

Effective Mentoring

Postdoc's Role vs. Mentor's Role

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Outline

What is a mentor?

How do you find one...the right one for you?

What can you expect from a mentor?

What can your mentor expect from you?

Mentor vs. mentors

Outcomes of mentoring

Definition of A Mentor

Advisors, people with career experience willing to share their knowledge; supporters, people who give emotional and moral encouragement; tutors, people who give specific feedback on one's performance; masters, in the sense of employers to whom one is apprenticed; sponsors, sources of information about, and aid in obtaining opportunities; models of identity, of the kind of person one should be to an academic.

Council of Graduate Schools

Zelditch, M. (1990). *Mentor Roles*, Proceedings of the 32nd Annual Meeting of the Western Association of Graduate Schools

Definition of A Postdoctoral Mentor

Someone who is willing and able to help you prepare for your professional career goals

Academic/Research Institute aspirations:

- Develop a competitive project to launch your lab
- Develop skills for leading an independent group – grant writing, manuscript writing, mentoring, etc.
- Develop other skills need for personal goals – presentation, teaching or other pertinent experience

Definition of A Postdoctoral Mentor

Someone who is willing and able to help you prepare for your professional career goals

Industrial aspirations:

- Develop leadership skills needed for R&D work
- Develop skills for leading an independent group – writing, editing, mentoring, managing, etc.
- Develop other skills need for personal goals – presentation, business management skills or other pertinent experience

How do you find a mentor... the right one for you?

Where to look?

Individuals you meet at conferences:

- Talk with them
- Talk with their students and postdocs at posters

Individuals who are invited speakers to your home institution:

- Agree to have a meal with them
- Ask if positions are currently available in their lab group

How do you find a mentor... the right one for you?

Apply to advertised positions:

- Jobs listed on websites of professional societies or in Science or other journals
- Have a visit to the campus or lab, not just a phone interview.
- Talk with PI and members of the lab group individually

The Importance of Choosing

A 'bad' mentor can sink a good project...not to mention sinking/delaying significantly your career.

A good mentor can help you creatively and critically think your way out of a bad project, or a bad 'spot' in an otherwise good one.

Support your growth towards your future goals.

Choosing the right mentor is as important as choosing a great research topic.

Things to consider

What is the individual's philosophy on mentoring postdocs? Consider whether it matches with your personal mentoring needs.

What types of positions have former postdocs go into? Consider whether any of these match your personal career goals.

How successful have former postdocs of the mentor been in areas that match with your goals? Some of this due to the individual former postdocs success, but some also to the efficacy of mentoring received.

What you should be able to expect from your mentor

- Clear expectations
- A clear plan for your project/career
- Regular and Critical Feedback
- Accessibility
- Financial support or assistance obtaining external/independent funding

What you should be able to expect from your mentor

- Professional development support
- Support in developing professional networks
- Personal interest in and support for your self-defined goals
- Respect as a colleague

What your mentor should be able to expect from you

- Clear expectations about your role in his or her team and what you desire/expect from the mentoring relationship
- Hard work / contribute to productivity
- Responsible conduct of your research
- Honest and open communication
- Engage both your mentor and lab colleagues – i.e., be a good lab citizen

What your mentor should be able to expect from you

- Being proactive about your career goals and future directions
- Self-awareness about strengths and weaknesses and ability to receive and productively respond to constructive criticism

Mentor vs. mentors

Mentors are not one size fits all

You are more likely to have a number of mentors with different areas of expertise, different roles, etc. than a single mentor

- * academic and disciplinary knowledge
- * professional mentoring
(i.e. balance, writing, service, etc.)
- * personal
(i.e. similar life issues, etc.)



Outcomes of Effective Mentoring

1. You grow in your disciplinary knowledge, independence as an effective researcher and as a professional.
2. You build an inner circle to draw upon as you move toward a permanent career, but also as you progress through distinct stages of your career.
3. You should be in a position to mentor someone else – based on both the good and bad things you have learned while being mentored.