

Big 10 Women's Mentoring and Networking Workshop



Critical Friends Process & Guidelines

1. **Confidentiality.** All discussions within Critical Friends should be kept *confidential* and not discussed with other participants, colleagues, students, etc. It is a small world, however, and so presenters may wish to withhold names and refer to Professor Smith and student John Doe, etc.
2. **Process.** There are 30 minutes, to be divided as:
 - **Step 1:** Facilitator Overview (2 minutes). For each participant, the facilitator should review this sheet. With one minute left in each step, the facilitator should give a warning to the group.
 - **Step 2:** Presenter Overview (5 minutes). The junior faculty presenter gets 5 minutes, uninterrupted, to describe the situation, provide context, and frame the key question for specific consideration.
 - **Step 3:** Probing and/or Clarifying Questions (5 minutes). The junior faculty discussants ask questions to learn more about what has been tried or considered, and what might be possible. Senior faculty facilitators should help keep the discussion focused. Senior faculty can ask questions if it seems that something might be overlooked.
 - **Step 4:** Discussion (12 minutes). The presenter turns her back to the group and takes notes. The junior faculty discuss the issue, potential strategies, and suggestions – drawn from their own experiences or knowledge. Senior faculty facilitators should NOT add to the discussion, but should keep the junior faculty discussants focused on the issue at hand and rein in any diversions.
 - **Step 5:** Presenter Response (5 minutes). The presenter comes back to the group and describes her reaction to the group's discussion.
3. **Nonjudgmental.** The participants should not judge each other, describing solutions or actions as “right” or “wrong.” Instead, they should try to discuss the “pros” and “cons” of different actions.
4. **Positive.** The participants should attempt to focus on the positives, and how situations can be turned around, rather than getting bogged down with the negatives, or complaining.
5. **Situations.** Situations that might be good topics for discussion include: an unruly student in class, disrespectful student or technician in lab, negotiations with a department chair, dealing with administrative or financial staff, faculty meeting discussions and votes, “cold shoulder” colleagues, how to keep saying “no” when somebody always asks, etc.