"Navigating Boundaries with Students" Workshop

We would like to use this workshop to provide simple, basic strategies to help participants navigate boundaries with students in their classes and/or places of work. Together we hope to present some concrete ways of responding and time to practice during the workshop. Themes will come from participants' experiences which may include issues related to student's sharing their personal lives and problems; responding to diverse histories and realities; and use of authority.

Some Thoughts about Boundaries

Boundaries need to be established in order to protect students, staff and faculty from potential abuse of power, authority and influence. While we know this, it can be challenging at times to develop and maintain ethical and professional boundaries. Establishing a strict set of ethical codes seems contradictory, as it risks having impersonal connections with students when this is the opposite of what they need. It is important to remember that through our behavior we are constantly modeling what appropriate and healthy boundaries are; this is especially important for students whose boundaries have been violated in the past or who have not learned how to enter and be in relationships.

Professional behavior should always be our priority. Our personal/professional values, rights, and responsibilities are more important than any sense of need to be liked by others, please others or make a good impression.

When people (colleagues, students, friends) illustrate inappropriate boundaries by asking questions or making remarks about which we feel uncomfortable, we need to look to our own boundaries for guidance. Just as the student’s cultural and social context is a critical variable, so is our own. How any of us navigate boundaries with students will vary depending on our own values, culture and sense of professional style. A keen awareness about this helps guide us.

Be familiar with HSU rules and regulations roles and responsibilities.
http://www.humboldt.edu/studentrights/

Boundary Themes

Emotional Boundaries: We will want to be able to mask and control our emotions, realize when to share and when to hold back. Self-disclosure on our part should be based on the relevancy to the student’s situation—err on the side of too little rather than too much. When students ask us about ourselves, what they usually want is the engagement, not really information about our lives. Helpful to distinguish between engagement and self-disclosure.
Relationship Boundaries: This is the challenge of navigating the level of “intimacy”. Some general guidelines include no touching unless in public or what we would consider appropriate in front of colleagues. Being tuned in to what the student is non-verbally communicating. A general guideline might be to not touch a student unless you are confident the touch will be well received.

Communication Boundaries: How to respond when students share highly personal subject matter with us. Conversations that are not entirely academic should not be discouraged, and, if possible, connect to the content of the course or the work site. Be familiar with the HSU policy on mandated reporting, i.e. danger to self or others.

Expertise Boundaries: Not having the knowledge or skill to deal with certain personal problems a student is experiencing. Listen empathically and respectfully, validating the depth and seriousness of their sharing. Know when to refer to programs whose staff have the expertise to help (e.g. Counseling & Psychological Services, EOP, ITEPP).

Curricular Boundaries: This includes discussing themes of morality or emotionally charged issues that may be vulnerable for students in our classes (e.g. Students whose lives are affected by abuse, poverty, homelessness, racism, oppression; veterans).

Social Network Boundaries: Friends on Facebook, LinkedIn or others.

Sources used:
www.uwlax.edu/soe/field/sti/.../HealthyBoundariesForTeachers.pdf
www.cedu.niu.edu/~shumow/itt/.../MaintainingEthicalBoundaries.pdf
www.jeffwolfsberg.com › Secondary School Counselor