MENTEE-MENTOR RELATIONSHIP

The Value of Mentors

The Faculty Career Plan is intended to serve as a dynamic professional development tool that facilitates conversation between you and your mentor regarding your career plans. It is important that as a mentee, you are clear on what you want your mentor’s roles to be. Here are some valuable ways in which a more senior colleague serving as a mentor might contribute to your professional development:

- Offer you a broader career perspective
- Bounce ideas off of regarding your career path
- Offer advice or help you explore and refine both your long-term and short-term goals
- Help you consider different ways to accomplish your goals/activities
- Provide feedback regarding the feasibility of goals and tasks related to your career path
- Provide a realistic assessment of timeframes in which to accomplish tasks of interest
- Clarify institutional goals and how your interests fit within the bigger picture
- Share professional networks and other resources

Discuss your role expectations with your potential mentor prior to your first planning meeting because his or her expectations and commitments to mentoring may differ from what you need or want. It is important that you and your mentor clearly communicate about the mentoring process and responsibilities to avoid misunderstandings and frustration regarding your career planning. It is also important to periodically revisit your expectations as your needs may change over time. Being on the same page with your mentor will lay the foundation for a positive working relationship.

In addition to agreement on roles, it is important to address the logistics of your relationship. A few considerations are listed below. Please note that this list is not meant to be exhaustive; you and your mentor may have other areas you feel are important to discuss.

Meeting Scheduling
- How often you meet
- Who is responsible for scheduling meetings and topics of discussion
- How you handle missed meetings

Managing Topics Discussed
- Topics or information you want to remain confidential
- Topics or information you do not want your mentor to explore with you
- Topics or information you do and do not want the mentor to share with your chair
- When and how you evaluate whether the mentee-mentor relationship is on track

Communication Pathways
- Ways in which you are most comfortable receiving and giving feedback
- If, how, and how often you want to communicate between meetings
- How to manage any successes and potential crisis points related to your FCP
What should the mentor expect of me?

Your mentor is putting time and energy into assisting you in your faculty development planning. Therefore, it is important that you maximize your use of time with him or her. The more prepared you are, the easier it will be for the mentor to help you and for you to benefit from his or her expertise.

- Make sure you have thoroughly considered the *Self-Assessment* questions and have put together a working draft of your *Career Plan* prior to your first meeting with your mentor. By creating this document, it will likely generate questions you can bring into the meeting with your mentor.
- Review the goals and action plan you have drafted. Have you created goals and actions that are quantifiable and clear? Meeting these two criteria will help your mentor provide concrete guidance on how to be successful.
- After your initial meeting and prior to subsequent meetings, capture any questions or concerns you have that you believe your mentor can help with. Commit to completing what you say you will do or keep your mentor informed of challenges he or she might be able to help with. Remember, your mentor is investing in your success as well.
- If at any point you believe the mentoring relationship is not working, clarify expectations, commitment, and interest with each other.

It is also important to maintain realistic expectations of your mentor. We have already highlighted the value of mentors. However, there are roles you should not expect your mentor to play. Your mentor is not your time manager, therapist, or go between/advocate with your chair. You can gain the most benefit from your mentor if you invest the time and energy into developing and maintaining a constructive relationship based on the mentor’s professional expertise, ideas, and guidance. Accessibility to a mentor and the PHHP career planning tools are designed to help you clarify your career goals and follow a pathway to professional success. Ultimately, these goals can only be realized with your commitment, energy, collegiality, and hard work.