INNOVATION IN ACTION!

ESTABLISHING AN INSTITUTIONAL MENTORING PROGRAM FOR POSTDOCS
ESTABLISHING AN INSTITUTIONAL MENTORING PROGRAM FOR POSTDOCS

Session Facilitators:
Kristene “Tina” Henne, PhD, Postdoctoral Program Lead, Argonne National Laboratory, NPA Board of Directors
Giselle Sandi, PhD, Director, Research and Teaching Mentoring Programs at Rush University Medical Center, NPA Board of Directors

Major Considerations:
• Establishing need and garnering support
• Determining the program structure that works best for your institutional climate
• Establishing guidelines and procedures for mentors and postdocs
• Recruiting and supporting mentors
• Measuring effectiveness
DISCUSSION 1-WHAT IS MENTORING?

Guidance, best practices, sound advice, guiding through institution, more than one mentor

Resource for career development

Challenge the individual

Facilitating growth

Driven by PDO or PI?

Formal or informal (no big M!)

Relationship—bidirectional communication, mutual respect, knowledge transfer
DISCUSSION 2—WHO IS A MENTOR?

 Depends on roles:
 PI—scientific mentor, challenges—sometimes mentor should not be the PI
 PI may feel threatened by external mentors—institutional programs can mitigate
 Peer groups, senior postdocs, alumni in other careers
 Someone in network in the desired career path
 PI—need to understand the different mentoring needs and functions—one person cannot fulfill all needs
 Mentors should be aware of all the resources and information applied to the postdocs
 Learning communities, faculty, peer learning communities
 Mentor may work one-on-one, Postdoc needs transitioning into next phase
 Postdocs can be mentors to grad and UG students
DETERMINING THE PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Group Discussion:

• Would your postdocs and mentors respond more to an informal or formalized program?

• What are the benefits and challenges of informal and formal programs?

• How many mentors will you need?

• How will you recruit mentors?

• How will you promote the program to postdocs and encourage participation?
DISCUSSION 3: PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Formal program—participation may be difficult; what incentives can you provide? What’s the motivation for someone to be a mentor?

Depends on culture of organization. Formal structure may help. Doesn’t have to be mandatory.

Need to have some structure for postdocs to be motivated to find mentors.

How do you know culture?—satisfaction survey; trial and error; anecdotal evidence from postdocs and satisfaction with supervisors; town hall?

Need to build culture of mentoring and eventually will become informal.

What questions should postdocs ask of potential mentors and supervisors? Start at the graduate level.

Structure program to provide different types of mentoring.

How to deal with “bad mentors”. Train postdocs to be better mentees.
ESTABLISHING GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR MENTORS AND POSTDOCS

Group Discussion:

• What is the role of the mentor?
• How will you distinguish between direct supervisor and mentor?
• What is the role of the postdoc?
• What resources will be made available to support both the mentors and postdocs?
• How will you set expectations and track participation?
• How will you enhance participation in “training”?
DISCUSSION 4: WHAT DO YOU NEED TO PROVIDE FOR POSTDOCS AND MENTORS?

Expectations for program

Communication skills, professionalism, giving and receiving feedback, “Crucial Conversations”, listening skills, core competencies, leadership skills, orientation, career trajectory guidance, conflict resolution, cultural competencies

NOTE—The above can be built into your professional development program series, with special invitations sent to mentors as well as postdocs

Facilitate Discussion to identify needs of postdocs and mentors

Provide examples, not just guidance

Training—will you call it “training”

Mentoring plan for grant proposals—benefit to mentors and supervisors

Mentoring Award—provides incentive—ALSO—gives you ideas on what postdocs are looking for in a good mentor

Development plans, guidance for establishing initial plan, follow up/evaluation on at least annual basis

Establish handbook with policies and make available for all postdocs and mentors

Ombudsman

Mentoring compact—between mentors and postdocs
ESTABLISHING NEED AND GARNERING SUPPORT

Group Discussion:
• What is the motivation for establishing a mentoring program?
• How will you assess need in your institution?
• Who are your allies and advocates for garnering support?
• What resources will be needed to support the program?
MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS

Group Discussion:
• What are the expected outcomes for your program?
• What metrics could you use to measure those outcomes?
• How will you gather data?
• What is your timeline for assessing success?
GROUP DISCUSSION 5: MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS

If career-motivated mentoring program, what positions do your postdocs go into? Are they successful in securing employment in a timely manner?

Satisfaction surveys—how well do postdocs value program?

Repeated needs assessment

If training-specific mentoring program, are postdocs successful at expected outcomes?—securing funding? Publishing? Well-received conference presentations?

Climate surveys for both postdocs and mentors—do you see an increase in overall work-life satisfaction? Engagement? Feeling valued?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Arrangement</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>Relationship Driver</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>Career Advancement, Team Mission</td>
<td>Experiences, Advice/Feedback, Guidance, Support, Network, Skills</td>
<td>Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>Formal or Informal</td>
<td>Higher, Same, or Lower</td>
<td>Career Advancement</td>
<td>Experiences, Advice/Feedback, Guidance, Support, Network, Skills</td>
<td>Mentee/Protégé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsor/Advocate</td>
<td>Formal or Informal</td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>Network, Seniority</td>
<td>Sponsor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>Formal or Informal</td>
<td>Higher, Same, or Lower</td>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>Skills, Feedback</td>
<td>Coach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Build Your Board of Directors

Use the diagram below to assess where you have mentors and where you might need mentors. Read the descriptions below and take charge of building your own Board of Directors.
SAMPLE ANNOTATED GOAL-SETTING WORKSHEET FOR MENTORING DISCUSSION PREP
ADAPTED FROM MENTORING-IN-A-BOX TOOLKIT FROM HTTP://WWW.NCWIT.ORG

Goal Setting Worksheet
When entering into a mentoring partnership both parties commit to a shared effort. This form is designed to document decisions you make together about the work ahead. As conditions change and your relationship matures, refer to this sheet to be reminded of agreements you made early on.

In advance of your first meeting, think about the themes below. When you meet, use the form as the basis for conversation and decision-making.

1. Clarify Roles. The role of a mentor is to share expertise, advise, advocate, coach, and support. The role of the mentee is to seek advice and take steps toward professional growth.
   Write comments or clarifications you wish to make about your roles.

   Considerations for mentor—what are your strengths? In what areas do you feel most prepared to offer advice? Are there any schedule/time constraints?

   Considerations for protégé/mentee—are you prepared to be proactive? How often do you plan to meet with your mentor? Do you understand your line management structure?

2. Establish Purpose. Mentoring for its own sake is not your purpose! Your shared purpose is to assist the mentee in finding success in his or her job and to advance his or her career.
   Record your specific purposes for entering this mentoring partnership.

   Consider both overarching goals and specific goals.
   For example, a postdoc needs to conduct productive research and prepare for next career step. What are some steps to get from postdoc to faculty or research staff?

   A new staff member may need to know how to build a strong case for promotion from RD2-RD3. What does a typical strong case for promotion look like in your division?

   A new professional/administrative staff member may benefit from growing a network at the lab and learning about the needs of the programs he/she supports.

3. Document Initial Goals. For the mentee: What do you wish to accomplish? In your meeting, discuss goals and set priorities. You will continue setting goals as you meet in the weeks ahead.
   Record several short-term work goals and long-term career goals.

   This is where the protégé will want to consider:
   • Immediate needs—e.g. new to the lab; prepping for a conference; preparing for job search (postdocs and grad students)
   • Long-term goals—e.g. career goals; leading own research group; taking on management responsibilities

4. Establish Mentoring Timeframe. How long should your mentoring relationship last? Having a clear end point will make you more productive in your time together. Consider a target date six to twelve months ahead. Let major milestones guide your choice, such as a performance appraisal or a project review. Plan a mid-point check halfway to your goal to reflect on progress.
   Describe your timeframe here. Set your midpoint check-in meeting now.

   Put reminders on your calendar!

5. Plan Your Work Together - Regular Meetings. Decide when, where and how frequently you will meet.
   Agree to maintain momentum by keeping to your meeting schedule, but discuss what you will do if one of you needs to postpone a meeting.
   Record your regular meeting plan and contingency plan.

   While protégés/mentees should be proactive, the mentor should check in periodically, especially if it has been a while since you've met.

6. Plan Your Work Together - Informal interactions. Mentoring works best when the participants can interact in an "open door" environment, but set some ground rules. Are impromptu drop-in meetings acceptable? What kind of turn-around can each of you expect when the other leaves a message by phone or e-mail?
   Briefly note your preferences and expectations.

   Be creative—meet for lunch or coffee; attend a seminar or workshop together; go to a social event, volunteer to do outreach together, etc.

7. Discuss Constructive Feedback. In a healthy partnership, both parties are able to give and take constructive feedback. A mentor may give critical input to help a mentee learn a new skill, change methods, or build awareness. In turn, a mentee may counter a recommendation or ask for a different kind of support from the mentor.
   Discuss how you prefer to give and receive critical feedback. And how will you agree to disagree?

   Seek advice from peers or mentoring leaders at the lab if you feel you have reached an impasse. Don't let one disagreement completely derail the mentoring relationship.

8. Establish Meeting Agenda. Review the Meeting Plan Template together. It is designed to help you structure effective meetings and document activity that occurs between meetings.
   Discuss ways to adapt or extend the Meeting Plan Template, and then customize it for your purposes.

9. Prepare for your next meeting using the Meeting Plan Template.

10. Record contact information for each of you.

   Name:
   Phone(s):
   email:

   Make a copy of this page for each of you.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

NPA Resources:

**Mentoring Plans for Postdoctoral Scholars:** This NPA resource covers all the basics to set your postdocs on the right path for establishing rewarding mentoring relationships. [http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/publications](http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/publications)

*LOOK FOR NEW MENTORING UP TOOLKIT TO BE POSTED SOON!*

Websites:

**UNM Mentoring Institute:** [http://mentor.unm.edu/](http://mentor.unm.edu/)

**Research Mentor Training:** [http://www.researchmentortraining.org/](http://www.researchmentortraining.org/)


**NASA FIRST Mentoring Program:** [http://leadership.nasa.gov/nasa_first/home.htm](http://leadership.nasa.gov/nasa_first/home.htm)

**MentorNet:** [http://mentornet.org/](http://mentornet.org/)

**MasteryWorks, Inc:** [www.masteryworks.com](http://www.masteryworks.com) “The Eight Types of Mentors” (2006) *Caela Farren, PhD*

**National Center for Women and Information Technology**—[http://www.ncwit.org](http://www.ncwit.org) Mentoring in a Box Toolkit (Released 2007)

Literature:


