

CBSE Research Mentoring Institute

MENTORING 101



WHAT IS A MENTOR?

- An advisor
A role model
- A teacher
- An ally
- [fill in **your** answer here]

THINKING ABOUT MENTORSHIP

- What makes a good mentor? Examples?
- Am I receiving the kind of mentorship that most benefits me?
- What can I do to help my PI (or grad student) be a better mentor?
- How can I mentor younger students or even my peers?

Getting the most from your mentor: a short guide

A good mentor can do much more than help you with course content lab and techniques; your mentor can guide you to valuable resources, offer you insights and understanding into the culture of the discipline, introduce you to important professional networks, and even alert you to funding opportunities.

In order to receive the best your mentor has to offer, you need to know how to be a good mentee. Sometimes all that means is showing up (actually going to office hours, for example!). You can also help your mentor share her or his knowledge by asking the right kind of questions. And don't forget that you can and should have more than one mentor!

Meeting with your mentor

- Initiate meetings with your mentor; either visit office hours or, if your schedule conflicts with regular office hours, ask for an appointment. When possible, adjust your schedule to accommodate your mentor's, not the other way around!
- Respect your mentor's time by coming to your meetings prepared and leaving promptly at the end of your meeting.
- At the beginning of the mentoring relationship, communicate clearly and discuss your goals for your time together. Be sure to ask your mentor what kind of expectations she has of you, too.
- Take responsibility for keeping notes and creating a record of what is discussed at your meetings.
- Invest time in learning about the mentor's research. Read her or his faculty profile on the department website and familiarize yourself with your mentor's publications.
- Honor any commitments made to the mentor. In other words, keep your appointments, show up on time, and turn in good work!
- Consider sending your mentor regular summaries of your progress (but keep them very brief unless she asks for more detail).

- Always be sure to express your appreciation for the mentor's time, counsel, and sharing of opportunities with you.

What should I say?

- If you are working in someone's lab, there will probably be numerous things to ask about process and technique during office hours. Be sure you approach your mentor as a source of knowledge—and seek explanations that deepen your understanding, not just quick answers.
- You can also ask broad questions about the field of research (such as whether there are other labs working on similar projects).
- And don't forget to ask career-related questions—this is especially important for juniors and seniors applying to grad school.

Here are some good examples :

- What are the best programs for graduate study in your field?
- Are there minors/electives/special knowledge and skills that would be helpful in making myself more competitive?
- What has your educational and career path been like? (You can break this one down into smaller questions such as “Where did you do your graduate work?”, “Where was your first postdoc [or teaching position]?”, etc.)

And here are some more:

- How has the field changed since you first started your career?
- What trends and challenges for this field do you see the future?
- How do you get funding for your research?
- What professional associations or organizations are useful to belong to?
- What magazines, journals, and/or web sites are important to read in this field?
- Remember, the only “bad” question is the question that is not asked!

Don't overwhelm your mentor by asking all these questions in one sitting. Instead, find appropriate times to naturally weave the questions into your normal conversations.

RESOURCES

University of Washington

How to Obtain the Mentoring You Need: <http://www.grad.washington.edu/mentoring/students>

Oregon Health & Science University Advice for Mentees:

<http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/schools/school-of-medicine/faculty/mentoring/getting-started/tips-for-mentees.cfm>