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## Developing, Assessing and Getting the Most Out of White Advocates, Allies and Advisors: Identifying Your Changing Needs and Responses Over a Career

Kent Wagner

Academic Advisor, Robert E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program, University of Colorado,  
Boulder

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# **Developing, Assessing and Getting the Most Out of White Advocates, Allies and Advisors: Identifying Your Changing Needs and Responses Over a Career**

## **Abstract**

*This workshop focuses on experiences successful students, faculty and staff of color have with white advisors, advocates and allies. Topics such as assessing ally motivation and commitment will be addressed. The goal is to compile a picture of changing retention needs as they are impacted by key, white personnel.*

## **Kent Wagner**

Academic Advisor, Robert E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program,  
University of Colorado, Boulder

This session is based on three premises. First, that people's priorities, needs and agendas become clearer as they grow personally and professionally. Second, that Euro-Americans who play key roles in the working life of faculty, staff and students of color may not provide consistent support for those changing needs and agendas. Third, that it would be useful to those concerned with retention if such changes were articulated in the context of stages over an entire career. My concern with this issue stems from the fact that I work with McNair students of color who are interested in pursuing careers in academia and I want to effectively help them prepare for a successful future. I also want white working class, first generation McNair scholars to develop the commitment, concern and skills that allow them to become more supportive, knowledgeable and effective allies for their colleagues and other people of color. Finally, I witness the struggles my friends encounter in their academic careers, which makes me want to become a better advocate for people of color in the academy. The workshop will be framed by a review of available literature on the subject, which I hope to supplement with interview data collected from successful doctoral students. Topics participants will be asked to engage include issues such as: what are my needs at this stage of my career? What is my agenda? What were my needs and agenda five years ago? What do I expect them to be five years down the road? Where do I want to be putting my energy? What did I want from advisors, allies or advocates five years ago? What do I want now? What do I expect to want in five years? What constitutes effective help at this point in my career? Who were my best and worst allies, advocates and advisors early in my career? Why? Who are my best and worst allies, advocates and advisors now? Why? etc. Notes resulting from the discussion will be made available in electronic form to all participants.

## **Presenter**

**Kent Wagner** is a white male who taught and advised "at risk" college students at Colorado University-Boulder for the last 12 years. Most of the population he taught was students of color. Many of the students had been provisionally admitted to the University and struggled with various degrees of alienation from the predominantly white, middle class campus community. For three years he taught in the Tribal Resources in business,

Engineering and Science Summer Program, receiving recognition for his work in assisting students to write autobiographical essays. Such experiences, along with more formal multi-cultural training and cross-cultural collaborations, led Mr. Wagner to gain a greater appreciation of similarities and differences in the experience and struggles of underrepresented populations at Colorado University-Boulder. Formally trained in literature and possessing a Masters Degree in Creative Writing, Wagner has a strong belief in the power of story and voice to communicate the quality of human experiences. Mr. Wagner currently serves as the academic advisor and course instructor for the Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program, roles in which he works to address issues relevant to working class academics and people of color who pursue careers in academia.