Mentoring Retreat Summary - July 2018

Discussion leaders: Peter Hitchcock, Scott Barolo, Shoba Subramanian, Lori Isom, Ashley (Curren) Kalinski, Jessica Chen, Tricia Garay, Jay Vornhagen

OGPS Team: Maggie Evans, Reggie Beasley, Catherine Garber, Jim Musgrave

I. What is the spectrum of productive mentor:mentee relationships?

Perspectives:
A. Successful science-related outcomes: publications, funding
B. Successful career outcomes: mentees that continue in science-related careers
C. Transitions mentee towards scientific independence
D. Explicitly encourages career exploration & professional skill development
E. Open & respectful communication

Challenges:
A. Effective mentoring must encompass diverse personalities, goals and needs
B. Current lack of institutional incentives that meaningfully value & reward mentoring
C. Widespread perception that faculty place less value on non-academic career trajectories undermining trust & communication

Action items:
A. Universally implement use of customized mentoring compact articulating specific expectations of each party, to be provided to dept upon joining the laboratory
B. Develop mentoring toolbox to include STEM-specific mentor training program, protocols and communication scripts

II. Can we elucidate a good framework for mentoring?

Perspectives:
A. Current ecosystem of mentoring resources lacks clarity and purpose
B. Postdocs lack robust mentoring infrastructure - overly reliant on PI for mentorship
C. Thesis committee currently used to provide scientific guidance but not tasked explicitly to promote trainee success
**Challenges:**
A. Effective mentoring must encompass a diverse spectrum of individual personalities, goals and needs
B. Current lack of institutional incentives that meaningfully value & reward mentoring
C. Widespread perception that faculty place less value on non-academic career trajectories leading to barriers in trust & communication

**Action items:**
A. Use of an mentoring compact signed by mentors & mentees articulating specific expectations of each party, tracked by departments
B. One thesis committee member designated by student as student advocate tasked with promoting student professional development
C. Facilitate peer-mentoring networks
D. Schedule OGPS “roadshow” to educate faculty on resources for mentoring/advising

**III. What does the concept of “training” mean to different stakeholders?**

**Perspectives:**
A. Primary stakeholders: trainees, faculty, funding agencies
B. Secondary stakeholders: institutions, employers, taxpayers, families
C. NIH is moving towards more clear expectations of training
D. Expectations of training for postdocs remain poorly defined
E. Faculty want to hear about trainee career interests

**Challenges:**
A. Trainees largely do not feel empowered to decide/communicate career interests
B. Faculty express concern about how to help students navigate career uncertainty
C. Need to recognize career decisions as emotionally charged
D. View career & professional development (CPD) as an integral part of scientific training

**Action items:**
A. Establish a culture of career exploration for students & faculty
B. Develop a CPD “toolbox” to provide resources for students & faculty
C. Articulate expectations for professional competencies
D. Create a diverse experiential learning portfolio
E. Schedule OGPS “roadshow” to educate faculty on resources for mentoring/advising

**IV. What mechanisms of accountability are needed?**

**Perspectives:**
A. Need for clear expectations to guide mentor-mentee relationship
B. Need for understanding how postdoc employment contracts impact mentor or mentee (e.g., when can postdoc look for jobs, what is the expectation for developing independent research)
C. Letters of recommendation carry a huge weight
D. Concern that mentoring (e.g., authorship decisions) can be biased by career goals
E. Conflict prevention is better than remediation
F. The uneven power dynamic in the mentor:mentee relationship minimizes accountability and can diminish trust
G. International trainees are especially vulnerable to consequences of poor mentoring practices

**Challenges:**
A. Mentors and mentees value autonomy
B. Current training system has evolved to be more faculty-centered not trainee-centered
C. Good mentorship is expected but not explicitly valued or rewarded
D. Lack of clear consensus on what constitutes good mentorship
E. Lack of mechanisms for mentor accountability

**Action items:**
A. Develop a mentoring “toolbox” to include a STEM-specific mentor training program, protocols & scripts for common areas of tension
B. Define a more intentionally learner-centered structure and purpose for thesis committees, e.g., committee chair that is not thesis mentor, designated student advocate
C. Create a culture that explicitly and materially values good mentorship
D. Articulate clear expectations of good mentorship
E. Explore mechanisms for mentor accountability

**Next Steps**
1. Develop STEM-specific mentor training workshop.
2. Evaluate how current mentoring frameworks, e.g., thesis committees or postdoc mentoring committees, can be intentionally structured to be more learner-centered.
3. Implement a UM mentor:mentee compact for all trainees that outlines training and mentoring obligations as a foundation for shared expectations and accountability.