Mentoring – Focus on Trainees

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Mentoring is a two way street

• Both the mentor and the mentee must participate
• Each should be willing to learn from the other
• Each has responsibility

But how do you get started at the beginning?
First: Determine if this is a good fit for the Mentor and the Mentee

• Have a preliminary meeting
  • Preliminary expectations
  • Working styles and boundaries
  • Possible mutual goals and outcome you are working towards
  • Requirements that must be met

• Talk to other people about whether this mentor/mentee is a good choice

• Gather information

• Try them out (rotations or other short term arrangements)
Establish concrete and transparent expectations and accountability

Tools can help with this:
- Laboratory Handbooks
- Worksheets followed by discussion
- Questionnaires followed by discussion
- Written agreements or compacts or plans

Recurring evaluation
- Needs/skills etc (i.e IDP)
- Accomplishments, meeting notes
- Data and Project tracking
- Well Being
Topics for Expectations Discussions

- **Research productivity**: research plans, experiment design, writing, conferences, presentations, notebooks, timelines
- **Authorship**: policies, timing of decisions, raising questions
- **Employment**: employment hours, absences, visa regulations, funding, time off
- **Communication**: frequency of meetings, preparation for and follow-up for meetings, method of communication (form, style), annual reviews, timing
- **Respect**: responsiveness, collegiality, teamwork, shared spaces, learning styles and identities
- **Professional development and networking**: conferences, department/campus seminars, IDPs, career fairs, exploration of diverse careers
- **Resolving conflicts**: contacts and resources, address power
Mentee/Mentor needs change over time

• **Have a “check in”** at least annually to see if you are meeting each others needs and to conduct a more in depth discussion of status

• **WWW/EBY** both for the mentor and the mentee

• **Define new needs** or new goals

• **Consider peer to peer or peer to near peer mentoring**

• **Mentees aren’t the only ones learning**, mentors learn too. Keep your mentoring skills sharp by attending training sessions and be open to new opportunities brought up by mentees (and vice versa)

• **Maintain effective communication**- consider standing individual meetings in addition to lab meetings, create common understanding of mode of communication.

• **Create a mentorship network**
  • SOT Mentor Match, Mentoring Breakfast, Chat with an expert, Regional Chapter and Specialty Section Mentoring Initiatives
Elements of a Successful Mentoring Relationship

• Fosters confidentiality and trust
• Includes timely updating and responsiveness
• Creates structures for learning and engagement
• Progresses toward shared goals and values
• Builds skills
• Constant re-evaluation of above

The most important element...... COMMUNICATION
Resources

- There is a science to mentoring and the NAS addressed it with some recommendations in this report and related podcasts: the Science of Effective Mentoring in STEMM, NAS 2019. New podcast coming up...

- Many mentoring programs use resources from The Center for the Improvement of Mentored Experience in Research (CIMER)

- Most universities have resources for mentoring with many integrating information from the two resources above and others

- Information I use:
  - I used concepts from mentoring courses I have taken at UC Davis through “Mentoring at Critical Transitions” and one I am currently taking “Graduate Mentoring Initiative”
  - And information/workshops/coursework from UC Davis GradPathways Institute for Professional Development
  - I am a fan of Hugh Kearns and his workshops/info at THINKWELL