MENTORS AND MENTEEES: UNDERGRADUATES IN RESEARCH

Expectations
Mentor/Mentee relationships work best when everyone understands the expectations. Start each relationship/project with an honest discussion about these types of expectations:

Relational Expectations
Who is the mentor and who is the mentee?
This is static; you will not likely swap roles in this particular setting.

Functional Expectations
How do you work together so that both of you are at your best?
This fluid; ground rules will change over time as the mentee becomes more experience and the team gains familiarity.

Project Expectations
What work is done, when will it be done, and who will do it?
This is fluid; as goals are realized, new goals and projects will need to be outlined.

How to Align Expectations
- Prepare to have an honest and direct conversation. Find time to devote just to this topic.
- Discuss the overall goal of the project and relationship. What does each party hope to learn or gain?
- Determine achievable steps needed to reach your goals.
- Develop a plan:
  - Who does which steps, and when should each step be done?
  - How often will you meet to assess progress and questions?
  - How will problems or conflicts be addressed?
- Use ICRU’s Mentorship Agreement Form as a template.
- Revisit and revise your collaboration pact on a routine basis.

What are “Functional Expectations”?

Mentor, how will you...
- Model work values and ethics?
- Teach desired competencies?
- Treat mentee as a collaborator?
- Offer advice and guidance?
- Provide feedback or critique?
- Advocate for mentee success?
- Offer encouragement?

Mentee, how will you...
- Use your strengths/weaknesses?
- Come to work prepared?
- Ask productive questions?
- Be flexible and innovative?
- Build trust?
- Employ professional behaviors?
- Absorb/listen to information, advice or critique?

Not sure how to approach a conversation? Talk to ICRU! We will help!

Signs of Misaligned Expectations
These are indicators of misaligned expectations. A conversation may be helpful if you notice that...

The mentor:
- Prevents mentee advancement, despite successful work
- Does not find time to meet as agreed
- Does all the talking or direction-setting in meetings
- Lags in response to written correspondence

The mentee:
- Feels marginalized professionally
- Misses deadlines
- Avoids independence

Either mentor/mentee:
- Dread/avoid meetings
- Change use of eye contact
- Lack shared curiosity and teamwork

Communication is a key part of research collaboration. If your expectations aren’t being met, it is likely due to miscommunication.

From the UW Institute for Clinical and Translational Research (https://ictr.wisc.edu/mentoring/mentees-alignment-phase-resources/)