Understanding and Improving Mentoring Relationships

Kimberly A. Griffin
University of Maryland
kgriff29@umd.edu; @doctorkag
Mentoring relationships in higher education

The Good

How to Win Your Nobel

Winners share tips and the keys to their successes. Many cite luck as a factor.

By Jack Grove for Times Higher Education // October 12, 2017

Several Nobel winners also point to the crucial importance of having a good mentor, with one California-based laureate recommending that researchers "go [to] a nurturing atmosphere with really smart, collaborative people."

"All major steps in my career were enabled by individual people who took an interest in me and my ideas," explained John Mather, a senior scientist in cosmology at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland, whose work on satellites earned him a share of the Nobel Prize in Physics in 2006.

The Not So Good

My Advisor Sucks; Advise A Social Scientist

Any advice if you have a crappy advisor? I am going for my PhD and although I thought I asked him some good questions, and received solid responses, in our interview, my advisor turns out that he is not a good mentor and not much of a help. He is mainly, at best, a time-suck with all the meetings he wants to make sure things are "going well" but doesn't actually want to help me with anything and gets petulant if I ask for help or advice. I don't know that many other people with a PhD so I thought I'd ask just in case you wanted to share some words of wisdom. I had a crappy master's advisor but that was two years and another year of not being around him, but writing while working full time. I finished though and it was worth it. Now the funding my new advisor said I'd have is virtually non-existent, he thinks the fact that I'm getting a stipend is enough for me to praise him daily and kiss his ass while running errands for him and taking care of all of his tech problems (I'm not doing that anymore). One semester and it's already an enormous headache. You can't get far in my field without a PhD. But I'm starting to get sick of the attitudes in my field...and yet I've been working towards this for 15 years so I have no idea what else I'd even do and it took me 4 years just to get in to a program.

By Tedra Osell // January 25, 2009
Barriers to increasing equity through mentoring relationships

1. Access to mentors is unequally distributed
2. Mentoring labor is not shared equally or recognized and rewarded
3. We underassess mentoring quality
4. We don’t know how to address harmful, dysfunctional mentors or relationships
Access to and Engagement in Mentoring

Relationship Quality

Personal and Professional Outcomes

Organizational Structures & Dynamics

Mentor & Mentee Identities

Equity Minded Mentoring Model (EM³)
How can you foster equity based mentoring relationships?

| Self evaluation          | • Who are you working with? Why?  
                          | • What are your strengths? Do they meet your students' needs?  
                          | • How do you recognize and honor your students' identities? |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Supporting colleagues    | • Who is doing the heavy lifting?  
                          | • How are they being recognized and rewarded?                                    |
| Disrupting dysfunction and bad practice | • Supporting mentoring assessment structures  
                          | • Reporting and advocating for students                                           |
Thank you very much!

Questions? Comments? kgriff29@umd.edu