

Mentees: How to Use Mentoring Relationships to Advance Your Career

Strategically Plan Career Goals

- Create an Individual Development Plan (IDP) to create detailed goals for a specified period of time (e.g., one month, three months, one year, or several years). This is useful so that you take a strategic approach to your daily and weekly activities, ensuring that progress is made in all areas (rather than research falling off the radar) (Watkins 2003; Zerzan et al. 2009). See the example below or find an editable word document [here](#).
- Clarify your needs. What do you want to address with mentors? Examples include: research (e.g., support resources, methodology, manuscripts, grants); academic guidance (e.g., progress on P+T, departmental values, departmental expectations for research, teaching, service, and outreach); personal (e.g., work-life balance, confidence); professional development (e.g., networking); and skill development (e.g., time management) (Zerzan et al. 2009).

Build a Network of Multiple Mentors

- Build a network to access “mentors of the moment” whose knowledge or expertise is most appropriate to your question or need (Baugh and Scandura 1999; de Janasz and Sullivan 2004).
- Find mentors both within and outside your department, both of which provide benefits.
 - Mentors within your department:
 - Provide concrete, specific guidance particular to the discipline (Borisoff 1998)
 - Guide teaching, research, and service
 - Facilitate socialization into the departmental culture (Cawyer et al. 2002)
 - Mentors outside your department:
 - Provide more comfortable space to voice struggles and weaknesses (Boice 1992)
 - Offer objective perspectives uninfluenced by departmental politics (Lumpkin 2011)
 - Facilitate a wider range of professional networking for mentees (Lumpkin 2011)
- Find senior mentors and peer mentors, both of which offer distinct benefits.

Junior faculty with multiple mentors have greater research productivity and job satisfaction than those with one or no mentors

(Peluchette and Jeanquart 2000; van Emmerick 2004).

In peer mentoring, faculty of equal rank from either the same or different departments develop supportive networks. They meet regularly to discuss issues and challenges they're facing, as well as share information, advice, and strategies (see Lumpkin 2011). Peer mentoring has been shown to be effective and can also address psychosocial needs, increase collegiality, normalize challenges, and reduce feelings of isolation (Rees and Shaw 2014; Smith et al. 2001).

- Grow a network of contacts to find multiple mentors. Meet with current mentors or faculty you know to talk about your goals and needs to get recommendations on who might be a good fit. Next, briefly meet with selected faculty to assess compatibility with your interests, work styles, and values, as well as their ability and availability to address your goals and needs (Zerzan et al. 2009).
 - To increase satisfaction and interpersonal comfort, choose mentors with similar values and work orientations. You will likely feel more supported, while mentors will likely feel more committed (Ortiz-Walters and Gilson 2005).

Set Clear Expectations for the Mentoring Relationship from the Beginning

- Clear expectations are critical for the success of faculty mentoring (Sorcinelli and Yun 2007).
- At the first meeting, you and your mentor(s) should agree on:
 - Confidentiality
 - Meeting frequency
 - Responsibilities (e.g., you will send agendas before meetings)
 - Mutual goals and expectations (e.g., mentor will review scholarly writing)
 - Concrete measures of progress and success (e.g., submitting a grant proposal) (Zerzan et al. 2009).
- Share your IDP and CV with your mentor. Ask for feedback on the feasibility of your goals and your current progress towards P+T.

You may want to establish a mentoring agreement (see example [here](#)).

“Manage Up”

- You as the mentee should take ownership and direct the relationship, which will increase success, satisfaction, and efficiency. Manage the work of the relationship by planning the agenda, expressing needs in a direct manner, asking questions, listening, completing tasks, sticking to a schedule of goals, and requesting feedback (Chin et al. 1998; Ramanan et al. 2002; Zerzan et al. 2009). Ask questions often to clarify, show interest, and listen actively.
- One possible structure for each meeting:
 - Inform your mentor of progress since your last meeting, discuss any challenges encountered, and get feedback on progress and how to address challenges
 - Discuss 2-3 additional topics you wish to address
 - Plan specific goals to accomplish before the next meeting (Rabatin 2004; Zerzan et al. 2009)
- Offer timely feedback to your mentor on whether their guidance was helpful, what is working well, and what is creating challenges to a positive mentoring experience (Feldman 2010).

With managing up, mentors can target help and mentees get exactly what they need, thereby increasing success, satisfaction, and efficiency (Zerzan et al. 2009).

Avoid Common Mentoring Pitfalls

- Common mentor complaints are mentee’s failure to follow through, ineffective use of the mentor’s time, and poor fit with personality or work style (Bhagia and Tinsley 2000). Choose mentors carefully to ensure a good fit, follow through, and use their time wisely by planning an agenda.
- Respect mentors’ time. Keep meetings as short as possible and be flexible if a mentor’s schedule changes (de Janasz et al. 2003; Zerzan et al. 2009).
- But don’t have an overly pronounced concern for a mentor’s time though, a primary reason mentoring fails. You may avoid asking for help when mentors are obviously busy, but asking for advice shows respect and builds the relationship (Reimers 2014). Just use their time wisely.
- Be receptive and respect the advice and investment of mentors (de Janasz et al. 2003), but play an active role and evaluate what is said. Consider advice, but don’t necessarily follow it (Reimers 2014).
- Avoid getting defensive when a mentor disagrees or provides feedback. Take the mentor’s perspective, ask clarifying questions, and respectfully disagree if necessary (Zerzan et al. 2009).
- Build a relationship that goes beyond formal interactions so that you both can speak candidly and comfortably, particularly when difficult situations arise (Reimers 2014).
- If irreconcilable conflicts occur, respectfully terminate the relationship (Detsky and Baerlocher 2007). Negative mentoring relationships reduce job satisfaction and increase stress (Eby and Allen 2002).

Individual Development Plan (IDP)

Adapted in part from resources from Reimers 2014, Feldman 2010, and [UW Tacoma](#)

A word document version for easy editing is available [here](#).

Time Allocation

1. What is your expected time allocation according to your employment contract or agreement (should equal 100%)?

Research %:

Teaching %:

Service %

Outreach %:

Other (e.g., clinical, administrative, etc.) %:

2. What do you estimate is your current actual time allocation?

Research %:

Teaching %:

Service %

Outreach %:

Other (e.g., clinical, administrative, etc.) %:

3. If there are discrepancies, what strategies can you use to change your time allocation to meet expectations? What areas do you need to spend more time on, and what areas do you need to spend less time on?

Short Term Goals

What specific goals do you want to accomplish in the next 3–12 months? Consider all areas, including research, teaching, service, outreach, work-life balance, communication skills, technical skills, and even personal goals. List your goals for the next 3–12 months. Be specific and indicate how you will assess if your goal was met (expected outcome).

Examples:

Goal: Submit a grant to support my research on the topic of X

Expected Outcome: Grant submitted to NSF by the grant deadline of [insert date]

Goal: Improve my teaching by working with the Office of Instruction and Assessment and learning more about pedagogy

Expected Outcome: Higher overall student evaluations compared to last semester and positive feedback from a peer who observes my teaching

4. Your Short Term Goals:

a. Goal:

Expected Outcome:

b. Goal:

Expected Outcome:

c. Goal:

Expected Outcome:

d. Goal:
Expected Outcome:

e. Goal:
Expected Outcome:

5. Do the following breakdown for *each* of your short term goals to keep yourself on track to attain your goals. Research shows that proximal goal setting in which you break up your larger goal into smaller goals enhances motivation, perceptions of self-efficacy, self-satisfaction, and task persistence.

In order to accomplish Goal A, what must be done in:

Three months:

Six months:

Nine months:

Twelve months:

[Repeat this breakdown for all remaining short term goals.]

6. Think about the steps you need to take to achieve your short term goals. Do you have questions about them? How can your mentor help you achieve your short term goals?

Long Term Goals

Think about ways in which you are satisfied and dissatisfied with your professional development at this point. Consider all areas again, including any aspirations for leadership roles and promotion or tenure. What would you like to develop, build on, or improve?

7. List your long term goals for the next 3-5 years. Again, be specific and indicate how you will assess if your goal was met (expected outcome).

a. Goal:
Expected Outcome:

b. Goal:
Expected Outcome:

c. Goal:
Expected Outcome:

d. Goal:
Expected Outcome:

e. Goal:
Expected Outcome:

8. Think about the steps you need to take to achieve your long term goals. Do you have questions about them? How can your mentor help you achieve your long term goals?

Promotion and Tenure

9. Think about tenure or promotion. What questions do you have about tenure or promotion in your department, at the college-level, and at the University-level? Do you have a good sense of your current progress towards P+T? What are you unsure about? What issues do you need to discuss with your mentor?

Networking

10. What groups, networks, or people have helped you already with reaching your goals? What groups or individuals might advance your professional development and help you attain your goals? What steps do you need to take to meet these individuals or join these groups/networks? Who would you like your mentor to introduce you to?