

Leadership I: Mentoring

Objectives

- Reflect on past mentoring relationships and how those shape the way you mentor current students
- Mentoring as an intentional process rather than one that just happens by chance or circumstance
- Realize the impact of conscious and unconscious assumptions, preconceptions, bias, and prejudice on the mentor-mentee relationship and acquire skills to manage them
- Recognize mentoring (and being mentored) as an essential component of your “job”

Memorable Mentoring Moments

Think about an experience that you had during your own training involving a memorable experience with one of your mentors (positive or negative so long as it was memorable). This could be an advisor or a peer mentor (such as a post-doc while you were a grad student).

- What happened that made it memorable?
- How did it shape the way you mentor students now?

A good mentor is...

- Accessible
- Reliable
- Empathic
- Open-minded
- Patient
- Honest
- Savvy
- ...?

Other relationships that can, but do not have to include a mentorship component:

Advisor: will share their career/scientific knowledge

Supporter: will give moral/emotional support

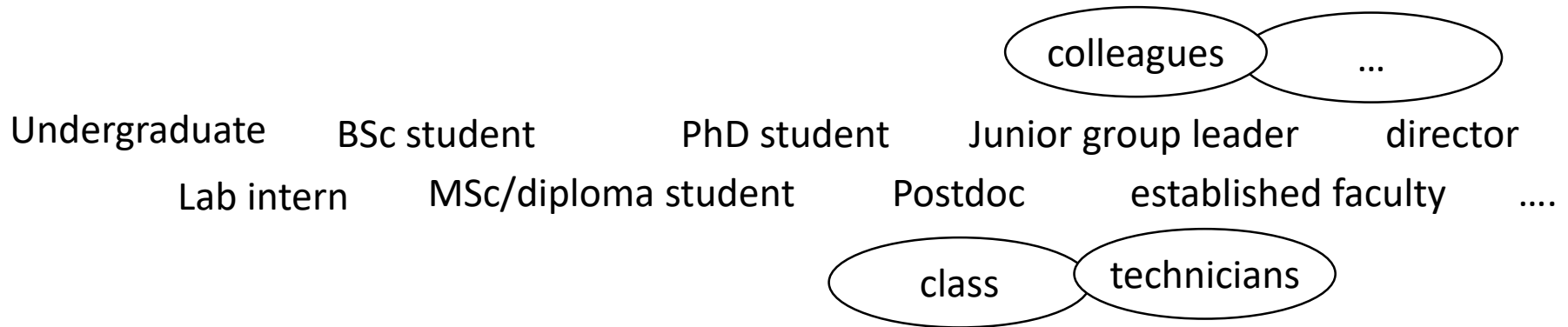
Tutor: will provide feedback on one's performance

Sponsor: provides information about opportunities and how to obtain them

"Mentoring should be intentional"

- Andrew Feig

(Professional) Mentoring Timeline...



You will meet people that are very diverse:

- age
- gender
- research/life experience
- their own mentor/mentee experience
- culturally
- intellectually
- ...

→ Implicit biases are going to affect your mentoring decisions with all of them!

e.g. how you distribute lab jobs and research projects, how you praise/criticise someone, how responsible you may feel for their successes, how you write LORs, how you evaluate students, ...

To assess your own implicit biases, you could:

take an Implicit Association Test



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Overview | About the IAT | Ethical Considerations | Frequently Asked Questions

People don't always say what's on their minds. One reason is that they are unwilling. For example, someone might report smoking a pack of cigarettes per day because they are embarrassed to admit that they smoke two. Another reason is that they are unable. A smoker might truly believe that she smokes a pack a day, or might not keep track at all. The difference between being unwilling and unable is the difference between purposely hiding something from someone and unknowingly hiding something from yourself.

The Implicit Association Test (IAT) measures attitudes and beliefs that people may be unwilling or unable to report. The IAT may be especially interesting if it shows that you have an implicit attitude that you did not know about. For example, you may believe that women and men should be equally associated with science, but your automatic associations could show that you (like many others) associate men with science more than you associate women with science.

We hope you have been able to take something of value from the experience of taking one or more of these tests. The links above will provide more information about the IAT and implicit attitudes; we will periodically update the information to reflect our current understanding of the unconscious roots of thought and feeling.

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

Example: Writing a Letter of Recommendation

- LORs are especially prone to bring out our implicit biases
- Multiple studies have shown that there is e.g. a bias how LORs are written for male vs female candidates

“Trix and Psenka (2003) and Schmader, Whitehead, and Wysocki (2007) found that letters for women did not contain as many “standout” adjectives—words like “superb,” “outstanding,” and “excellent”—as did letters for men. In addition, Trix and Psenka found that letters for women had more doubt-raising statements, including negative or unexplained comments.”

Trix, Frances, and Carolyn Psenka. “Exploring the Color of Glass: Letters of Recommendation for Female and Male Medical Faculty.” *Discourse & Society* 14(2):191–220 (2003).

Schmader, Toni, Jessica Whitehead, and Vicki H. Wysocki. A Linguistic Comparison of Letters of Recommendation for Male and Female Chemistry and Biochemistry Job Applicants. *Sex Roles* 57:509–514 (2007).

(for pointers how to write a LOR, see e.g. HHMI Making the Right Moves;
all text examples also from that book)

Example: Writing a Letter of Recommendation

What you write about a candidate may also be interpreted differently by the letter recipient

“Chris works well in a team.”

Chris could be a charismatic leader, ready to accept the backseat when this is required for the greater good of the team

Chris could be lacking the enthusiasm/ability to lead

A way to get around gender bias: Exchange the gender pronouns into the opposite gender. Is the letter still conveying what you wanted it to say? Would you have written sth differently?

Take Away Messages...

- Think about how your actions as a mentor impact your mentees and be intentional.
- Establish clear lines of communication between yourself and your mentees.
- Be aware that we all have unconscious biases - that is normal. Goal is to not act in ways that are influenced by them if possible.
- Mentoring compacts can help us articulate 2-way practices and expectations within the mentoring relationship.

Valuable Mentoring Resources:

New Faculty Workshop website (talk to Andrew and Rory!) 😊

<http://chem.wayne.edu/feiggroup/CSCNFW/>

Books/Seminars:

HHMI – Making the right moves

Downloadable: <https://www.hhmi.org/science-education/programs/making-right-moves>

Entering Mentoring – Pfund, Branchaw, Handelsman, publisher: W.H. Freeman

Downloadable:

https://www.cimerproject.org/Content/PDFs/completeCurricula/Overview_Entering%20Mentoringv2.pdf

What the best teachers do – Ken Bain, Harvard Press (approx. 30Euro)

Many papers published in scientific journals – keep your eyes open!

Most universities have additional resources and offices, check yours out!

Lab guidelines from established lab heads – just google them! 😊

