**Title:** Soft-skill development for the students and facilitating culturally responsive mentoring practices for faculties

**Graduate Program:** Prestage Department of Poultry Science

# Description of the Project:

Abstract

The Prestage Department of Poultry Science at NC State University is a fairly smaller department compared to some other department within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. However, the department serves to support the much larger (statewide and nationwide) poultry industry with research, education, and extension. At any given year, 10-15 graduate students with good standing are working towards their doctoral program. Even though our students are from diverse cultural background, currently we only have 1 African-American graduate student in the department. A climate survey conducted last year by the AGEP-NC research program in the department had identified few bottlenecks that impeded the graduate students towards the successful completion of their degree. One key area was under-preparation in soft skills such as writing and public speaking. Of the 7 faculties that participated in the survey, 2 of them felt diversity was high priority while the same number responded that diversity was not a priority at all. Also, more than 40% responded moderately regarding their confidence in mentoring graduate students. Based on these results and discussions with in the department, we propose to hold two seminars in the coming year to help students and faculties.

Proposed activities

1. Workshop for graduate students on public speaking and networking:

To achieve this objective, we will invite an external expert in the area of public speaking and networking for an intensive 4-hour workshop with our graduate students. The president of the Graduate Student Association in our department will be included in the discussion about who to bring as an expert. We will incentivize the participation of the maximum number of graduate students by offering them bonus credits in the departmental seminar course which is mandatory to all graduate students.

1. Facilitator to discuss culturally responsive mentoring among faculties:

To achieve this objective, the AGEP-Fellow with consult with the Departmental Graduate Coordinator, Department Head and the AGEP mentors to identify and invite an expert in facilitating the said kind of discussion in a faculty environment. One of the monthly faculty meeting will be dedicated towards the discussion session.

Both activities will be conducted in Spring 2020.