

Mentors: How to Maximize Mentoring Success

Set Clear Expectations from the Beginning

- Clear expectations are critical for the success of faculty mentoring (Sorcinelli and Yun 2007).
- At the first meeting, you and your mentee should agree on:
 - Confidentiality
 - Meeting frequency
 - Responsibilities (e.g., mentee will send agendas before meetings)
 - Mutual goals and expectations (e.g., you will review scholarly writing)
 - Concrete measures of progress and success (e.g., mentee submitting a grant proposal) (Zerzan et al. 2009).

You may want to establish a [mentoring agreement](#).

Allow and Expect Mentee to “Manage Up”

- The mentee should primarily direct and manage the work of the relationship to increase success. Mentees should plan the agenda, express what they need in a direct manner, stick to a schedule of goals, and request feedback (Chin et al. 1998; Ramanan et al. 2002; Zerzan et al. 2009). You as the mentor can then target your feedback, thus increasing efficiency and impact.
- One possible structure for each meeting:
 - Mentee informs you of progress since your last meeting and discusses any challenges encountered, and you offer feedback on progress and tips to address their challenges
 - Discuss 2-3 additional topics mentee wishes to address
 - Mentee plans goals to accomplish before the next meeting (Rabatin 2004; Zerzan et al. 2009)
- Ask for feedback on your role (Feldman 2010). What is and is not working well for the mentee?

With managing up, mentors can target help and mentees get exactly what they need, thereby increasing success, satisfaction, and efficiency (Zerzan et al. 2009).

Provide Effective & Timely Feedback

- Encourage your mentee to create an Individual Development Plan (IDP) (see example [here](#)) so they approach their career strategically, including their daily and weekly activities. Provide feedback on their professional goals and IDP. Are their goals specific enough and measurable? Are they realistic? Is there an action plan to achieve the goals? How can you best help the mentee achieve these goals? (Feldman 2010). Check in often to ascertain progress.
- Ask for your mentee’s CV and give effective advice on their P+T progress. [One common problem](#) in faculty evaluations is pure evaluation without providing an evidentiary basis. For example, “your research is on track” is weak feedback. Better feedback would be “you have the right number of publications in quality journals at this stage of your career.” Specificity in both areas of strength and weakness can help the mentee plan and monitor future P+T progress (learn more [here](#)).
- Offer to provide substantive feedback by reading manuscripts and grant proposals and suggesting appropriate journals for publication (Detsky and Baerlocher 2007; Reimers 2014).
- Advise mentees on service and committee work, helping the mentee choose service obligations strategically and say “no” when necessary (Reimers 2014).
- Offer to discuss student issues, such as managing the classroom, effectively using teaching prep time (Boice 2000), advising, and supervising grad students (Reimers 2014).
- Provide “insider’s advice” about the campus and department, such as sources of campus support for research and informal rules for advancement in the department/college (Reimers 2014).
- Especially for new faculty, help the mentee budget time, sort priorities, balance professional and personal lives, manage stress, and say “no” in acceptable ways at appropriate times (Reimers 2014).

Effective Feedback (Feldman 2010):

- Focuses on a mentee's long term development and helps them think strategically
- Focuses on *specific* behaviors
- Is offered in a timely manner
- Emphasizes strategies and solutions
- Offers both praise (strengths and assets) and constructive feedback (areas for growth and development)
- Identifies harmful attitudes or behaviors if they occur and how this can influence others' perceptions

Advocate and Provide Opportunities

- Nominate the mentee for awards and opportunities that would lead to career advancement (Jackson et al. 2003; Ramanan et al. 2002; Tillman 2001).
- Facilitate networking for mentees (Lumpkin 2011), including helping mentees find other mentors since having more than one faculty mentor increases research productivity and career satisfaction (Peluchette and Jeanquart 2000; van Emmerick 2004).
- Advocate for your mentees in your department, college and University.
- Look for opportunities to showcase your mentee's work, formally and informally (Reimers 2014).

Good Mentors:

- Are accessible and available. Physical and emotional accessibility is the key indicator of success or failure in a faculty mentoring relationship (Cawyer et al. 2002). Availability is the standout quality appreciated by the mentees (Detsky and Baerlocher 2007).
- Use a *participative* leadership style. Information sharing, engagement with problem solving, and teaching is more successful than a top-down approach relying on simple authority or referring to "how it's done around here" (Bickel and Brown 2005).
- Provide both professional and personal support, serving as a role model, coach, and counselor (Zellers et al. 2008) who listens, guides, teaches, challenges, supports, encourages, advises, and sponsors mentees (Borisoff 1998; Zellers et al. 2008).
- Develop mutual trust and respect; listen actively (Reimers 2014).
- Are sensitive to the abilities, needs, and perspectives of mentees (Sands et al. 1991).
- Display passion, enthusiasm, and positivity (Detsky and Baerlocher 2007).
- Are aware of diversity issues if mentees are of a different gender or race. See tips [here](#).
- Know that the roles and relationship will change as the mentee grows (Detsky and Baerlocher 2007).

A case study of faculty found that a mentor's physical and emotional accessibility is the key indicator of success or failure in a mentoring relationship (Cawyer et al. 2002).

Avoid Common Mentoring Pitfalls

- Don't be disappointed if mentees don't always follow your advice. A good mentoring relationship is one in which both feel free to give honest advice without insistence to accept it (Lee et al. 2006).
- Balance direction while encouraging self-direction (Detsky and Baerlocher 2007). "Over-mentoring" is easy to do for well-meaning mentors, in which mentors see their own career as a template for success and push the mentee to follow in their footsteps rather than building their own career trajectory (Reimers 2014). Don't try to produce an academic clone but instead help mentees develop their own trajectory (Jackson et al. 2003; Rose et al. 2005; Detsky and Baerlocher 2007).
- If irreconcilable conflicts occur, respectfully terminate the relationship (Detsky and Baerlocher 2007). Negative mentoring relationships can have detrimental effects (Eby and Allen 2002; Lunsford et al. 2013).