BEST PRACTICES
FIT on FACULTY-STUDENT INTERACTIONS
Based upon Faculty Interviews (and research)
R. Ikeda, 28 April 2013

- Recognize that students are afraid: of school, of our courses, of faculty.
- Maintain high standards and expectations in parallel with empathy and compassion.
- Construct learning as a shared adventure.
  - Acculturate students into a process of ongoing inquiry.
  - “We experience the topics together.”
  - “We are all learning; we are all in this together.”
  - “I am learning from them.”
  - “We are all conspiring together to explore this material. We are all investigating.”
  - Create tasks with low stakes initially.
  - “Watch for the moment when it becomes precious to you.”
  - Hook learners into the relevance of the course material.
- Maintain a happy affect.
  - Smile.
  - Make eye contact.
  - Communicate positive, non-threatening messages.
- Be empathetic.
  - “We were all students once.”
  - “What would make you more comfortable?”
  - “Show a genuine interest.”
- Be welcoming and accessible.
  - “You are not interrupting!”
  - “This is your office. I’m assigned this space so I can meet with you!”
- Connect with students as whole persons—as individuals.
  - “I see you. I know who you are. I care about you. I am going to help you get through this class.”
  - “When we show students that we see them as individuals, they will do what it takes to succeed because they are visible. They can’t disappear again.”
  - Tap into topics without tension to break into conversations with students.
- Cultivate ways to be less scary.
  - “Get out of the office.”
  - Create space to share with students (e.g., lab space). Visit with them there.
  - Create space for students to meet, work, and talk together.
- Help students learn to be resilient, hopeful, and assertive
  - Help students reframe their fears and anxieties about school performance, as appropriate.
  - Help students identify and manage their expectations and priorities.
  - Provide guidance and encouragement.
  - Provide access to resources.
  - Provide advising, as appropriate.
  - Listen and understand students’ struggles without judgment.
  - Ask questions. Listen actively. “What are your goals?”
  - Maintain appropriate boundaries.
- Help students to know themselves.
  - Ask students why they like what they like and think what they think. Watch them discover how to be their own owner’s manual.
- Help students to become resourceful learners.
  - Expect students to identify questions that represent the obstacles to their understanding. Watch them become able to ask the perspicuous questions when they become stuck.
- Solicit students’ feedback, and then let them watch you try to improve instruction by using it.
- Share your stories of struggle and perseverance on the path to degrees and career.
- Provide opportunities to interact off campus
  - Class field trips, club trips and activities, and spontaneous trips are all meaningful.
  - Such trips offer myriad opportunities for growth, broadening of experiences, exchange of ideas, and acquisition of new and unique skills.
- Understand that students know when faculty are engaged, and when they are not; when they care, and when they do not.