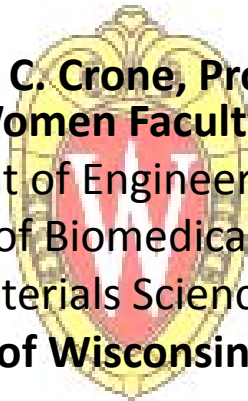


Finding Mentors and Creating a Supportive Climate

The academic profession is a "colleague system." Your relationships influence your place within your profession and your field. You can negotiate your way through such a system by establishing a variety of connections and relationships. We will discuss classic mentoring relationships in addition to mentoring in more contemporary terms, where mentoring occurs on multiple levels with multiple individuals and incorporates peers, professional networks, and colleagues as well as the classic mentors. We will also explore strategies for creating your own peer mentoring group and growing your professional network.

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What types of issues are discussed with a mentor?

(Small Group Brainstorming Activity Results)

- Time management
 - Balance
 - Prioritization
- Ensuring you have good letter writers
- How to pick your graduate students
- Teaching strategies
 - Graduate student supervision
 - Classroom teaching
- Expectations for tenure
- Work/life balance
- Proposal writing
- Identifying funding opportunities
- Avoiding common pitfalls
- setting goals
- preparing your tenure packet
- handling conflict
- dealing with department politics
- understanding the culture of your discipline
- knowing when and how to say "No"

Expectations

Mentee:

(What roles do you envision that your mentor will play?)

- Providing advice
- Advocacy
- Confidentiality
- Trust
- Nonjudgmental
- Uncensored/constructive advice
- Positivity with honesty
- Cheerleader

Mentor:

(What roles do you envision taking on in a mentoring relationship?)

- Being a good listener
- Providing a safe environment
- Nurturing
- Insights and multiple perspectives
- Helping to think through the decision tree
- Kicking butt when required
- Making links to the profession/introductions
- Protection
- Using connections to help the mentee create new networks
- Openness about values
- Reviewing of proposals and papers

Questions to ask yourself when developing a new mentoring relationship:

- Do you feel comfortable asking for advice and accepting criticism?
- Can your mentor meet with you frequently enough for your needs?
- How formal do you want the relationship to be?
- Can you develop a productive and non-threatening relationship with your mentor?
- Is the individual familiar with your academic position and your institution?
- Should you share everything with your mentors or be selective about what you discuss with each individual?

How much information should you share and with whom?

(Small Group Discussion)

- Consider how much information about your personal life you want to share with your colleagues, mentors, and students, including details about your:
 - perceived professional weaknesses
 - recreational activities
 - health issues
 - family life
 - partner/spouse
 - sexual preference
 - lifestyle choices
- Discuss the pros and cons of sharing certain types of information.

Where can you look for mentors?

(Small Group Brainstorming Activity Results)

- Faculty within your department
- PhD advisor
- Conferences and professional societies
- New and old peers
- Staff members in the department
- Mentoring, teaching, professional development programs
- Research collaborators
- Program directors of federal agencies
- <http://mentornet.net/>
- colleagues outside your department and at other institutions
- formal mentoring programs offered by your institution or professional society
- individuals in the community not associated with your university

Starting Your Own Peer Mentoring Group

- Identify a common topic of interest for the group, e.g. proposal writing, teaching in your disciplinary area, parenting while professing, etc.
- Identify a few colleagues who you would like to invite to join you in the group. Have a conversation with each of them about their interest in meeting regularly to discuss the topic. Identify the best venue for the meetings and timing for the meetings.
- Set up an email group or listserv with the initial members and send out a formal announcement.
- Develop consensus within the group at the initial meeting about the formality of meetings, frequency of meetings, optimal size of the group, and responsibilities of the group members.
- Grow the group to a sustainable size.
- As the “convener” of the group, you will be responsible for sending out reminders for meetings and keeping the momentum of the group going. It is good practice to rotate the “convener” responsibility to a new individual for a group that meets for more than one year.