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Faculty Perceptions of Mentoring First-Generation/Low Income and Underrepresented College Students at Predominately White Institutions: An Exploratory Study

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FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF MENTORING FIRST-GENERATION/LOW INCOME AND
UNDERREPRESENTED COLLEGE STUDENTS AT PREDOMINATELY WHITE
INSTITUTIONS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Title: Faculty Perceptions of Mentoring First-Generation/Low Income and Underrepresented College Students at Predominately White Institutions: An Exploratory Study

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Demographic shifts in the United States indicate that students enrolling and matriculating in predominately white institutions (PWIs) will increasingly be students who are from first generation, low income and underrepresented minority (FG/LI/UNR) backgrounds (Betances, 2006). Extensive research suggests that students from these backgrounds face myriad more challenges in their academic progress than students from majority backgrounds including lack of academic preparation (Ishitani, 2003), burdensome life stressors (Collier & Morgan, 2008) and a lack of academic role models in their homes (Betances, 2006). However, through the development of mentoring relationships with faculty, FG/LI/UNR students can overcome these challenges (Smith, 2007; 2013). Using social and cultural capital theory as a guiding framework, this study explored faculty perceptions of mentoring students from these backgrounds as well as their lived experiences as mentors. Findings support the work of Smith (2013) who suggests that cultural and social capital can be transmitted within mentoring relationships, and that faculty perceive their role as mentors to be cultural brokers to FG/LI/UNR mentees.