

Overview:

This NSF-BPE Track 3: Inclusive Mentoring Hubs (IM Hubs) project will support the formation of an inclusive mentoring hub called **Raíces** (or *roots* in Spanish) **Institute for Transformative Advocacy (RITA)** to equip BIPOC contingent faculty in engineering of all intersectional identities, BIPOCx, to form their own transformative grassroots advocacy strategies for attaining equity in promotion pathways and working conditions at their hiring academic institutions. Due to scant attention paid to the lives and careers of contingent faculty (adjuncts, part-timers, and non-tenure track) in fields like engineering, this population is severely under-studied and under-supported. *While not all paths may lead to promotion, we posit that all contingent faculty need better working conditions.* In STEM, most contingent faculty positions are held by minoritized groups (~46%), creating a missed opportunity to broaden participation for faculty and their students. For this project, **transformative advocacy** is defined as the willingness to act on a person's behalf, including themselves, for the purpose of transforming existing structures that oppress and limit the broadening of participation and retention in each domain. Grassroots, from the base word '*root*' or *raíces*, advocates for the inception and formation of strategies and support structures that are situated in the unique contexts of individuals, their positionalities, and experiences. We position that BIPOCx contingent engineering faculty bring *individual* and *collective* power needed to ignite, catalyze, and sustain structural change around promotion pathways and/or equitable working conditions.

Keywords: Transformative Advocacy, Hidden Curriculum, Contingent Faculty, Grassroots, Mentoring.

Intellectual Merit:

This proposal will add to the existing knowledge-based on evidence-based and effective mentoring and expand our understanding on how transformative advocacy mentoring, a topic that is understudied, can help broaden participation and equity amongst BIPOCx contingent faculty in engineering. Three institutions (University of Florida, a Hispanic Emerging Institution (HEI); Morehouse College, a Historically Black College & University (HBCU); and Virginia Tech, a Predominantly White Institution (PWI)) will collaborate to incept the RITA mentoring hub. Thus, this five-year project will include two main phases aimed to account for differing transformative advocacy approaches within and between/across sites: Phase 1 (Design and Development Study; Year 1 and 2) and Phase 2 (Efficacy & Sustainability Study; Years 3-5), guided by the following key questions (KQ) and sub-questions (SQ):

KQ (Phase 1 and 2). *How can BIPOCx contingent faculty in engineering be mentored, at the grassroots, towards transformative advocacy plans for attaining promotion and/or equitable working conditions?*

SQ1. In what ways are *individual* transformative advocacy plans and their implementation different? In what ways are they the same? (Phase 1)

SQ2. In what ways are *collective* transformative advocacy plans and their implementation different? In what ways are they the same? (Phase 2)

SQ3. What lessons and strategies could be learned and applied to other institutions as a result of this RITA mentoring hub? (Phase 1 and Phase 2)

The objectives will center around: (a) developing authentic mentor/mentee relationships; (b) learning/developing transformative advocacy strategies (through individual/collective advocacy plans); and (c) raising awareness for the promotion and/or working conditions of BIPOCx contingent faculty in engineering. Project strategies will rely on evidence-based models of hidden curriculum *rooted* in asset-based and comparative critical race theory professional (CCRT) development and mentoring practices.

Broader Impacts:

Through this RITA mentoring hub, we can directly impact the nation's need to prepare a diverse, globally engaged workforce in engineering and to build capacity of this workforce, we need to not only understand the reasons why there exists inequities with this population of professions, but we also must systemically and structurally tackle the barriers that prevent this talented and underserved population to thrive professionally. The project will yield findings, strategies, guides, and materials for accessible and readily available use through its online repository and chartered partnerships. RITA is expected to reach out to the potentially ~690,000 contingent faculty impacted by inequitable working conditions in academia today. By extension, professionally supporting these BIPOCx contingent faculty will also support many of the minoritized students they support in their courses and beyond.