Building a Successful Student-Mentor Relationship: Use of Mentoring Compacts

James J. Tomasek, Ph.D., Dean, Graduate College and
David Ross Boyd Professor, Department of Cell Biology
University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center

Please turn your cell phones and pagers to silent or off. Thank you!
Learning Objectives

1. Understand the core tenants of student training

2. Describe the differences between commitments of student and advisor in a mentoring relationship

3. Be able to implement a compact in a mentor-mentee relationship

One of the most important roles for faculty at OUHSC is to serve as mentors for students and trainees – this presentation will focus on mentoring graduate students and postdoctoral research fellows but can be extrapolated to other students and trainees.

What is a Mentor?

• Original Mentor described by Homer as the “wise and trusted counselor”

• Mentor – more than an advisor

• Mentoring is a personal, as well as, professional relationship
  - Based on a common goal to advance the educational and personal growth of the student

• Mentoring relationship develops over extended period of time

• Mentoring relationship changes over time depending upon needs of student
Characteristics of a Good Mentor

- Seeks to help the student optimize an educational experience
- Assists the student's socialization into a disciplinary culture
- Aids the student in finding suitable employment

Why be a Good Mentor?

- Achieve satisfaction
- Attract good students
- Stay on top of your field
- Develop your professional network
- Extend your contribution
Good Mentoring Practices

• Careful listening
• Keeping in touch
• Multiple mentors
• Building networks

Advice for New Mentors

• Listen patiently
• Build a relationship
• Don’t abuse your authority
• Nurture self-sufficiency
• Establish “protected time” together
• Share yourself
• Provide introductions
• Don’t be overbearing
• Find your own mentors
**Professional Ethics**

- Show by your example what you mean by ethical conduct
- Discuss your policies on grades, conflicts of interest, authorship credits, who goes to meetings

**Assisting Students with Choosing a Mentor**

- Encourage students to shop around (lab rotations)
- Examine performance of mentors
  - publication record (including students in lab)
  - financial-support base
  - reputation
  - success of recent graduates
  - willingness to spend time with students
- Speak with students, postdoctoral fellows and technicians in lab
Mentor as Faculty Advisor

• Assist student with following requirements of degree program
• Planning a curriculum
• Choosing a research topic
• Choosing a committee
• Making good progress – teach careful planning and use of time
• Assist student to develop independence

Mentor as Career Advisor

Two key career questions to discuss with students

• What kind of job can I expect?
• What kind of career can I expect?
US Pipeline For Independent Biomedical Scientists

54 K Grad Students

6K Ph.D.s / year (80% US)

10 K Masters / year

Little / no postdoc (50%)

7K US Postdocs + 10K Foreign

9K Tenure-Tracks

800 new US / yr (14% of US Ph.D.s)

Age 31 at Ph.D. ~ 4 Year Postdoc

25% Initial R01 Success

13% of grantees < Age 40

50% of those drop out

Some Career Paths

Source: Bridges to Independence, 2005
Mentor as Skills Consultant

- Communication skills
- Teaching
- Grant proposals
- People skills
- Leadership
- Teamwork
- Creative thinking

Compact Between Biomedical Graduate Students and Their Research Advisors

http://www.aamc.org/research/gradcompact/start.htm

AAMC/Group on Graduate, Research, Education and Training
Compact Between Postdoctoral Appointees and Their Mentors

http://www.aamc.org/research/postdoccompact/start.htm

AAMC/Group on Graduate, Research, Education and Training

Individual Development Plan for Postdoctoral Research Fellows


Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB)
Other Resources


