Holistic Mentoring – Supporting the WHOLE Postdoc Experience
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@ Salon 3, Rosen Centre Hotel

Ziyan Bai, Tam’ra-Kay Francis, Bill Mahoney
University of Washington

Case Study 1*

Jason was accepted into the lab of Dr. Weaver, a well-known and well-funded researcher who collaborates with other teams both domestically and abroad. Jason felt lucky to be invited to get involved in several interesting projects. He worked long hours and volunteered to help other students and post-docs. Because Dr. Weaver traveled frequently, Jason had limited 1:1 meetings with him (averaging about one every 1-2 months) but he was learning a lot from the other team members so that mitigated the lack of face time with his advisor. During his second year, Jason sent a prospectus for his thesis to Dr. Weaver; after 2 months went by, he sent it again, asking explicitly for feedback. Three weeks later he got the document back with a few general comments. Jason proceeded to develop his ideas into a full proposal and sent it back to Dr. Weaver. After waiting 5-6 weeks, Jason asked for a meeting with Dr. Weaver. After the meeting was rescheduled a couple of times, they met and he was surprised to hear that Dr. Weaver was not enthusiastic about his topic, and strongly encouraged Jason to move in a very different direction. Jason left the meeting feeling mixed about this new research direction, but had to wait at least 3 weeks to consult with Dr. Weaver again due to an upcoming international trip.

Notes:

* Both case studies are adapted from the case studies in Mentor Training for Biomedical Researchers, manual, part of the W. H. Freeman, Entering Mentoring Series, 2014.
Case Study 2*

Celia is a first-year graduate student and the only URM in the graduate program’s incoming cohort; she is also the fourth URM graduate student in the graduate program’s history. Dr. Crane notices Celia is very quiet and is barely participating during small group discussions. She appears to listen to others and nods to acknowledge her engagement. When she does speak, it is almost always to agree with what others are saying. Dr. Crane did not expect to see this passive behavior from Celia in the seminar course. In fact, during her interview last February, Celia was excited, animated and fiery in talking about her research and the field; she was excited to challenge the field. When Dr. Crane confronts her in a one-on-one meeting (she is also Dr. Crane’s first-year advisee), she shares that she is struggling with the readings and is apprehensive about the small group discussions that are part of the course. She has never been in this type of environment before and feels as though the other students who “always have something to say” are clearly more knowledgeable than she is: “After all, they have all come to graduate school with grant-funded research projects, from larger well-funded undergraduate institutions, and have traveled the United States and the world to study. The furthest I have traveled was to Rhode Island for grad school.” She shares that she feels completely isolated in the program. She wonders why the program invited her to join; in her mind, it’s clear she doesn’t belong here and is not meant for graduate study.

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