Mentoring Up: Learning to pro-actively manage your relationship with your research mentor

Steve Lee, PhD
Graduate Diversity Officer for the STEM Disciplines

UC Davis
University of California

VSPA
Visiting Scholar and Postdoc Affairs

UC Berkeley
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Group Discussion #1

1. What are some benefits from mentoring? Have you had a good mentor, which you’d like to share?

2. What are some challenges in mentoring relationships? Have you had a difficult relationship, which you’d like to share?
What exactly is mentoring?

Traditional Mentoring

Mentee

Mentor

Instructions, advice, etc.
Any other aspects of mentoring?

Peer Mentoring

Peer  Peer  Peer
Any other aspects of mentoring?

“Mentoring Up”

Mentee

Questions, input, etc

Mentor
Based upon original concept of:

“Managing Up”

Manager

Questions, input, etc

Boss

Mentoring up is:

the mentee learning to pro-actively manage their mentoring relationship

Mentee

Mentor

Questions, input, etc
What skills are essential in managing relationships?


Gabarro and Kotter point to 2 essential steps:

1. **assess** yourself and the other accurately

2. **apply** this assessment to develop a mutually beneficial relationship
Why is self-assessment so important?
Because research shows we don’t self-assess accurately

Dunning and Kruger, 1999 and 2003

Recent update:
“We are All Confident Idiots” Dunning, 2014
Why is self-assessment so important?

Because self-awareness leads to better team performance

Teams with less self-aware members made worse decisions, engaged in less coordination, & showed less conflict management.

PROBABILITY OF SUCCESS

High self-awareness teams

Low self-awareness teams

Dierdorff & Rubin, March 2015

HBR.ORG
Main Message

Assess:
- Assess yourself & others accurately

Apply:
- Apply your assessments strategically
How do we assess ourselves?
How do we apply our assessment to “mentor up”?

Group Discussion #2

- Please refer to the handout
- Complete the individual and group activities
What skills are needed in mentoring up?

- **Assess yourself and your mentee/mentor**
  - Myers-Briggs
  - StrengthsFinder
  - myIDP website
  - *seek research-based, multiple assessments*

- **Apply the assessment**
  - use case studies
  - use the principles of mentoring relationships
What principles are important in mentoring relationships?

Handelsman, Pfund, Branchaw, etc at U of WI

*Entering Mentoring and Entering Research*

- Communication
- Aligning expectations
- Assessing understanding
- Ethics
- Addressing equity and inclusion
- Fostering independence
- Promoting professional development
Mentoring up includes:

**Acting with confidence & Treating with respect**

- actively engage with your mentor
- seek to understand your mentor’s expectations
- communicate your goals and expectations
- actively listen
- practice “follow-ship”
- determine and fulfill your responsibilities
- adapt to your mentor’s needs
Mentoring up is **NOT**

- Manipulating your mentor
- False-flattery
Mentoring up includes seeking multiple mentors

- unrealistic to get everything from one mentor
- seek other mentors for:
  - different research areas & professional interests
  - career planning, networking, & info interviews
  - internal and external to your institution
  - feedback on papers & presentations
  - emotional support, etc
Mentoring relationships evolve
Mentee becomes more engaged and independent

Your relationship is not static

Mentor's Contribution

Mentee's Contribution

Progress
Mentoring relationships evolve
Mentee becomes more engaged and independent

This is a more realistic graph

Mentor's Contribution

Mentee's Contribution

mentor busy writing proposal
mentee works on publication

Progress

mentor micromanages
Mentoring relationships evolve

Mentors/mentees can become peer mentors

Past

Supervisor: Steve

Grad Student Researcher: Kathy

Current

Peer: Steve

Peer: Kathy
Director of Strategic Initiatives & Research at AISES
What are your needs as a mentee?

A Gallup survey of 10,000 people asked:

- What leader has the most positive influence in your daily life?
- List 3 words that best describe what this person contributes to your life.

**Followers’ Four Basic Needs:**

**Trust**
- honesty, integrity, respect

**Compassion**
- caring, friendship, happiness, love

**Stability**
- security, strength, support, peace

**Hope**
- direction, faith, guidance, initiating
Assess your expectations in mentoring relationships

- See handout: “Questionnaire for Aligning Expectations in New Mentoring Relationships”
  - complete and share responses with peers
- Consider asking your mentor to complete this separately, and comparing responses
- Consider using this questionnaire when you mentor others
We always need mentors in all stages of our lives.

As we learn how to mentor up, we also learn how to mentor others, and create a supportive community.
Thanks for your participation!

What from this session has helped?

What action items will you do?

Do you have any remaining questions?
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Steve Lee, PhD  
stevelee@ucdavis.edu  
University of California, Davis  
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Group Discussion #2  

A. Individual Activity, adapted Myers-Briggs test for introverts/extroverts <www.humanmetrics.com>  
   ○ Select the answer that more accurately reflects your preferred behavior.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>✓</td>
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</table>

✓ You enjoy having a wide circle of acquaintances.  
✓ You’re usually the first to react to sudden events and surprises.  
✓ You easily tell new people about yourself.  
✓ You spend your leisure actively socializing with groups of people, attending parties, shopping, etc.  
✓ You rapidly get involved in the social life of a new workplace.  
✓ The more people with whom you speak, the better you feel.  
✓ It is easy for you to speak loudly.  
✓ You enjoy being at the center of events in which other people are directly involved.  
✓ You feel at ease in a crowd.  
✓ It is easy for you to communicate in social situations.  

Totals  

○ Scoring: add up the number of statements with which you answered "Yes" and "No". Extroverts will tend to answer Yes to most of these statements, and Introverts will tend to answer No.  

Success Types by John Pelley <http://www.ttuhsce.edu/SQM/success/>  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Well-developed type skills</th>
<th>Underdeveloped type skills</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>Introversion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active approach</td>
<td>Reflective approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring breadth</td>
<td>Bring depth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**What the Types Can Offer Each Other**

**EXTRAVERTS**
- Provide the outwardly directed energy needed to move into action
- Offer responsiveness to what is going on in the environment
- Have a natural inclination to converse and to network

**INTROVERTS**
- Provide the inwardly directed energy needed for focused reflection
- Offer stability from attending to deep ideas, and listening to others
- Have a natural tendency to think and work alone

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**B. Group Activity with Case Study #1:** Please read the case study and answer the questions.

- Joseph has been feeling intimidated and overwhelmed with his research professor, and isn’t sure how to improve his communications with her. He had heard many wonderful and positive things about Professor Mason, and so had wanted to join her lab. She publishes regularly in high impact journals, and recently won a couple of prestigious awards for her research and teaching. So when Joseph applied to join her lab, he was pleasantly surprised when she welcomed him into her group.

- But Joseph has been feeling overwhelmed during his weekly individual meetings with her. She is very friendly and talkative, and even shares personal stories about raising her young kids. But she also gives him so many ideas, resources, and tasks to complete, that he has trouble writing down everything in his notes. He’s constantly afraid that he’s forgotten to record important tasks or items to complete. She also regularly spouts many terms and acronyms that are unfamiliar to him, but he’s afraid to ask too many questions because he doesn’t want to look incompetent and because she seems so busy with her own work and travel. He’s thought about asking if he could audio-record their meetings, but he’s concerned that she might think it would a little awkward, or an invasion of her privacy to record their individual meetings. He’s also thought about asking for advice from other members of the research group, but they all seem to have their cliques and he’s feeling too timid to approach others. His past research group had felt more comfortable with only 8 members, but his new group has 27 members and feels so big to him.

- Questions:
  1) Introduce yourselves in your group, and share your results from the test for introverts and extroverts. Do you think the test and the tables helped you to determine or confirm your preference to be an introvert or extrovert?

  2) From the case study, do you think Joseph is an introvert or extrovert? Is the professor an introvert or extrovert? Explain your reasoning.

  3) What exactly are the problems that Joseph is facing with his research mentor?

  4) How might Joseph adapt, to work better with his professor? How can he improve his understanding of her expectations for his research?

     a) How might Joseph use his strengths to help resolve his problem?

     b) What underdeveloped type skills (see tables above for some ideas) might Joseph need to address as he considers how to improve the communication with his professor?

  5) How would this relationship differ if Joseph and his professor had their opposite types? This is a tough, but important question! Think carefully and hard.

     a) What conflicts and miscommunications might arise? How would they address their conflicts?
C. More case studies for group discussion

2. International lab (from Steve Lee)
   - Harry has just joined a lab group, where all of the other members of the lab are international and usually speak their native language. They are friendly to Harry, but he’s been feeling left out of informal conversations and at their social activities because they often speak their native language. The PI is also from the same country and often speaks their native language.
     ○ What would you do if you were in Harry’s shoes?

3. Possible romantic relationships in the lab (from Steve Lee)
   - Mary has always been a hard worker. She works 16-hr days for 6 days a week, and even puts in 8 hrs on Sundays. Recently, the relationship with one of her labmates has gotten sour. Her labmate has not been contributing her fair share of the group’s responsibilities and has not been responsive when Mary asked her for help.
   - Mary also noticed that her labmate and the PI has been spending a lot of time together in the lab and outside in social activities. She hears rumors that the PI is dating her labmate, and so is hesitant to approach the PI with this problem.
     ○ What would you do in this situation?

4. Wendy and her awkward professor (from Steve Lee)
   - Wendy has recently joined a lab, and started to observe how her professor interacts with others. She notices that the professor seems really comfortable with other men, but seems to be more awkward with the women students and colleagues. She hears indirectly that he often has “urinal conversations” with the men in his group, so that they seem to benefit from more mentoring and guidance than what she receives. Wendy wants to develop a stronger relationship with her research mentor, but doesn’t want to send wrong signals, given his awkward behavior around women.
     ○ How might you handle this situation? What would you recommend for Wendy?

5. Co-Mentors (from Beyond Mentoring by McGee, Lee, Pfund, and Branchaw)
   - Tom is thinking of collaborating with two professors for his postdoc. Both faculty members are leaders in their fields, so he’s excited about the possibility of expanding his research expertise by these two leaders. One works primarily at the medical campus of the university, while the other works primarily at the main campus, which is about an hour’s drive away.
     ○ What are some benefits of working with two mentors? What can he do to make sure to take advantage of these benefits?
     ○ What are some potential pitfalls of working with two mentors? What are some things he should do to avoid these pitfalls?

6. Lack of independence (from Steve Lee)
   - Jennifer began working in her new research group with high hopes. She had initial great meetings with her PI, who seemed friendly and willing to listen to her ideas and hopes for her project. She also heard from the grad students in the group that they were very happy with his mentorship style.
   - However, as she began working under her research mentor, she began to notice that he would brush off her ideas, and insist that she work on his ideas and plans. She brought up her ideas for what she had hoped to focus on multiple times, but he kept insisting that she first work on an initial project. Jennifer’s initial project has started to grow and take longer than they both first anticipated, and he has started talking about it becoming her main project for her whole appointment.
   - Jen began to notice that the grad students basically did what they were told to do, and were not given much independence in their research projects. She had been accustomed to having much more freedom from her past graduate research mentor, so she is finding it difficult to follow her new research mentor.
     ○ What would you do in this situation?
**Questionnaire for Aligning Expectations in New Mentoring Relationships**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor / Supervisor:</th>
<th>Mentee / Student:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time Period:</td>
<td>Dept / Program:</td>
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</table>

Read each pair of statements below and then estimate your position on each. For example with statement 1, if you believe strongly that the ideal mentoring relationship focuses on the research interests, you would circle “1” or “2”. But if you think that the ideal relationship focuses on the working and communication styles, you would circle “3” or “4”.

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<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>For an ideal mentoring relationship, it's important for both to have similar research interests</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>When choosing research topics, I prefer to work on projects with potential for high payoffs, even if it involves high risk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>It is the mentor's responsibility to select a research topic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>It is the mentor who decides which theoretical framework or methodology is most appropriate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The mentor should develop an appropriate program and timetable of research and study for the mentee</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The mentor is responsible for ensuring that the mentee is introduced to the appropriate services and facilities of the department and university</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mentors should only accept mentees when they have specific knowledge of the mentee's chosen topic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>A personal and friendly relationship between mentor and mentee is important for a successful relationship</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The mentor is responsible for providing emotional support &amp; encouragement to the mentee</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The mentor should insist on regular meetings with the mentee</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The mentor should check regularly that the mentee is working consistently and on task</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The mentor should insist on seeing all drafts of work to ensure that the mentee is on the right track</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>The mentor should assist in the preparation of presentations &amp; writing of the thesis (or reports)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The mentor is responsible for decisions regarding the standard of the presentation or thesis</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using the “Questionnaire for Aligning Expectations in New Mentoring Relationships”

The Role of Expectations
Aligning expectations and goals is a constant theme in the literature on mentoring relationships and supervision. The expectations do not need to be identical for both sides (and would be unrealistic), but a thorough discussion of expectations can greatly increase the likelihood of a productive collaboration and minimize conflicts. Relevant expectations in the context of research mentoring and supervision can relate to:

- understandings of what research is
- appropriate roles of mentors and mentees, supervisors and employees, etc
- what is polite behavior and how respect is expressed to the mentor
- the likely consequences of asking for help or acknowledging problems
- how the mentee can be pro-active
- and many other issues.

Mismatches of expectations are a constant theme in the literature on supervision and mentoring. To help bring some of these differences in expectations into the open for discussion, a possible strategy is using this questionnaire. This tool has been designed as a discussion starter for use by supervisors and students.

Our experience suggests that the tool is especially effective when users of this form recognize that

- there are no “right” answers to the items on the questionnaire
- responses are likely to be different at different stages of academic or professional progress
- even identical numerical responses can correspond to different thoughts and expectations
- the purposes of using this form are:
  - to structure a fruitful discussion about the reasons why different responses may have been selected, and
  - to decide on appropriate ongoing actions for the current participants and stage

Suggestions for Use
We suggest the following process for using this form.

- make sure both parties have a blank copy of the questionnaire
- both parties fill out the questionnaire separately
- set up a meeting that will be focused on this questionnaire
- at the meeting, start by comparing the responses given for each statement by each person
- discuss thoroughly the significance of each response (i.e. answer what each response means for each person)
- provide suggestions on how you’ll address different responses and expectations
- consider repeating the process at various points (e.g. once per year, during critical transitions of the mentee’s academic timeline, etc)

This version has been adapted by Steve Lee (Graduate Diversity Officer for the STEM Disciplines at UC Davis), which was previously adapted by Margaret Kiley & Kate Cadman (Advisory Centre for University Education at the University of Adelaide). This was originally from work by Ingrid Moses, Centre for Learning & Teaching, University of Technology, Sydney.
References and Resources

**Mentoring Up:**
- Beyond "Finding Good Mentors" to "Building and Cultivating your Mentoring Team"
  o Rick McGee, Steve Lee, Chris Pfund, and Janet Branchaw
  o for the National Postdoc Association: [http://www.npacommunity.org/?page=beyond_mentoring](http://www.npacommunity.org/?page=beyond_mentoring)

**Self-Awareness**
- Dierdorff, E. and Rubin, R. "Research: We're not very self-aware, especially at work" Harvard Business Review, March 12 2015. [https://hbr.org/2015/03/research-were-not-very-self-aware-especially-at-work/](https://hbr.org/2015/03/research-were-not-very-self-aware-especially-at-work/)

**Self-Assessments**
- A free, unofficial version of the Myers Briggs Type test: [www.humanmetrics.com](http://www.humanmetrics.com)
- An introduction to the Myers Briggs types by John Pelley. He refers to this as “success types”
  o [http://www.ttuhsc.edu/SOM/success/](http://www.ttuhsc.edu/SOM/success/)
- A more thorough explanation of Myers Briggs types and their impact on various relationships
  o "Please Understand Me II" by David Keirsey
  o I recommend starting with the book "Strengths Based Leadership", which provides a summary.
  o Buying the book will also give you a code to take the online test.
- *The Seven Success Stories and Your Forty-Year Vision Exercises*
  o The seven stories help you to reflect on past patterns of success, and to see if you can replicate those patterns or circumstances. The 40-year vision helps you to dream of your ideal future, and develop specific goals for you to achieve your dreams.

**Other Resources on Mentoring:**
- Research Mentor Training
  o [http://www.researchmentortraining.org/index.aspx](http://www.researchmentortraining.org/index.aspx)
- Handelsman, J.; Pfund, C.; Lauffer, S. M.; Pribbenow, C. "Entering Mentoring: A seminar to train a new generation of scientists" (the first edition is available for a free download)

*Thanks for coming to my workshop! I hope that it was helpful.*