



College of Medicine and Public Health Mentoring Program

Guide for Group Mentors

What is group mentoring?

“Mentoring” is a relationship which gives people the opportunity to share their professional and personal skills and experiences, and to grow and develop in the process. It can take many forms; group mentoring involves 3-6 mentees and 1-2 mentors. It is based on encouragement, constructive comments, openness, mutual trust, respect, and a willingness to learn and share.

Thank you for agreeing to act as a mentor in our program. We hope the time spent as a mentor is as valuable and rewarding for you as it will be for your mentees. Below is a basic guide to establishing and maintaining your mentoring relationship.

Some foundation principles:

- The mentoring relationship provides a confidential, nonjudgmental and non-directive environment
- the parties to a mentoring relationship are equal within, and share responsibility for, the relationship. The mentors and mentees should negotiate the operational details of the mentoring relationship in the first few meetings.

Issues for consideration include:

- When, where, how often, and how long will you meet (minimum 4 meetings per year recommended – bimonthly is ideal). Set definite times for the next year.
- How formal/informal would the mentees and mentors like the relationship to be?
- What are your objectives for the mentoring relationship?
- What are the expectations and roles of the mentors and mentees?
- What kind of issues, tasks or projects would you like to work as a group?
- How will the relationship be maintained if any members are away or if meetings have to be cancelled or rescheduled?
- How will you manage online meetings if required?

Types of activities mentees may find valuable, in addition to meeting and talking with the mentor are:

- Working on a joint project or task together eg HDR grant writing
- Asking your mentors to observe you in action and provide feedback eg 3MT practise
- Asking your mentors to review your work
- Remember, mentors are not supervisors/managers – they do not have the answers - the mentor is there to facilitate, not influence.

As much as possible, the mentors should anticipate offering the mentee support in one or more of the following areas:

- Listening objectively, and acting as a sounding board and confidante, to the mentees’ ideas, ambitions, plans and problems;
- Asking questions that will encourage the mentees to explore issues from a variety of perspectives, and sharing expertise and experience;
- Challenging the mentees’ traditional ways of thinking and acting to encourage them to try strategies that are outside her or his “comfort zone”;
- Facilitating the mentees’ learning and development and “raising the bar” in relation to their potential;
- Providing information, guidance, support, encouragement and constructive feedback eg on further professional contacts as appropriate;
- Providing guidance to the mentees on negotiating the agenda for discussions within the relationship;
- Respecting the mentees’ standing, desire to be mentored and improve in their professional development and sensibilities;
- Facilitating problem-solving, decision-making and strategic planning processes in relation to work or career matters;
- Maintaining confidentiality at all times;
- Providing professional guidance, not direction, and possibly including such things as how to manage difficult personalities or work situations.

Resources

“Making the Right Moves- a practical guide to scientific management for postdocs and new faculty” Burroughs Wellcome Fund and Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

“At the Helm: A Laboratory Navigator” Kathy Barker.
