Myths & Realities of Mentoring

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The topics to be covered in this session

What is Mentoring?

Finding a Mentor

Guidance for Mentees & Mentors

Questions & Discussion
Mentoring is essential for effective team science — you will also need a team of mentors.

Mentoring should occur within your team.

Meet your mentoring needs with a team.

The principles and approaches we will discuss for mentoring also apply to collaborations and team science.
I wish to acknowledge my team of mentors . . .

Luanne Thorndyke, MD
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*UMMS Office of Faculty Affairs*

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*American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy*

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*American Association of Medical Colleges*

Some materials were extracted from
*Mentoring Clinical & Translational Science Researchers: A Training Guide*
My goal today is to dispel the myths of mentoring...
...and replace with evidence-based reality
Mentoring throughout a professional career is a critical key to success.
Many studies have demonstrated that mentoring is key to career success.

Meta-analysis of 116 papers on youth, academic and workplace mentoring

**Mentoring**  →  **Positive Outcomes:**

- behavior
- satisfaction
- relationships
- motivation
- health-related
- career

What is mentoring?
A good definition of mentoring . . .

“Mentorship refers to a dynamic, collaborative, reciprocal, and sustained relationship focused on an emerging individual’s acquisition of the values and attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary to develop into a successful professional.”

Mentoring consists of both career and psychosocial functions

“While career functions serve, primarily, to aid advancement up the hierarchy of an organization, psychosocial functions affect each individual on a personal level by building self-worth both inside and outside the organization. Taken together these functions should enable individuals to navigate the challenges of each successive career stage.”

*Kram KE, Mentoring at work: developmental relationships in organizational life. (1985).*
Mentoring encompasses three areas of activity

**Educational:**
- coaching
- mentee acquires and integrates new learning

**Personal:**
- counseling
- mentee manages transitional states

**Professional:**
- sponsorship
- mentee maximizes potential to become an achieving practitioner

Sambunjak & Marusic. *Mentoring. What’s in a Name?*
Observable behaviors of the Mentor as Coach

Engages with or observes mentee during their work and provides constructive feedback

— provides guidance on research or clinical skills
— gives feedback on mentee’s writing: grants and papers
— gives feedback on mentee’s presentations
— directs mentee to resources
— observes meetings or other interactions
Observable behaviors of the Mentor as Counselor

Provides psychosocial support:

— prepares mentee for a negotiation, difficult meeting or managing conflict

— helps mentee think about career and work/life issues

— guides mentee in setting short and long term career goals and objectives

— offers alternative options and solutions for career development
Observable behaviors of the Mentor as *Sponsor*

Supports the growth of the mentee’s career
— facilitates referrals to mentee
— talks up work of mentee in meetings and conversations with colleagues
— involves mentee in projects
— introduces mentee to leaders in the field
— nominates mentee for awards, committees
— advocates for the mentee
Myths:

A single mentor can serve all functions

The traditional, dyadic, senior-junior relationship is the only type of mentoring
The reality . . .

Mentoring has many forms

You will need a team of mentors
An individual mentor may have different roles reflecting their mentoring strengths

It is a rare mentor who can serve all roles

It is a rare mentor who can serve all roles
You may need different mentors to serve these roles . . . *a team of mentors*
You will also need mentors throughout your life and career

- set goals
- write grants
- educational skills
- work-life integration
- manage money
- negotiation
- leadership
- social & emotional intelligence
- mentoring
- manage people
- rejuvenation
- administrative skills
- intrapersonal communication
Mentoring occurs in many different forms:

- Traditional
- Peer
- Team
- Circle
- Informal
- Formal
Myth:
Mentoring just happens
The reality . . .

You can take deliberate steps to establish a mentoring relationship.
**Functional mentoring:** a defined process to identify, establish and nurture a mentoring relationship . . .

Junior Faculty Development Program (JFDP) — mentors are identified with the skills to match the needs of a mentee

*Based on the principle that mentoring is not the goal but a means to achieve a goal:*

. . . career advancement
. . . learning a skill
. . . completing a project
. . . growing a network
. . . balancing work & family

Five steps to identify, establish and sustain a mentoring relationship . . .

1. Define your needs for mentoring
2. Identify potential mentors
3. Contact your mentor
4. Establish the relationship
5. Nurture the relationship

The same steps can be used to identify and nurture collaborators for a team science project
Step 1 Define your needs for mentoring . . .

- Are you planning a research project?
  - What guidance do you need for the project?
- Do you need help in other areas?
  - Where do you need guidance?

What are your needs for mentoring?
Meet Ayesha Umar, MBBS, PhD — Clinical Research Scholar

Assistant Professor of Surgery
MBBS, Aga Khan University Medical College
PhD (Cell Biology), New York University

Research Project: Role of innate immunity in vascular changes in diabetes

Ayesha needs to find a mentor for her project
My project will use the \textit{in vitro} model that I developed for my doctoral studies to study inflammatory changes in the vascular system in diabetes.

I have some experience with diabetes but no background in innate immunity.

I’d like a mentor with expertise in immunology. Success in writing grants would be a plus!

It would be nice if the mentor was outside my department but otherwise I have no preferences.
Step 2  Identify potential mentors . . .

1. Use personal networks to identify mentors who fit your needs:
   — talk to colleagues
   — talk to your supervisor
   — consult with the Office of Faculty Affairs

2. Search databases for expertise:
   — Faculty Profiles: who is at UMMS?
   — PubMed: who is publishing in the area?
   — NIH Reporter: who is funded?
Step 2  Who is publishing? — example

PubMed search:
Worcester [AD] and “innate immunity”

193 papers on innate immunity
Step 2  Who is funded in the area?

Search the NIH reporter:

http://projectreporter.nih.gov
Step 2  Once you have a list of potential mentors:

Learn more about them in order to make a final choice:

— what have they published?
— how are they funded?

Are they good mentors?

— whom have they trained?
— do you know someone who knows them?
— seek advice from current mentors
Step 3  Contact your mentor . . .

You can send an email but a personal contact can be more powerful; in either case . . .

Introduce yourself:
— include brief personal information & attach CV

Be specific about your need for guidance:
— define how the potential mentor can help you

Describe why you are asking this person for help
— what is their relevant expertise?
Step 3  Contact your mentor — an example

Ayesha has identified an investigator in the Department of Medicine who is an expert in innate immunity.

She writes an email . . .

Dear Dr. Smith:

I’m an Assistant Professor of Surgery. I was accepted into the Clinical Research Scholar program this year: my project focuses on the role of innate immunity in vascular changes during diabetes.

Your research on the effects of inflammation on muscle during diabetes is very relevant to the project I am planning.

I wonder if we could meet to discuss whether you would be willing to help me with my research project?
Effective Mentees and Mentors:
Define the goals and objectives for the mentoring relationship
Agree on the steps and timeline to reach the goal
Discuss mutual expectations and boundaries, ethics and vision
Negotiate a schedule for meeting together

A mentoring agreement is a useful tool to define goals and expectations
Step 5  Nurture the mentoring relationship

Behaviors of an effective mentee

- Comes prepared to meetings
- Respects the mentor’s time
- Follows through and accepts responsibility
- Demonstrates insight and self-knowledge
- Comes with solutions, not just problems
- Seeks clarification in communications
- Gives, requests and accepts feedback
Step 5  What should mentors expect of a mentee?

Professionalism:
— responds to messages
— keeps to scheduled meetings or gives notice in good time
— is honest about needs

Listens to advice (but doesn’t necessarily take it!)

Provides the mentor with feedback about their needs

Don’t forget that mentors can also learn from their mentees!
Myth:
Anyone can mentor
The reality . . .

Mentoring requires defined skills and can be taught.
What are the essential qualities (competencies) of an effective mentor?

Used a range of methods to define competencies

Derived 19 competencies for mentors of clinical and translational investigators

The 19 mentoring competencies are organized into six thematic areas

1. Communication & managing the relationship
2. Psychosocial support
3. Career & professional development
4. Professional enculturation & scientific integrity
5. Research skills development
6. Clinical and translational investigator development

Areas 1–4 are common to most mentoring relationships
These competencies were used to develop a Mentoring Competency Assessment

Validated instrument for both mentors & mentees

26 questions over six domains:

• Effective communication
• Aligning expectations
• Assessing understanding
• Fostering independence
• Addressing diversity
• Promoting professional development

https://mentoringresources.ictr.wisc.edu/EvalTemplates
Effective curricula have been developed to teach the mentoring competences

The curriculum increased mentor’s scores on the Mentoring Competency Assessment

Curricula for mentors in specific areas of research:

Clinical & Translational Biomedical Research
Clinical & Behavioral Community Engagement

https://mentoringresources.ictr.wisc.edu/TrainingCurriculumChoices
The Mentoring Curriculum teaches important skills for mentors

- Effective communication
- Aligning expectations
- Assessing understanding
- Fostering independence
- Addressing diversity
- Promoting professional development
Good communication is essential for an effective mentoring relationship

Identify respective preferences
Clarify expectations for communication, including frequency
Develop an initial plan for communication
Recognize that this plan will likely need to be flexible
Lack of effective communication can derail a mentoring relationship

- Frequency of interactions
- Types or styles of communication
- Make time for face to face discussions when either party is not satisfied with progress
- Be patient but don’t wait....
Final thoughts . . .

*a framework for success*

Know what is **expected** of you
Set **goals** and make a plan
Continue to **learn**
Connect with **colleagues**
Understand your **strengths & weaknesses**
Maintain **balance** in your life
Take time to **reflect**
Seek **help and guidance**
For more information on mentoring . . .
— go to the Office of Faculty Affairs website

http://www.umassmed.edu/ofa/mentoring