Being a mentor:
How to be the mentor your protégé needs

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Mentorship

A relationship based on mutual trust, respect, and the expectation of hard work and dedication (on the part of the mentee) and a commitment to furthering the career of the mentee (on the part of the mentor).

Alpert, Gardner and Laing (2008)
What do mentors do?

Rackham Graduate School, UM, 2009

• Socialize into the culture of discipline/career
• Model professional responsibility
• Demystify career development stages
• Oversee professional development
• Assist with finding other mentors
Very different roles may come together

Mentors’ roles are centered on a commitment to advancing the mentee’s career through an interpersonal engagement that facilitates sharing guidance, experience and expertise.

Rackham Graduate School, UM, 2009
Spectrum of mentoring interactions

Mentoring Episodes
Informal Mentoring Relationship
Formal Mentoring Relationship
True Mentoring Relationship

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Mentoring undergraduate students
vs.
Mentoring graduate students
Mentoring undergraduate students

- Course work advising and support identifying academic goals
- Research involvement *
- Support with career/graduate school decisions
- Support with skill development
**Undergraduate students research involvement**

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<th>DOs</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Set up a clear time line for project completion&lt;br&gt;- Set specific, measurable, and realistic goals&lt;br&gt;- Define yours and their responsibilities&lt;br&gt;- Interpret at the level of knowledge</td>
<td>- Place student in projects without evaluating their fitness and motivation&lt;br&gt;- Assign pilot programs or untested methods</td>
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Council on Undergraduate Research website [www.cur.org](http://www.cur.org)
Mentoring graduate students

First years: Developing a coherent plan of study and overcome steep learning curve
Middle years: Challenges of his/her thesis
Final years: Job search and thesis completion
Throughout: Skill development support
Some areas to cover in the initial meeting with your protégé-to-be

Adapted from Rackham Graduate School, UM, 2009

• Student’s previous educational experiences, reasons for major choice/attending graduate school, plans after degree completion

• Roles and responsibilities
  • Goals
  • Meetings
  • Feedback
  • Drafts
  • Publishing and presenting
  • Intellectual property
General guidelines for mentors

Adapted from Rackham Graduate School, UM, 2009

• Be partial to the student but impartial about the student’s work
• Clarity sets the foundation for the relationship
• Share your time wisely
• Provide timely, clear and concrete feedback
• Track progress, set milestones and acknowledge accomplishments
• Nurture self-sufficiency
• Provide support in times of discouragement as well as in times of success
• Be open and approachable
• Share your experience as a scholar and member of a profession
Benefits of being a mentor

Lockwood et al., 2007; Ragins & Scandura, 1999

• Satisfaction and fulfillment from fostering the protégé’s development

• Work-related information received from protégés

• Productive use of accumulated skills and wisdom

• Recognition from protégés, peers and superiors
Building your mentoring reputation through mentoring episodes
Adding to your current challenges as a “mentor”

- Poorly defined context boundaries
- Unclear roles in professional interactions with under/graduate students
Mentors’ negative mentoring experiences

Eby et al., 2008

- Interpersonal problems
- Destructive relationship patterns
- Performance problems **
Benefits of maximizing your current opportunities to mentor students

• Experience managing through influence
• Safe learning environment to practice
• A professional network that can speak about your mentoring reputation
• Satisfaction and fulfillment
• Experience handling challenging interactions with students
Addressing work performance problems and motivating your protégés
Diagnosing work performance problems

Whetten & Cameron, 2011

Performance = Ability x Motivation
Performance inhibited by lack of ability

Whetten & Cameron, 2011

- Aptitude
- Training
- Resources

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Overcoming poor performance due to lack of ability

based on Whetten & Cameron, 2011

- Modify the job supports
- Provide training
- Change the work
- Transfer to another job/project
- Terminate

Performance

Ability to Perform

Motivation
Performance inhibited by lack of motivation

Whetten & Cameron, 2011

Performance

Ability to Perform

Motivation

• Desire
• Commitment

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Overcoming poor performance due to low motivation

- Clarify performance expectations
- Remove obstacles to performance
- Reinforce performance-enhancing behaviors
- Provide salient incentives
- Recognize learning, progress and results
- Provide feedback

Based on Whetten & Cameron, 2011
How involved are you?

Lee, Dennis & Campbell, 2007

Guided independence and scientific creativity

*The direction–self-direction scale*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Micromanagement  Sink or Swim
Factors influencing management involvement

Wetten & Cameron, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contingencies</th>
<th>Appropriate Conditions for High Involvement</th>
<th>Appropriate Conditions for Low Involvement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task structure</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task mastery</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report’s desire for autonomy</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report’s experience</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report’s ability</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of group norms</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of organization’s controls and rewards</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
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</table>
Your actions as reinforcers

Adapted from Whetten & Cameron, 2011

**Do**

- Ask open-ended questions
- Keep analysis and evaluation focused on behaviors and areas under the control of the student
- Ask for further investigation and analysis
- Ask them to return with plans after factoring in new issues

**Don’t**

- Ask closed questions, tell
- Imply that the task is the student’s total responsibility, that they hang alone if they fail
- React to on an emotional basis
- Take their planning and cross out, change, mark “no good”
- Redo their plans
Fostering a motivating work environment

Whetten & Cameron, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emphasis on Satisfaction</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Ignoring</td>
<td>Indulging</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Integrating</td>
<td>Imposing</td>
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Whetten & Cameron, 2011
How good a mentor are you?

Lee, Dennis & Campbell, 2007

- Appreciating individual differences
- Availability
- Self-direction
- Questioning
- Celebration
- Building a scientific community
- Building a social community
- Skill development
- Networking
- Mentor for life
Three ideas from our time together

1. **Clarity about your role** sets the foundation for professional relationships with under/graduate students

2. You develop your **mentoring reputation** through multiple **mentoring episodes**

3. **Learning to address work performance problems** will help you be a better mentor
Questions?

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Resources

• **Nature’s guide to mentors**

• **Advisor, Teacher, Role Model, Friend**
  *National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, Institute of Medicine*
  [http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/mentor/](http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/mentor/)

• **Lab dynamics: Management skills for scientists**

• **Mentoring and Being Mentored**
  Chapter 5 from Burroughs Wellcome Fund and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (2006)
  *Making the Right Moves: A Practical Guide to Scientific Management for Postdocs and New Faculty (2nd Ed)*

• **NPA mentoring resources for graduate students and postdocs**
  National Postdoc Association - [www.nationalpostdoc.org/home](http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/home)

• **How to mentor undergraduate researchers**

• **AWIS mentoring resources for women in science**

• **Influence: The psychology of persuasion**
  Cialdini R (2007)

• **Mentoring international postdocs**
  [http://www.ori.hhs.gov/mentoring-international-post-docs](http://www.ori.hhs.gov/mentoring-international-post-docs)
References

• Rackham Graduate School - The University of Michigan (2010). *How to mentor graduate students: A guide for faculty*. http://www.rackham.umich.edu/