proposals or publications, where the mentees came up with the projects and the mentors provided advice. The group wide interactive webinars addressed issues that came from the individual group meetings.

How to respond to important parts of RFAs	Understand what the RFA is asking for and match that with your purpose	Participants will discuss their identified needs and proposed interventions
Saturday Afternoon National program directors discuss funding sources		
Who is funding childhood obesity prevention projects	NIH, USDA, DHHS, Robert wood Johnson foundation	National program leaders from selected national organization will discuss what their organizations are looking for
Money matters	How does the money you are asking for match with your proposed activities and outcome	How to stretch your budget
Project evaluation	How do you assess the impact of your project	
Ethical matters	When to get IRB approval	
Reporting your outcome far and wide	What do I do when my manuscripts are rejected?	The mentors will discuss the importance of publications
Ideas on project proposal	Either revise a proposal or design one	Participants will bring to the table an idea to write a proposal on under the mentorship of the panelist
Dinner and next step		
August through December discuss a possible grant to submit in the next funding cycle for USDA NIFA or any other organization	Each mentoring cluster will discuss their project, funding source and submission timeline	Round table discussion

Table. Topics for the preconference workshop

The workshop will cover applied research methods tailored to mentees needs as follows:

1. Round table discussion and identifying the felt need and area of need were discussed to help tailor the workshop to the needs of the participants.
2. Speakers discussed research design and gave examples from their projects
3. Speakers addressed data collection, including the need for reliability in recording and analysis
4. Speakers addressed behavior theories and duration of the intervention for behavior change

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Grants submitted as a result of the workshop:

- Grants were prepared and submitted to USDA NIFA SPECA Challenge grant
- Diversity grant through Robert Wood Johnson and the Academy

Manuscript:

- My mentor provided support for the preparation of a systematic review
- 3 manuscripts that were submitted with other writing teams were accepted for publication
- Submitted an article as the first author to JAND
- submitted a book chapter on nutrition assessment with a colleague and have been working on revisions with the editors

Research:

Submitted an IRB application to expand the diversity in dietetics research that I completed over the past couple of years with the National Organization of Blacks in Dietetics

Conclusion

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