Helping Trainees Get to the Next Level

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OFAPD Home Page: http://faculty.medicine.iu.edu/index.asp

For Research Faculty: http://faculty.medicine.iu.edu/offices/fd/resFac.html
How many here have…?

- Had a student or postdoc move onto a higher position?
- Student or postdoc will be looking for a new position soon?
- Never had a trainee move on but want to learn more about how to help them?
- Had a trainee move on, but would like some pointers about helping them more in the future?
Helping them reach the next level

- Next level in their career…
- Intellectually
- As a future mentor
- As a future Principal Investigator
- Finding a postdoctoral fellowship
- Finding a faculty position
- Finding a job in something other than academia
Helping them reach the next level

- Getting their name out there
- Introduce them at meetings
- Push to get them accepted for oral presentations
  --English is their first language
  --English is not
- Introduce them to seminar speakers
- If you are hosting a seminar speaker, invite them to lunch or dinner
  --give them some one-on-one time with the speaker
Characterizing your trainees’ work

• When you present their work in your seminars, compliment them
  --people remember what you say
  --show them RESPECT when you are speaking to others about them
• They are not simply a graduate student or postdoc in the lab
• It is always appropriate to give them credit
  --everyone knows you are the PI—you lose nothing
Respecting your Trainees

DILBERT

DON'T BRING ME PROBLEMS, BRING ME SOLUTIONS.

WHEN I BRING YOU SOLUTIONS, YOU TELL ME THEY WON'T WORK AND TREAT ME LIKE A MORON.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH THAT?

The same goes with ideas for experiments, projects, etc.
Characterizing your trainees’ work (continued):

• If you want them to succeed, never complain about them to others who are potential postdoctoral mentors (or hiring officers)

• Be realistic; however, one could characterize a weakness as a “developing strength”

• It is always advisable to give them credit
  --everyone knows you are the PI—you lose nothing
When do you help them get to the next step in their career?

- Start building the foundation early
- Wait until you can see how well they work out
  --within the first few months
What should a trainee expect from a mentor?

- For a grad student--teaches how to design (and perform) experiments, interpret data, take the next step… (a postdoc really should already know how to do this—but not always)
- Has trainee’s best interest at heart
- Leader in their field and shows how to be a leader (i.e., leads by example)
- Always supports the trainee (within reason)
- Once a mentor, always a mentor
Mentoring is a “two-way street”

• The mentor teaches, advises and leads
• Every mentee is different; as such, the mentoring is (and should be) different

However,

• A mentor also learns from the mentee
• But this can be a bit dependent upon the different mentoring styles
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Talking to your trainees regularly…

- How is your science going?
- Are you having any problems in the lab?
- When is your next committee meeting scheduled?
- Go over their results and talk about the data critically—don’t “candy-coat” efforts that need improvement
- Communication is essential
What types of jobs might my trainees be interested in?

- Tenure-track faculty positions
- Industrial research positions
  -- advantages
  -- disadvantages
- Faculty at a liberal arts college
  -- Many applications for only a few positions
  -- Difficult if they did not go to a small liberal arts college as a student themselves
- Different careers
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- Different careers
  --medical school
  --law school (patent attorneys)
- Journal editor
- Scientific writer
- Science policy (e.g., for elected representative)
- Other…
  --this includes non-science…
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What if it seems they cannot (or will not) make it to that next level?

• Not everyone has an interest in being a tenure-track faculty member

• This can be a late “discovery” by the trainee him or herself?

• Discuss their career interests from time to time
  --not every day…
  --but not never!
What if it seems they cannot (or will not) make it to that next level?

• Am I a failure as a mentor?
• What does this do to my reputation as a mentor?
  --training record
  --T32 grants
• You need to know what they want to do with their careers
• Talk with your trainees regularly!
What is the most important thing a mentor can give to a trainee?

TIME !!!
What about from the trainee side?

• Predoctoral and Postdoctoral training is NOT a job—it is training
  --this needs to be communicated by mentor
• Training is a “two way street”
• Trainees need to do their part
• No one can make trainees outstanding scientists
• Requires time and effort
• Input = Output
I need to “walk the talk…”
Your success is dependent upon those you mentor...
If they do well...

You look good!

You know what the opposite is!
Your success is dependent upon those you mentor…

Jacqueline A. Hobbs, M.D., Ph.D.
Postdoc in lab: 1999 – 2001

Currently:
Assistant Professor
Department of Psychiatry,
University of Florida College of Medicine

One first author, one co-authored manuscript
Your success is dependent upon those you mentor…

Tonya Roberts Webb, Ph.D.
Graduate Student in lab: 1999 – 2003

Currently:
Assistant Professor
Univ. of Maryland
School of Medicine
KO1 grant awarded 2007

4 first author, 3 co-authored manuscripts
Your success is dependent upon those you mentor…

Gourapura J. Renukaradhya, D.V.M., Ph.D.
Postdoc in lab: 2002 – 2008

Currently:
Assistant Professor
Food Animal Health Research Program
Ohio State University School of Veterinary Medicine

5 first author, 7 co-authored manuscripts
Your success is dependent upon those you mentor…

Trainees who have gone on to industry

Emily (Yinling) Lin (Scientist, Novartis) 2000 - 2005
Jon Larkin (Principal Res. Sci., GlaxoSmithKline) 2002 - 2004
Sriram (Senior Scientist, Schering-Plough) 1999 - 2005
You can only do your best...

- It is important to be a good mentor
- You do get better over time
- “Practice makes perfect”
- We can never be perfect
- You will make mistakes (we all do)
- Learn from your mistakes
- Don’t make the same mistake twice
- Luck does play a role, too…
WISDOM COMES WITH AGE

...BUT SOMETIMES IT'S AN OPTIONAL FEATURE!
Additional questions?

Please fill out the evaluations and hand them in as you leave

Thank you for attending...
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