PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS EXPLAIN 3 ATE MENTORING INITIATIVES

CCPI-STEM's webcast NSF ATE Grant Success through Mentoring contains detailed information about three Advanced Technological Education (ATE) mentoring initiatives that use different delivery formats and offer a range of services to help community college teams prepare ATE grant proposals.

The three projects featured in the January 26 webinar and the three others listed on CCPI-STEM's Resources webpage share the same goal: to increase the number and quality of ATE grant proposals.

The newest service and one with the nearest deadline is Mentor Up's pre-mentoring review of proposal ideas. It is available until March 15. To initiate a consultation with a mentor, complete the brief form at https://xafor full proposals. That application is open until April 1.

Mentor Up Principal Investigator Elizabeth Teles encourages community college faculty to begin their proposal work by reading the program solicitation. "The big thing is it's got to be about technician education and it's got to be a good idea," she said.

Here is a summary of the three mentoring initiatives projects. All of their services are free; each provides stipends; two provide travel support.

Mentor Up

Mentor-Up is open to all community college educators who are interested in technician education improvements. It provides all-virtual mentoring to help community colleges assemble the people and resources they need to prepare competitive proposals.

"Our whole purpose is to broaden knowledge, build capacity, and increase access and information to the ATE program," Teles said. In addition to leading Mentor Up, Teles is a senior advisor to CCPI-STEM.

When NSF program officers recommend projects for funding Mentor Up helps its mentees through the award negotiation phase. Mentees whose proposals have been declined can receive Mentor Up mentors' help to revise and resubmit their proposals.

Mentor Up participants are required to attend a virtual conference June 5, and 7 and three webinars. Those who complete a full draft of their proposals by August ,ay ask for a written review from one of the two retired NSF programs officers who lead Mentor Up. Over five years, 72% of Mentor Up participants have received grant awards. But the funding rate is 85% to 90% for the teams that have received a written review and then refined their proposals prior to submission to NSF.

Mentor Up is taking applications now through April 1. It has the capacity for 16 teams, and provides stipends for two faculty members per team.

Mentor-Connect

Mentor-Connect assists mentees from December until they submit their ATE proposals in October. Community colleges or faculty members who have not had ATE grants in the past seven years are eligible for New to ATE mentoring.

The application for the 2025 cohort will be posted in July. It is due November 8. Mentor-Connect can accommodate up to 26 teams in 2025.

The faculty-led teams that Mentor-ect selects in November will meet in person with mentors at two workshops and confer with mentors remotely throughout the proposal development process. Mentees are expected to attend technical webinars and may utilize Mentor-Connect's help desk and post-award services.
The newest post-award service is PI 101, a course that helps new principal investigators navigate the first year of their projects.

In addition to attentive mentoring by an experienced ATE principal investigator, Mentor-Connect provides travel support for up to four team members, the registration fee for the HI-TEC conference that the one-day summer workshop precedes, and stipends for two faculty members. Mentor-Connect's online library of grant-writing resources is freely available to the public.

Since 2012, 72% of 261 Mentor-Connect teams that applied to the funding track for institutions new to ATE have received grants. The NSF's agency-wide funding rate is 26%.

Mentor-Connect Principal Investigator Elaine Craft noted that three mentoring projects on the webinar all have much higher funding rates than the agency-wide rate. She said that working with one of the mentoring programs "greatly increases the probability that your first proposal will be funded. It's not a guarantee, but it certainly increases the probability."

Mentor-Connect also offers two other types of mentoring: Second Chance mentoring to help teams revise declined proposals; and Moving Up mentoring to help college teams prepare larger grant proposals.

FORCCE-ATE

Each year FORtifying Cybersecurity and Computer Education (FORCCE-ATE) mentors up to 15 teams that are developing proposals that focus on preparing technicians for cybersecurity and computer science-related careers.

Elizabeth Hawthorne, FORCCE-ATE principal investigator, said the project "has a deep bench" of mentors who are experts in cybersecurity and information technology. All of the mentors have received professional development in coaching techniques as well. Hawthorne is also a co-principal investigator of CCPI-STEM and served as the webcast moderator.

FORCCE-ATE's formal mentoring runs from April to October and includes an in-person workshop from June 10 to 13 at Prince George's Community College.

The project also makes its mentors available to help project teams answer program officers' questions during the agency's review process.

FORCCE-ATE's application is open now through April 1. Hawthorne said priority is given to teams that submit their applications for mentoring early. FORCCE-ATE provides travel support and stipends for two faculty members and a dean from each participating college.

"We also have a very good success rate," Hawthorne said, reporting that FORCCE-ATE funding rate over the years has ranged from 70% to 82%.

"It really makes a difference to join one of these mentoring initiatives. It doesn't matter which one. But if you want to have a better chance at being successful, link up, connect with one of our mentoring initiatives. We're all here to help build the ATE community and help you," Hawthorne said.