

## **Building and maintaining healthy mentor/mentee relationships**

What roles do mentorship relationships play in professional development of PhD students?

*“Mentorship relationships are quite essential to the professional development of PhD students since mentors can suggest potential research directions, give guidance on what can be done to get positive results in research, offer encouragement when the beginning researcher has a hard time and help the mentee throughout his/her research career.”*

What do the mentee and mentor gain from the relationship?

*“The mentee can have an assistance being a mature member of the scientific research group. He/she can get valuable information or mental support. The mentor can get a respect from the beginning researcher, and he/she can also get an new idea while discussing with the mentee.”*

Describe a situation in which the interests of the mentor and mentee are aligned. [In this context, “interests” means career or financial advancement.]

*“If a mentor and mentee have similar research interests or working styles.”*

COMMENT ON WHAT YOU COULD LEARN FROM THIS RESPONSE ABOUT THE WORTHWHILENESS (OR LACK OF IT) OF RCRS EDUCATION.

Describe a situation in which the interests of the mentor and mentee are aligned. [In this context, “interests” means career or financial advancement.]

*“There are some mentors who want their mentees to get an academic career. If mentee also wants to become a professor, then their interests are aligned.”*

THIS IS A REAL ISSUE. FROM AN RCRS PERSPECTIVE, IT IS ALSO NECESSARY TO DISCUSS THE USE OF THE WORD ‘INTERESTS’ IN THIS CONTEXT, WHICH I THINK HERE IS PARTLY CORRECT BUT POSSIBLY PARTLY MISUNDERSTOOD. PLEASE COMMENT.

Describe a situation in which the interests of the mentor and mentee are conflicting.

*“One typical example of conflicts would be the concept of intellectual property. For example, the mentor has a brilliant idea about a problem. The mentee is a senior in the lab, and he/she is looking for a research fellow career in a competitive lab. In a job interview, which has not been confirmed with the mentor, the mentee discusses the mentors idea to the competitor. When the mentor realizes that his/her competitor knows about his idea, he gets really upset and disappointed from his mentee.”*

Describe a situation in which the interests of the mentor and mentee are conflicting.

*“Mentor has been leading a group of researchers which consists of his/her mentees to work a few closely related problems. They have made good progress. The mentor wishes to publish a paper that presents the entire work which would make a big impact. However each of his mentees would want to publish a seperate (salami) paper so that their names can be all listed as first authors in the papers.”*

IS THIS A “CONFLICT OF INTEREST” OR  
SIMPLY A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION? A  
SUBTLE QUESTION, ON WHICH ONE  
MIGHT TAKE EITHER VIEW...

How are mentorship relationships initiated? E.g., how do you find a thesis adviser?

*“Generally , it is the mentees responsibility to look for the appropriate thesis adviser, and it might prove to be extremely helpful to talk to other senior PhD students about respective work interests and try to sort out who could be best suited in that regard as an adviser.”*

*“A student might find a thesis adviser by looking into faculty members research, reading recent papers, etc., and finding a professor who does work aligned with the students interests. A conversation with that faculty member may start to build a relationship between the two.”*

How common is it in Statistics for a faculty member to actively recruit a student, rather than waiting for potential PhD students to contact them?

When might a faculty member initiate a mentorship relationship in a Statistics department? Compare this to other scientific fields.



Collaboration: What are the advantages and disadvantages of building a mentorship relationship with a researcher who is not a Statistician?

*“Advantages: You can gain access to data you might not have had access to before. You can also get useful guidance in what sorts of questions are important to be able to answer/what sorts of situations your method should be able to deal with, which might not seem statistically important but are very important for people who might want to use your methods.”*

*“By getting a mentor from different field, a mentee can broaden the perspective. the different research methodology can provide a good insight. The tradeoff is that the mentor might not know well about main trends in statistics. This disadvantage gets more significant if the mentee is about to graduate and get a job in statistics research group.”*

Collaboration: What are the advantages and disadvantages of building a mentorship relationship with a researcher who is not a Statistician?

*“Disadvantages: Interests may conflict. Also, you have to spend extra time on understanding knowledge of other field.”*

IS THIS TIME WELL SPENT? ALSO,  
COMMENT ON THIS ANSWER IN THE  
CONTEXT OF RCRS TERMINOLOGY.

Describe a way in which a mentorship relationship can turn unhealthy. What warning signs should one look for? What actions can one take?

*“The relationship should be mutually beneficial. If one party begins relying too heavily on the other it can create problems. So if a mentor is relying too heavily on their mentee helping with their research, they may prevent the mentee from moving onto more beneficial positions. Conversely if a mentee is too heavily reliant on a mentor they may be unable to move on as well.”*