Mentor/Mentee Responsibilities and Relationships

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Geetha P. Bansal, Ph.D.
School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine
Tulane University
Mentoring

- Research environment thrives on sound and positive mentoring
- Way to pass on research methods, ethical and responsible conduct in the particular research area
- Ensures that a line of scientific inquiry continues and progress is maintained
Mentoring helps in understanding and following standards of conduct whether it be in research, business, teaching and other areas.

Mentoring is a relationship of both a personal and professional nature between two individuals; potentially a long lasting friendship.

Mentoring is a voluntary activity, and is an investment of time, effort for the mentor whose interest is in helping another learn and succeed.
Mentor

Who is a mentor

- A trusted and more experienced senior colleague; teacher or advisor
- Sometimes from outside the immediate sphere of influence
- An influential supporter, interested in helping a young professional succeed

Role model, confidante who provides guidance for professional development and training for career development
Mentee

- Also referred to as Protégé or Protégée
- Undergraduate student
- Graduate Student
- Predoctoral or Postdoctoral fellow
- Junior Faculty
- A less experienced professional or non-professional
Role of Mentor

- Provide a “vision” of the project’s relevance
- Help mentee stay focused and on track
- Provide guidance in writing scientific grants and manuscripts, and in oral presentations
- Encourage independent thinking
Role of Mentor

- Be critical but with a rational and constructive approach
- Tailor the individual’s paths to their strengths and desires
- Identify an area that will not result in a future conflicts with mentor
- Be available
Finding a Mentor

- **Academic**
  - Research
  - Teaching

- **Non-Academic**
  - Government
  - Industry

- Discuss with a guidance counselor or academic advisor or respected friend/parent
Mentor Responsibilities

- Respect for dignity and rights of the mentee
- Maintain confidentiality
- Understand mentee’s personal goals, desires and values and not force mentor’s aspirations
- Avoid tendency to undermine mentee’s capacity to make his or her own decisions
Mentor Responsibilities

Be aware of

- Communication skills
- Potential prejudicial treatment based on mentor’s own background or history
- Unfair discrimination based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, or any basis proscribed by law
Mentor Responsibilities

A mentor must not

- force a mentee to do anything that makes mentee uncomfortable
- must not invoke a state of moral dilemma for mentee

Coercion will be inappropriate
Mentee Responsibilities

- Respectful of mentor’s role and position
- Value mentor’s time
- Preparation of questions or topics to discuss
- Feedback especially if positive outcomes
- Be honest if arrangement is not working for you
Mentee Responsibilities

A mentee must not

- create a situation that can compromise a mentor
- create a threatening atmosphere for the mentor

Coercion will be inappropriate
Challenges for Mentee

- Depending on professional level mentees have different issues to overcome
- Balance between class time and laboratory work
- Balance between literature search and research
- Balance between family and research demands
Challenges for Mentee

- Competitive work or laboratory environment
- Adequate guidance in research project
- Safeguarding research project, work area
- Personal limitations of personality, physical limitations, personal problems etc.
Common Challenges

Perceived bias by both mentors and mentees

- Assumption that female mentors have less resources and influence or power in profession
- Stereotyping males as aggressive and less caring or responsive
- Stereotyping females as too gentle and lacking in decisiveness
Common Challenges

Perceived bias by both mentors and mentees

- Racial, cultural or ethnic differences
- Foreign born and educated mentors cannot understand “my” problem
- Non-minority vs. minority advantages
References

- On being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty. W. Brad Johnson
- Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) online access through Tulane University
Contact Tulane University Research Compliance Office when in need of further assistance or clarification of any issues relating to mentoring

- Research Compliance Officer
- Brian Weimer
- Phone: 504.988.1147
- Email: bweimer1@tulane.edu