

What Good is Mentoring? – Mentors and Protégés Having Their Say

Panel Moderator: Evelyn Hsia, Hyperion (MentorNet Volunteer)

Panel Speakers: Celesta White, Shell Chemical LP; Cynthia Gilley, The Weather Channel; Katharine Horst, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Rebecca Sawchuk, The Dow Chemical Company; Dana Gary, Carnegie Mellon University; Norma Fries, IBM; Brenda Liu, Intel

Mentoring has consistently been identified as one of the most effective strategies to date in addressing the retention of women in engineering. Yet, mentoring experiences frequently are difficult to quantify, and results of mentoring programs can be difficult to measure. Evaluations of mentoring programs have highlighted a variety of positive results. But sometimes the data by themselves do not provide the first person, visceral accounts that can validate studies of mentoring and highlight the value of mentoring, helping us to appreciate the nuances, and know more about how one mentoring relationship may differ from another.

How, and to what extent, does having a mentoring relationship help a student decide to remain in engineering? And, does it make her experience more valuable, or tolerable? If so, how? What specifically occurs during a mentoring relationship? How does the experience correlate with their expectations, and what might they learn or experience that is unexpected? What do protégés learn and what else do they gain from mentoring? And why do mentors volunteer their time? What do they learn as a result of the experience? What advice do they have for their colleagues? When should one seek out a mentor? How does the experience vary from one student to another? What helps a mentoring relationship “take off”? From a student’s perspective, how do academic mentors differ from those working in industry?

During this panel discussion, students and professionals who have been involved in MentorNet’s structured One-on-One mentoring programs during the past year will relate their experiences, and address these questions.