Developing Professional Mentor Relationships

Students with good mentors are more likely to have productive, distinguished, and ethical careers that reflect credit on the mentors and enrich the discipline. Effective mentoring helps to ensure the quality of research, scholarship and teaching well into the future. Topics that will be covered in this session are:

- What is a mentor?
- How to find a mentor
- Steps to mentorship
- Faculty challenges
- Establishing the relationship
- Mentee responsibilities

**What is a Mentor?**
A mentor is not necessarily an academic advisor, but more of a person that engages in an interpersonal and professional relationship with a student and takes an interest in developing another’s career, advancing academic and professional goals. A mentor can also support advancement in:

- Research
- Conferences
- Publications
- Pedagogy
- Grant Writing

**How to Find a Mentor**
To find a mentor, explore your institution and consult with faculty, friends, colleagues, and even post-docs. When looking for a mentor, determine your personal, academic, and professional needs:

- What are my objectives?
- What types of training?
- What are my strengths?
- What skills need to be developed?
- What kinds of research or projects will engage?
- Independent vs. team work?
- What career do I want?

The best way to search out a mentor is to register for courses taught by specific (preferred) faculty so that you can make yourself known. In addition, identify a professional network or mentoring team with one primary and 2-3 secondary members. Your team can be your safety net. Look for team members inside and outside the institution.

**Faculty Challenges**
Keep in mind that faculty at a research institution have a number of responsibilities outside the classroom, including advising other students, sitting on or chairing committees, conducting their own research and publishing, and developing grant funding proposals.

**Establishing the Mentor Relationship**
When you are in the final stage for selection of your mentor, consider the discussion that a two-way interview. Is this a good fit? Discuss the topics of mutual interests and goals, skills and strengths, availability, financial (grant support), availability for co-authoring, and their mentee expectations.

**Mentee Responsibilities**
In the mentee role, you bear (at least) 50% of the responsibility for this professional relationship. Always be respectful of your relationship:

- Schedule meetings in advance
- Don’t waste time and always be prepared for the meeting discussion
- Have a plan to present
- Follow up and keep in contact