Mentor/Mentee Responsibilities and Relationships

October 5, 2016

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

- 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
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
- a 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
- 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 their actions and potential effects
- 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
- Balance between financial constraints and professional 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

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