

LESSONS LEARNED

There was a clear presence and feeling of 'community' in SACNAS that is not found in other meetings.



Most of the professionals at the meeting wore ribbons indicating that they wanted to connect with students and serve as mentors. Student and professional presenters noted the importance of mentorship and constantly highlighted the that mentees need mentors with whom they can identify.



The entire conference provided a feeling of community and safety. It was evident that students need to feel a sense of belonging, and creating safe spaces for students opens up their ability to do science.



Science, the scientific endeavor, and scientists were of course central to everything—but the intentional focus on community, mentorship, and belongingness in all of the sessions made the conference unique and effective. This intentionality seemed to give students a lot of confidence, and this is something worth trying to replicate at other meetings.



Students, scientists, and other professionals were very open about their life stories. Many successful scientists noted that to be successful, practitioners should commit to science that is authentic to them.



There was a lot of sharing of stories and experiences, both successes and vulnerabilities, and how people overcame obstacles. And there was an underlying optimism in all of them.



The SACNAS meeting created a space where attendees could be vulnerable. In many of these vulnerable conversations, students struggling with how to be their authentic selves or with academic challenges noted that they do not want to show their vulnerability because, in other settings, it is often used against them.



SACNAS provided a space where all attendees belonged. Many sessions reiterated that a lack of belonging causes minoritized students to drop out of terminal degrees.



STRATEGIES & IDEAS FOR MSOs

Ensure that all speakers value the importance of networking with students. End all presentations, talks, and professional development sessions with a networking session.



As a part of conference programming, have meet and greet receptions for unique groups in order to build connection and foster community.



Ask presenters to tell their authentic story of growth and development so that students can learn from their struggles and triumphs.



We heard from a lot of speakers that SACNAS was a transformational experience for them—it was the first time they found others like them, met and heard from role models who looked like them, and experienced this sense of belongingness in science. Societies/MSOs could consider supporting more students to attend SACNAS and similar conferences to really benefit from this unique opportunity (also a great networking opportunity to find mentors).



SACNAS meeting organizers did really great job of emphasizing community and creating this safe environment, particularly for students and early career folks, and it would be worth looking to their best practices, code of conduct, student resources, and meeting protocols in general and then replicating or amplifying or incorporating parts of them in other scientific meetings.



Societies should invest in sending their leadership to SACNAS to further their professional and personal growth.



Engage community colleges, as they are a common pathway for marginalized communities to become scientists.



MSOs could come together and fundraise to provide travel awards to support more undergrads to attend the meeting. AIBS could facilitate and coordinate such an effort.

