Getting the Most Out of Your Mentor

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“Making the Most of Mentors”
A Guide for Mentees

Key Concepts:
• Know yourself and your needs first
• Take an active role in the mentoring process by communicating expectations and “managing up”
• Address problems/issues directly and respectfully
Defining the Mentor Relationship

- Dynamic
- Collaborative
- Professional Development
- Two Way Street
- Personal Development

Mentoring: Advancement and enjoyment of career
Roles Defined

Mentor
- Advanced rank/experience who guides, teaches, develops novice
- Skill development
- Academic guidance
- Research

Mentee
- Active role: plan and set agenda
- Follow through
- Ask questions and for feedback
- Managing up
Desired Qualities

Mentor

• Available and accessible
• Coach & role model
• Recognizes potential
• Provides opportunities
• Inspires risk taking
• Improves
  – Sense of identity
  – Competence
  – Effectiveness

Mentee

• Well organized and takes initiative
• Creative and motivated
• Open to new ideas
• Seeks feedback
• Respectful and considerate
• Knows resources
  – especially other people
Stages of Mentoring

Initiation
- Initially hierarchical

Cultivation
- Interactive sharing

Separation
- Plan to independence

Redefinition
- Collegial relationship
Initial Steps: Know yourself

**Clarify Values**
- Know what energizes you!
- What values do you respect?
- Interpersonal preferences
- Work style: Hands on vs. gentle guidance

**Clarify Your Needs**
- Knowledge/Skills
- Personal
  - Work/life balance
- Professional
  - Networking
  - Academic guidance
- Confidence level
- What do you want mentor for?

**Set A Clear Vision**
- Write down goals
  - Three months
  - One year
  - Three years
- Be specific
- Even if you don’t know – try!
Securing A Mentor

Where to Look
- Target those you know & respect
- Look w/in your department & outside
- Conduct informational interviews
- Ask for recommendations

Common Difficulties
- Perceived unavailability
- Fear of rejection
- Career indecision
- Trying to find “all-in-one” mentor

What to Do
- Be persistent and don’t give up
- Find more than one
- Find junior and senior mentors
Marketing Yourself

• Conduct informational interviews
  – Come prepared (like in a job interview)
  – Communicate your goals & needs
  – Ask questions
  – State exactly what you are looking for

• Be accountable: follow up & stay engaged
  – Ask if you can contact again for more advice
  – Make mentor feel appreciated
Cultivation: Agreement on Structure and Objectives

- Frequency of meetings
- Confidentiality
- Measures of success & progress
- Key responsibilities & needs
- Mutual expectations & goals

Make Relationship A High Priority
Cultivation: Managing Up

• Let your mentor know what you need
• Set own goal schedule and stick to it
• Be responsive and available
• Straightforward, bring up issues
• Directly ask how success judged
• Understand yourself and your mentor
Communication: Managing Up

• Ask directly about mentor’s preferred style
  – Detailed facts/figures vs. overview
  – Email and phone

• Talk frequently and effectively

• Avoid defensiveness

• Think very carefully if disagree
  – Should put forth own ideas
  – Disagree respectfully, ask clarifying questions
Meetings

• Set-up regular meeting schedule
  – Usually 1-2 times per month for 1 hour
• Create agenda for meetings
  – Send to your mentor ahead of time
• Know what is expected of you
• Let your mentor(s) know what you are doing
• Ask questions & listen actively
Special Situations

- Multiple mentors
- Long distance
- Dissatisfaction/problems
Managing Multiple Mentors

• Potential problems
  – Unclear expectations
  – Disagreement or competition
  – Inefficient/overlap

• Making it work
  – Clarify roles & expectations
  – Create good relationship among mentors
  – Complementary experience
Managing Long Distance Mentors

• Potential problems
  – Not as effective as on-site
  – Lack of direct observation
  – Problems with email or phone

• Making it work
  – Establish locally and then continue
  – Clarify expectations
  – Plan for occasional face time at national meetings
Dissatisfaction and Termination

- SGIM mentoring survey
  - 84% unsatisfactory mentoring relationship
  - 23% terminated mentoring relationship
- Most common complaints
  - Mentee did not follow through
  - Mentee did not use mentor’s time effectively
  - Poor fit with work style and/or personality
Challenges

• Mismatch of goals, commitment, expectations
• Reluctance to own and pursue own development
• Reluctance to ask for personal help
• Mentor or mentee can suggest change
  – Depends on style how approach
  – Ask for advice
Conclusion

• Mentees have an active role in mentoring
  – Know values
  – Know needs
  – Manage up
  – Show appreciation

• Mentoring requires time and nurturing
  – Worth the effort!