

Common Issues and Concerns in a Mentoring Relationship

--- “Technical” knowledge: As a mentor, you have knowledge to offer students that they cannot learn in a class or textbook. This might include:¹ ---

- Who are the powerful and important people in the department, the institution, and the discipline world wide;
- Which sub fields are expanding or contracting;
- Which professors have contacts with faculty at other institutions;
- How people in the field find out about, get nominated for and win assistantships, fellowships, grants, awards, and prizes;
- Which journals lead the field. Who can bring a submission to the attention of the editors;
- How to get feedback on a paper;
- How to handle co-authorship;
- What organizations are important to join. What is the structure of the organization. What roles should the student seek to fill in the structure;
- What conferences are important to attend. How to play a role in the conference;
- How people in the department find out about job openings in academia, private industry and government. What an effective vita should say. What the job search is like. How to negotiate a contract;
- How to appropriately raise concerns, issues and problems and with whom;
- How to build a tenure file;
- How to write and interpret letters of recommendation;
- How to objectively evaluate potential hires;
- How to design courses, lectures, and syllabi;
- How to prepare a grant.

--- Addressing common concerns through support (validation and understanding) and role-modeling²: ---

- Concerns about self
 - Competence: Can I be effective in the graduate student/faculty role? Can I be effective in the role of spouse/partner/parent?
 - Identity: Who am I as a professional? What are my skills and aspirations?
- Concerns about career
 - Commitment: How involved and committed to the organization do I want to become? Or do I want to seriously explore other options?
 - Advancement: Do I want to advance? Can I advance without compromising important values?

¹ Excerpted from CWD Faculty Mentor Handbook and PGSC Survey (Fall 2008)

² Excerpted from Kathy Kram’s book, *Mentoring at Work: Developmental Relationships in Organizational Life*

- Relationships: How can I establish effective relationships with peers and supervisors? As I advance, how can I prove my competence and worth to others?
- Concerns about family
 - Family Role Definition: How can I establish a satisfying personal life? What kind of lifestyle do I want to establish?
 - Work/Family Conflict: How can I effectively balance work and family commitments? How can I spend time with my family without jeopardizing my career advancement?

--- For more examples/ideas, see the Distinguished Graduate Mentor Award Recipients Booklet
(http://www.grad.washington.edu/envision/PDF/mentor_booklet.pdf)