

The Graduate College Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion offers a series of student-centered mentoring workshops. The four-workshop series includes the following topics: “building and maintaining an accountable mentoring relationship”; “planning and assigning a workflow timeline”; “negotiating the mentor mentee dynamic”; and “addressing equity and inclusion in mentoring relationships.” These workshops cover a range of topics from recognizing your personal mentoring style, avoiding mismatched expectations with your mentee, and how to model student-centered mentoring.

We use Bruce Shore’s *The Graduate Advisor Handbook: A Student-Center Approach* (University of Chicago Press, 2014) as our reference text. The workshops are designed to provide a framework for mentoring applicable to a range of fields, while offering a set of best-practices for effective mentor-mentee relationships.

The cost of the workshop series is \$750 per workshop, or \$2,000 for the four-workshop series. Each of the workshops is designed to run for 50 minutes, and can be presented individually or altogether. We have found the optimal spacing to be once-a-week for a month, but the workshops can be presented in any alternate configuration.

I. Building and maintaining an accountable mentoring relationship

This workshop is designed to prepare mentors to begin the mentoring relationship on the right foot. The literature shows that effective mentoring has proven essential for persistence in academic careers, and particularly so in the STEM fields (Valentine and Collins, 2015). Earl-Novell’s (2006) case study found students who finished PhDs in a math doctoral program were twice as likely to have had positive relationships with their advisors as those who withdrew without a degree. Another meta-analysis of research studies from 1970 to 1990 found that the most frequently occurring cause of PhD student retention or withdrawal was either a positive or negative student-advisor relationship, respectively (Bair, 1999).

With the mentor relationship being so important, this workshop includes discussions on the following topics:

- Identifying your mentoring philosophy
- Developing strategies for the first interaction(s)
- Working to set a tone for the relationship
- Learning strategies for managing expectations

The workshop includes the following “active-learning” modules using a “think-pair-share” format:

- Drafting a mentoring philosophy statement
- Identifying and discussing factors in your success

- “Gallery walk”: identifying real or anticipated issues in mentoring relationships, posted anonymously, with discussion
- “Solutions” and “Safe Openers” activity: when and how to address student issues

By the end of the workshop, mentors should have a better idea how to plan for successful first interactions with mentees. Further, mentors should have a better idea of the importance of setting clear mutual expectations and how to maintain them.

“Take home” work before the next workshop:

- Draft items for a dynamic and evolving “mutual expectations compact”: includes mentor responsibilities, mentee responsibilities, and joint responsibilities

II. Negotiating the mentor/mentee dynamic

The second workshop in the mentoring series concerns setting and maintaining proper boundaries in the relationship, setting realistic expectations, and negotiating the academic space (in contrast to the social or personal space). We will explore and discuss a series of case studies, taken from actual graduate and undergraduate student experiences, in which difficult circumstances must be dealt with in a professional and positive way. These can include issues ranging from unclear communication to interpersonal conflicts.

This workshop includes discussions on the following topics:

- Developing strategies for managing obstacles
- Working to maintain a tone for the relationship
- Identifying techniques for offering constructive criticism—and making it stick

The workshop includes the following “active-learning” modules using a “think-pair-share” format:

- Identifying your “conflict style”
- Case studies drawn from actual experiences of conflict (or potential conflict) with mentees

By the end of the workshop, mentors should have a better of what types of issues are likely to arise with their mentees, and what strategies might be effective in dealing with them.

“Take home” work before the next workshop:

- Read “Characteristics of Successful and Failed Mentoring Relationships: A Qualitative Study Across Two Academic Health Centers” (Straus et al., 2013)

III. Planning and assigning a workflow timeline

The third workshop in the series is a practical one, discussing best practices on how to identify and set a reasonable workflow timeline. Through a hands-on exercise in which mentors are asked to “diagram” a recent research project of their own, attendees are challenged to identify the main “parts” of the research process and to recognize which aspects could be given to a mentee and how.

This workshop includes discussions on the following topics:

- Planning a workflow timeline
- How to “enforce” and timeline and how (and when) to be flexible
- Troubleshooting potential issues
- How to maintain structure while motivating your mentee

The workshop includes the following “active-learning” modules using a “think-pair-share” format:

- Crafting a draft “workflow timeline”
- Moving from “workflow outline” to “workflow plan”

By the end of the workshop, mentors should have a better of what types of challenges are likely to arise with respect to assigning a workload to their mentees, and what strategies might be effective in mitigating them. Mentors should also have more confidence in delegating parts of their research and helping mentees to gain confidence in their own contributions to the research process.

“Take home” work before the next workshop:

- Submit a draft of “workflow timeline” for review to mentoring facilitators.

IV. Addressing Equity and Inclusion in Mentoring Relationships

This final workshop is designed to create opportunities to identify, reflect upon, learn from, and engage with the diverse perspectives. This engagement is critical to forming and maintaining both effective mentoring relationships and promoting vibrant learning environments. Diversity along a range of dimensions offers both challenges and opportunities to any relationship. Participants will consider what is needed to foster an inclusive environment where everyone can pursue the highest academic achievements both because of and in spite of their diverse perspectives

This workshop includes discussions on the following topics:

- Increasing understanding of equity and inclusion

- Understanding the impact of conscious and unconscious assumptions and biases on the mentor-mentee relationship and how to manage them
- How to foster inclusive and effective mentoring relationships and workplaces

The workshop includes the following “active-learning” modules using a “think-pair-share” format:

- “Reflecting on Diversity”: Identifying differences between mentors and mentees
- “Quick-fire” activity: “occupations and assumptions”
- Think, Pair, Share: Implications of Diversity Research Studies
- Case Study: “Is it OK to ask?”

By the end of the workshop, mentors should be able to identify concrete strategies for learning about and addressing equity and inclusion; recognize the importance of inclusion to research productivity and work satisfaction; and have an awareness of different mentoring styles and their effect on mentees.

References

- Bair, C.R. (1999). *Doctoral student attrition and persistence: A meta-synthesis*. (Doctoral dissertation). ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database (UMI No. 9917754).
- Earl-Novell, S. (2006). Determining the extent to which program features and integration mechanisms facilitate or impede doctoral student persistence in mathematics. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 1, 45-57.
- Valentine, Hannah A. and Francis S. Collins. (2015). National Institutes of Health addresses the science of diversity. *PNAS*, 112, 11240-12242.