

Highlights and Insights

Developing Your Mentoring Networks

Reflecting On Your Core Values

Prof. Takayama underscores the significance of self-awareness and remaining committed to your core values, they are non-negotiable and should not be compromised. These principles serve as your compass, helping you navigate life's challenges, trials, and tribulations.

Identifying Your Core Values

To identify your core values, reflect on what drives you and ask yourself questions like, "What excites me today?" Avoid letting your identity be defined solely by grades, titles, or material possessions.

Building Mentoring Networks Are Vital

As you progress in your career, it's essential to think about strategic ways to create and maintain these networks. Prof Takayama asked students to think of mentoring networks as being constellations. She explained 'just like how some stars seem brighter than others when you're looking at the sky, and changes depending on what season we are in, and so depending on your needs there are certain types of mentors that are going to fulfill your more immediate needs. Others are good to have in your network'.

Seeking Strategic Mentorship

When seeking mentors, she asked students to be purposeful and strategic by considering both the short-term and long-term goals and choosing mentors with specific purposes in mind. Different mentors serve different needs in your career, so be clear about what you want to gain from each mentorship. Peer mentors can be valuable, and it's essential to maintain connections with your peer mentors over time.

Mentoring up

Mentees should develop the skill of "learning how to mentor up."

The development of mentoring structures and constellations

Conceptualisations of Mentorships

The workshop introduced various conceptualisations of mentorships, including dyads, triads, collective or group mentoring, networks, and mentoring constellations. It encourages thinking intentionally about crisis management in mentorship.

Benefits of Mentoring Constellations

Mentoring constellations can break down siloes, promote interdisciplinarity, and bridge connections between different aspects of university life, such as curricular, co-curricular, and research activities. It's a dynamic and evolving process that benefits both mentors and mentees.

Reflection and Mentoring

The workshop emphasised the value of pausing and reflecting, even for a brief 2-3 minutes, and underscored the importance of how such a reflective exercise is essential in mentoring.

Peer Mentoring Circles (PMCs)

Prof Takayama highlighted that PMCs is a form of productive mentoring practice that fosters strong and lasting connections. They serve various purposes, are not bound by departmental structures, and require commitment and ownership from circle members. They focus on building a strong sense of community and supporting each other throughout their career.

Mentor-centered to Mentee-Centered Mentoring

The shift from "mentor-centered mentoring" to "mentee-centered mentoring" is advocated. This paradigm shift should be evidence-based while also fostering an inclusive, flourishing climate.

Relationship-rich Mentoring

The workshop discussed relationship-rich mentoring groups, their characteristics, and the various functions they serve, including social engagement, academic, personal, cultural, and career support. The mentoring relationship in this environment is characterised by: (a) high reciprocity and mutuality, (b) intentionality, (c) the importance of trust building, and that the level of trust and the building of trust varies depending on that relationship, (d) the emphasis placed on identity which is aspect of that relationship; and lastly the intensity, time and duration spent on the relationship.

Developing Mentoring Taxonomies

Developing mentoring taxonomies or categories for different needs and contexts is encouraged. It's essential to help students identify their mentoring constellations and think about their needs in terms of thriving, not just succeeding.

Inclusive Mentoring

The workshop promoted inclusive mentoring by considering diverse networks, including family, friends, and peers, as potential mentors. It suggests involving students in the process by asking them to identify their network, broader network, and fellow mentors.

A Framework for Research Skills Development

Prof Takayama introduced a research skills development framework, to enable faculty to consider the progressive steps in developing research expertise. The framework helps faculty target their mentorship and feedback in relation to the mentee's stage of research skills development. It can be helpful for neurodiverse learners by mapping out specific facets of inquiry in relation to progress in student autonomy.

Cultivating resilient ecosystems through new paradigms of mentorship and leadership

1 Promoting inclusive university culture

The first step to promoting an inclusive university culture, Kathy shared is to start examining our institutional ecosystem—the diverse backgrounds, experiences, identities of every member of the university including our faculty, staff, and students; interactions amongst these members; their perspectives; the institutional structures and practices; and the external influences on the university community.

2 Inclusive Excellence

- **Commitment to Inclusive Excellence:** Inclusive excellence is a continual process of self-examination and learning within universities. It requires embracing a growth mindset, rejecting deficit-based approaches, and ensuring that everyone in the institution takes ownership of it.
- **Effects of Inclusive Excellence:** Embracing inclusive excellence creates an inclusive ecosystem where all members feel valued, fostering innovation, transparency, and trust. It benefits both research and teaching by tapping into the creativity and diversity within the university ecosystem.
- **Preconditions of Inclusive Excellence:** Cultivating inclusive excellence requires a clear vision, strong leadership but with shared ownership, readiness, transparent and inclusive communication, resilience, sustainability, capacity building, and ongoing evaluation. These elements are essential for institutional sustainability and growth.
- **Diversity ≠ Inclusion:** While diversity enhances creativity and innovation, it is not synonymous with inclusion. Inclusion is necessary to fully leverage the benefits of diversity and create an environment where everyone's contributions are valued. We need to reflect, reframe, and rethink our university ecosystems placing emphasis on inclusive mentorship and leadership.

3 Equity in Education

Kathy emphasised that equity is all about ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential, which means that universities must examine and remove barriers that preclude them from doing so. This is crucial to retaining students in certain disciplines and addressing disparities that aren't based on motivation or ability, but on the structure of teaching, the institutional climate, and implicit bias.

4 Case Study on Values Affirmation Intervention

Kathy shared about how a psychological intervention that incorporated a very simple "brief writing exercise" can affirm personal values and positively impact underrepresented groups in education, closing performance gaps caused by stereotype threats. This illustrates the role universities play in supporting students beyond academic teaching; and emphasises the implementation of such innovative interventions require a university ecosystem that fosters guidance, trust, transparency and above all commitment and support from leadership, without which an institutional stance of "inclusive excellence" can become another term in vision statements.

5 Inclusive Leadership & Core Values

Inclusive leadership emphasises the need for dialogue over debate, nurturing the ability to engage in collaborative and inclusive conversations. It also highlights the importance of core values and ethics, as well as the shift from mentor-centric to mentee-centric mentorship for more effective guidance.

Peer Mentoring Circles (PMCs)

PMC is a unique support system for OIST's staff, faculty, postdocs, and students to exchange professional experiences, challenges, interests, and goals for the purpose of sharing and discussing strategies or resources, and creating a collegial, supportive community to mentor and learn from each other.

Salient features of PMCs

- Serves as monthly support groups.
- No more than six participants.
- Self-running with participants collectively deciding on facilitators and objectives.
- Flexible structure allowing participants to choose themes that align with their own interests and goals.
- Focuses on specific, relevant themes (e.g., female leadership, well-being, general diversity, and inclusion) keeps members engaged.
- Addresses power imbalances as members of similar rank gather to connect, provide mutual assistance, and share experiences.
- Encourages collective decision-making, goal setting, and even the possibility of inviting external speakers for extended learning opportunities.
- Fosters a sense of unity and shared purpose among members.
- Helps members identify and leverage their strengths, further enhancing their commitment to the program.



Sustaining PMCs relies on multiple factors:
sense of relatedness, belonging, the small size, and accountability.

The success and effectiveness of PMCs is evaluated through focus group sessions at the end of the program, and the findings consistently revealed that the PMC members develop a strong sense of belonging and identity because of their involvement in PMCs.

This system allows OIST to address the unique needs and challenges of its academic environment, providing a strong support network for both staff and faculty.