Optimizing Your Mentoring Relationships:

Getting Off to a Good Start

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The Graduate School & Postdoc Office

AAN Day of Teaching and Learning (August 26, 2019)
Goals

- Provide a conceptual framework to support your thinking about mentorship and mentoring relationships.

- Create awareness of national conversations about the science and practice of mentorship.

- Provide tools to support the alignment of expectations among mentors and mentees.

- Encourage movement from mentoring relationships to mentoring networks.
Conceptual Framework
Mentors Play A Number of Roles

- **Advising** - Providing general advice about adherence to rules and/or standards that apply for any mentee in a particular educational program.

- **Mentoring** is a significantly deeper relationship, one in which the mentor and mentee commit to meaningful and honest sharing to support a particular individual. The sharing allows the mentor to develop a multifaceted personal understanding of the mentee and provide committed assistance in order that the mentee progresses toward achieving his or her academic professional.

- **Sponsoring** involves promoting protégés directly, using influence and networks to connect them to high-profile assignments, people, pay increases and promotions.

- **Supervising** involves supplying the oversight, resources and feedback to an individual that has been hired (or volunteers for) a formal role in an organization.

Adapted from “Diversity and Inclusion at SLAC” (https://inclusion.slac.stanford.edu/) ; and Montgomery, B. L., Dodson, J. E., & Johnson, S. M. (2014). Guiding the Way: Mentoring Graduate Students and Junior Faculty for Sustainable Academic Careers. SAGE Open.
Effective mentorship is critical to ...

- **Enhanced science identity, sense of belonging, and self-efficacy**

- **Persistence**
  (Gloria et al, 2001; Solorzano, 1993; McGee and Keller, 2007; Sambunjak et al, 2010; Williams et al, 2015; Bordes-Edgar et al, 2011; Campbell and Campbell, 1997)

- **Research productivity**
  (Steiner and Lanphear, 2002, 2007; Wingard et al, 2004)

- **Higher career satisfaction**
  (Schapira et al, 1992; Beech et al, 2013)

- **Enhanced recruitment of URMs**
  (Hathaway et al, 2002; Nagda et al, 1998)
Faculty, academic staff, postdocs, graduate students and undergraduate researchers each have a role to play in optimizing mentoring relationships.

Mentoring Teams: Informal Mentors; Near Peer Mentors; Peer Mentors; Career Coaches; Others
National Conversation
A National Focus on Mentoring

- National Academies of Science
- National Institutes of Health
- National Science Foundation
- Sloan Foundation
- Howard Hughes Medical Institute & Burroughs Wellcome Fund
A National Focus on Mentoring

The Science of Effective Mentorship: A Consensus Study
(National Academies)

A final report of a consensus study identifying evidence (or lack thereof) of successful programs and practices for mentoring individuals in STEMM fields

An online interactive guide of effective programs and practices that can be adopted and adapted by institutions, departments, and individual faculty members

Available October 2019

http://nationalacademies.org/mentoring

NAS Study Director Maria Dahlberg
What questions or topics are most pressing for you and your colleagues?
Alignment of Expectations**

** One of the most important things you can do to get off to a good start.
Questions:

● Align expectations about what?
● Impact of diverse perspectives on aligning expectation?
● Does alignment mean agreement?
● Do differences in expectations mean a relationship won’t work?
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The HOW of Mentoring

COMMUNICATION

☐ Through what channel? (e-mail, text, cell, other)
☐ Response time
☐ Days / times of day available
☐ To what degree is the content confidential?
☐ Handling disagreement or conflict
☐ Meetings - frequency and length
☐ Meetings (in-person, Skype, Zoom, other)
☐ Meeting preparation (expectations for mentor/mentee)
☐ Meetings - How goal oriented should they be?
☐ If one of us needs to cancel, what should we do?
☐ How should we follow-up on meetings (e.g., summarize advice given/taken, information promised, support offered)
☐ Other

The WHAT of Mentoring

Mentors:
To what degree are you comfortable providing support to your mentee in each of these domains of expertise? On what topics is your time with the mentee best used?

Mentees:
What are your greatest needs for professional development? On what topics is your time with your mentor best used?

The goal is NOT to achieve a “match”, the goal is to create a plan to make sure the mentee gets the support they need (either directly from the mentor or from another person). Recognizing this takes pressure off of that relationship and promotes an expanded relationship for the mentee.

Doing the Research

☐ Methods & Technical Skills
☐ Data analysis
☐ Research integrity & ethics

Progressing In Research

☐ Career options
☐ Job opportunities
☐ Leadership roles in professional Societies

Other

☐ Managing difficult conversations
☐ Managing expectations
☐ Written communication
☐ Public speaking
☐ Work Life balance

General Tips

Mentors

- Be honest about what you can and cannot do - you don’t have to be everything to every mentee (and cannot!).
- Work with colleagues to share mentoring responsibilities and skills.
- Design structured poor...
Mentoring Relationships > Mentoring Networks
Why?

- Diversity of perspectives
- Shared responsibility
- Interdisciplinary connections
- Cross-institutional partnerships
Questions?
Upcoming Graduate School Workshops

Developing Conflict Management and Communication Skills in Research Teams

September 20, MSU Union

• This is an interactive workshop that teaches communication skills and how to use them to set expectations jointly following an interest-based approach of negotiating. The workshop is free and open to all graduate students, postdocs and faculty, but registration is required. Registration is available at https://grad.msu.edu/events/developing-conflict-management-and-communication-skills-research-teams.
Upcoming Graduate School Workshops

Optimizing Mentoring Relationships to Promote Diversity and Research Excellence

September 27, 110 Chittenden Hall

• The Graduate School and Postdoctoral Office at MSU invite graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to gather for an extended workshop about how to optimize their research mentoring relationships. More information and registration is available at https://grad.msu.edu/events/optimizing-mentoring-relationships-promote-diversity-and-research-excellence-1
Upcoming Graduate School Workshops

Optimizing mentoring relationships by aligning expectations:
A workshop for faculty, postdocs and graduate students.

November 8, 2019, MSU Union

• The goal of this workshop is to provide a structured forum for important discussions about the role that both faculty and graduate students/Postdocs play in optimizing mentoring relationships in the research context. The workshop will be divided into both plenary and breakout sessions, allowing faculty and graduate students/Postdocs to have conversations about opportunities and challenges together, as well in separate venues (as cohorts). More information and registration is available at https://grad.msu.edu/events/optimizing-mentoring-relationships-aligning-expectations-workshop-faculty-postdocs-and
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The advisor should determine how often and when to meet with the student.</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5</th>
<th>The student should decide how often and when to meet with the advisor.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty-student relationships are purely professional and personal matters are not appropriate.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Close personal relationships are essential for successful advising.</td>
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<td>The advisor should check regularly that the student is working consistently and on task.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Students should work independently without having to account for how they spend their time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The advisor should be the first place to turn when the student has problems with the research project.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Students should try to resolve problems on their own, including seeking input from others, before bringing a research problem to the advisor.</td>
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<td>The advisor is responsible for providing emotional support and encouragement to the student.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Emotional support and encouragement are not the responsibility of the advisor – students should look elsewhere.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The advisor is responsible for finding funding for the student until the student graduates.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Students are responsible for finding their own sources of funding.</td>
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<td>The advisor is responsible for introducing the student to others in the field, especially at conferences.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Students are responsible for building their networks in the field.</td>
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<td>The advisor is responsible for providing career advice and preparation to the student.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Career advice and preparation are not the responsibility of the advisor – students should look elsewhere.</td>
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<td>Domain</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Knowledge of scholar about current developments in research area</td>
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<td>Technical skills of scholar in research methods and procedures</td>
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<td>Research productivity of scholar (e.g., conference abstracts, publications, grants)</td>
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<td>Progress of scholar toward research independence</td>
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<td>Responsible conduct of research by scholar and mentor</td>
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<td>Education</td>
<td>Didactic activities (e.g., coursework, seminars, workshops) of scholar to fill gaps in knowledge</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Other educational activities to facilitate the scholar's professional growth and development</td>
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<td>Professional development/career advancement</td>
<td>Skills development of scholar (critical thinking, creativity, writing, speaking, reviewing, managing time and projects, teaching, mentoring, leading teams, working with others)</td>
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<td>Academic promotion of scholar (understanding and meeting promotion requirements)</td>
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<td>Networking by mentor on scholar's behalf</td>
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<td>Skills development of scholar in the conduct of team science</td>
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<td>Maintaining appropriate work-life balance of scholar</td>
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<td>Supporting of scholar's exploration of different career pathways</td>
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<td>Socializing the scholar to institutional culture (e.g., structures, processes, interpersonal)</td>
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<td>Identifying a process for ending the research mentoring relationship while continuing to support scholar professionally as needed</td>
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<td>Support</td>
<td>Allocation of scholar's effort to research vs. nonresearch activities</td>
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<td>Support provided by mentor for scholar's research (e.g., space, equipment, supplies)</td>
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<td>Facilitated access of scholar to experts, training opportunities, key committees</td>
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<td>Opportunities to develop and work on multidisciplinary team projects</td>
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<td>Attendance of mentor at scholar's presentations</td>
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<td>Advocacy on behalf of scholar</td>
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<td>Emotional support of scholar</td>
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<td>Communication</td>
<td>Frequency of meetings with mentor, mentorship team, and program leadership</td>
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<td>Topics to be addressed at meetings, information to be prepared in advance of meetings</td>
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<td>Completion of progress reports by scholar and mentor for program director and research team members</td>
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<td>Coordinating input from multiple mentors and research team members</td>
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<td>Constructive critique and feedback (offered by mentor; asked for, reflected on, followed up on by both mentor and scholar)</td>
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<td><em>“Ground rules” for communication (e.g., openness, truthfulness, confidentiality)</em></td>
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<td>Personal conduct/interpersonal relations</td>
<td>Ethical/professional conduct by both scholar and mentor</td>
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<td>Understanding and respect for diversity by both scholar and mentor</td>
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<td>Strategies for managing conflicts in the mentoring relationship</td>
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<td>Appropriate acknowledgement of one another's contributions to shared projects</td>
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*CTSA, Clinical and Translational Science Award; KL2, mentored clinical/translational research career development program.

*“Drawn from review of the AAMC’s “Compact Between Postdoctoral Appointees and Their Mentors” and mentoring contracts or agreements (with permission): Columbia University; Mayo Clinic; University of Alabama at Birmingham; University of California at Davis; University of North Carolina; University of Rochester; Vanderbilt University.*

Table 3. Types of expectations included in mentoring contracts and agreements.