Mentoring and Mentoring Up:

Workshop #1: Principles & Skills for Effective Mentoring Relationships

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CLIMB
Collaborative Learning and
Integrated Mentoring in the Biosciences

CREATING A DIVERSE COMMUNITY OF YOUNG SCIENTISTS

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2013 Winter RCW2

What exactly is mentoring?

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- Traditional mentoring
  - mentor to mentee

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- Peer mentoring
  - community of peers

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- "Mentoring up"
  - mentee *pro-actively* participates in the mentoring relationship
  - similar to "managing up"

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What exactly is mentoring up?

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- Mentoring up is <u>not</u> manipulating your mentor
  - You can't control your mentor. You can only control yourself.

- "Some superiors spell out their expectations very explicitly. But most do not. Ultimately, the burden falls on the subordinate to find out what the boss's expectations are."   *John Kotter*

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Our workshops will address:

1. **Intro to Mentoring and Mentoring Up – Maintaining Effective Communication**

2. **Establishing Goals and Expectations**

3. **Diversity and Unconscious Assumptions**

4. **Fostering Independence**

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Let's consider your relationships as the mentee and mentor

- What successes / questions / challenges have you had with your mentor?

- Are you currently mentoring someone?
  - What successes / questions / challenges have you encountered?

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How do you prefer to communicate?

- Use the Communication styles inventory
- Also, remember the Myers-Briggs types:

  How do you prefer to:
  - relate to people? — **E**xtroverts / **I**ntroverts
  - gather information? — **S**ensors / **IN**tuitors
  - make decisions? — **T**hinkers / **F**eelers
  - relate to outside world? — **J**udgers / **P**erceivers

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Let's consider some case studies

- Place yourself as the mentor or the mentee.

- How would you respond to these situations?

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A common mistake is to confuse *intention* with *impact*

Ex: if someone hurts us (*impact*), we often assume they meant to hurt us (*intention*)

Also, we are not always aware of intentions and impacts:

	Yourself	The Other Person
Intention	Your intention to other person: *Generally aware*	Other person's intention to you: *Not fully aware*
Impact	Your impact upon other person: *Not fully aware*	Other person's impact upon you: *Generally aware*

Thus: distinguish intention from impact, and
seek to understand other person's intentions and your impact

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Suggested Reading

posted in our CLIMB Blackboard site

- Managing Your Boss
  - John Gabarro and John Kotter

- Building a relationship with a mentee
  - from *Mentoring Clinical & Translational Science Researchers: A Training Guide*

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The CLIMB Program
Winter 2013
Steve Lee

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Mentoring and Mentoring Up – Case Studies
Workshop #1: Maintaing Effective Communication

Case #1: Sarah and Fred (from Rick McGee)

Sarah, a second year PhD student is working on preliminary experiments for what might become her dissertation project. It is a new project she has suggested to her mentor, an off-shoot of the primary direction of the lab. Fred, her mentor, was reluctant to let Sarah take on the project as it is fairly high risk and even if it worked would take at least 2 years before it could lead to a significant publication. Sarah is super excited about the project, but after 6 months does not have a lot of progress to show for her work. Some experiments seemed to give results consistent with her hypothesis but others don't. Reproducibility is also a problem at times. When the project first started, Sarah and Fred chatted almost daily about how things were going and met weekly to assess progress and brainstorm approaches. But over the last few months they have been talking much less frequently due to the lack of progress. Sarah has started avoiding Fred, often times coming in late in the day and working into the night. Fred is reaching the point where he is about to pull Sarah off the project but does not know how to go about it given her attachment to it. The tension between them is starting to spill over to other people and projects in the lab with people dreading their bi-weekly lab meetings which devote an inordinate amount of time to Sarah's project and the lack of progress.

1. What kind of communication issues come to mind when you think about the current state of affairs and how it got to this point?
2. Whose responsibility is it to deal with the communication and scientific issues that need to be addressed?
3. As a colleague in a different lab, how would you advise Sarah to handle the situation?
4. As another graduate student in the lab, should you get involved and, if so, how would you approach the situation?
5. As a faculty colleague, how would you advise Fred to the situation?

Case #2: Giving Constructive Feedback (from *Mentor Training for Clinical and Translational Researchers*, Christine Pfund, et al, p 23)

As he leaves the crowded conference room, Dr Tariq tells Sheila that he'll see her in a few minutes. Sheila was the last presenter in the practice session. Back in his office Dr Tariq sits looking

distractedly out the window and releases a heavy sigh. He shifts his attention back to his notes for a last review: reading slides … too fast … too long … print too small … too much print … color contrast … meandering … A few moments later he hears a knock on the door and beckons Sheila to come in. She plops in a chair across from him and looks up expectantly. He meets her gaze and smiles.

"Thanks for coming by. I wanted to make sure we could review your talk since the conference is in a week and I know you're in clinic all day tomorrow—and then I'm out of town," he says. Sheila continues to stare without comment, a blank expression on her face. "Well, as you know I think your research is really important and I'm glad that we have this opportunity to share it. I think this conference will be a great opportunity for you to meet some key colleagues in this field." She nods slightly, and shifts in her seat. "I do think there are a few things that could tighten your presentation." She continues to stare and Dr. Tariq keeps his focus on his notes as he continues.

"For example you had some long sentences, and even whole paragraphs on your slides. While they were well written"—his computer chimes as a new email arrives and he glances over to see who it's from. *Oh, not again …* "As I was saying, while they were well written—I mean you know your writing is strong—it is really too much text for a slide. You could try to shorten some to bullet points. Then you can still make those points without just reading your slides to the audience." He looks up and sees that she is now looking at the floor. "It would also allow you to increase the font size a bit. I think it might have been hard to read from the back of the room." He looks up again and sees she is taking some notes. "To cut back on the time, I think you could cut the four slides on the background and just briefly summarize those." He waits for comment and the silence drags on a few moments. "What do you think?"

"I can look at it." Her face remains expressionless as she glances up and briefly meets his eye.

"That might allow you to slow down a bit," he continues. "Of course it's natural to get nervous and then one tends to talk faster. Perhaps you could practice it a bit at home and focus on slowing the pace and not looking at your notes as much. Have you tried practicing out loud to yourself at home?

"Yes."

The phone rings. He checks caller ID. *I'll have to call her back when this is over.* "Okay then. I can send you a link to some tips on slide composition and oral presentation and hopefully that will be helpful." There is another long moment of silence. "Well do you have any questions for me?"

"No, not right now."

"Okay then, well good luck!" He forces another smile and reaches out to shake her hand as she rises to leave. She takes it and smiles back feebly.

"Thanks."

1. What are the main themes raised in this case study?
2. How could this situation have been handled differently? What should the mentor do now?
3. Does a lack of response constitute feedback? When you get no response, how do you interpret that?

Case #3: Summer Project (from *Entering Mentoring*, Jo Handelsman, et al, p 22)

I mentored an undergraduate student who came from another university for the summer. I explained the project to him and taught him how to make media and grow bacteria. Because my professor and I did not think he had sufficient genetics background for a molecular project, we gave him a microbiology project.

He was very quiet for the first ten days of the project and then he went to my adviser and complained about the project. He said he wanted a project "like Mark's." Mark was a student with a strong genetics background and his project was to clone and sequence a gene. My adviser insisted that my mentee keep the project I had designed for him, but the student became sulky. As the summer went on and he didn't get any of his experiments to work, I began to wonder if he understood what we were doing or even cared about it.

How would you respond to this situation?

Case #4: Rotation Project (adapted from *Entering Mentoring*, Jo Handelsman, et al, p 23)

I am a graduate student in a large lab. A week ago, a first year graduate student joined our group to do a quarter rotation. He really wanted to come to our lab and aggressively sought us out, which I assumed was because of our field of research. He had seen presentations about our lab's research and had read some of our major papers, so he knew what we worked on. This young man was clearly intelligent, and he knew what he wanted out of a research experience. He was exactly the type of student I would love to join our group.

My adviser and I came up with two aspects of my research compatible with the student's interests that would be feasible for him to work on in the short, ten-week rotation. When he arrived, I presented the two ideas to him, gave him several papers to read, and told him to let me know by the end of the week which project he preferred. He seemed lukewarm about both projects and, when he returned the next day, he enthusiastically presented his idea for a different project. It was related to what we do, but branched into a field that my adviser was not funded for and about which I knew little. I didn't want to squash his enthusiasm, and wanted to reinforce his creativity and independence, but I felt overwhelmed by the prospect of learning an entirely new field in order to advise him well. Moreover, my adviser was concerned that the agency that funds our work would likely not be supportive of this new area from another lab. With only the rest of the quarter remaining before his poster presentation, I was stumped.

How would you respond to this situation?

<u>Case #5: Compatible Work Styles</u> (adapted from *Managing Your Boss*, Gabarro and Kotter, p 98)

A grad student (who had a relatively good relationship with his mentor) realized that during meetings his PI would often become inattentive and sometimes brusque. The student's own style tended to be discursive and exploratory. He would often digress from the topic at hand to deal with background factors, alternative approaches, and so forth. His PI preferred to discuss problems with a minimum of background detail and became impatient and distracted whenever the student digressed from the immediate issue.

Recognizing this difference in style, the student became terser and more direct during meetings with his PI. To help himself do this, before meetings, he would develop brief agendas that he used as a guide. Whenever he felt that a digression was needed, he explained why. This small shift in his own style made these meetings more effective and far less frustrating for both of them.

1. How might you analyze the student's and PI's communication preferences, from the Myers-Briggs types?
2. What is the student's likely communication preference or type, and what is the PI's?