

Humanities & Social Sciences Case Study: "To Be or Not to Be a Professor"

SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTION: 20 MINUTES

Step 1: Read case study.

Step 2: Group Introductions

- Name
- Department
- Role
- What was the first academic conference you attended, likely as a graduate student?

Step 3: Designate one person to report out.

Step 4: Discuss case study using prompts.

Step 5: Reporter share up to three insights.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Identify the role(s) mentors play in the overall professional development of their mentees.
- Develop a strategy for guiding professional development using a written document.

CASE NARRATIVE:

You currently have two mentees. Both are very talented and hardworking. Early in the relationships when discussing career plans, Briar would talk about a passion for the academy and the joy of learning. The other student, Campbell, has been set on becoming a tenured professor and, from your perspective, is doing all of the right things to be competitive when it's time to conduct a search.

As time has passed, Briar has become increasingly active in social movements on and off campus, something you have been comfortable with because Briar is making good research progress.

Recently, Briar decided not to attend a department-sponsored conference to help organize a rally instead. Also, while clearly nervous at the time, just last week Briar mentioned to you looking at non-profit jobs on various job search websites, and being contacted by a consulting firm.

You find giving professional development advice to Campbell straightforward because you are more familiar with this career path and thus have more to offer. When you raise career plans with Briar, the conversation has become awkward. In part, you know you are less sure about what advice to give or even how to help.

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- What are the responsibilities of the mentor to every mentee, regardless of career path?
- To what extent are the differing value systems of the mentor and mentee a factor in this relationship?
- How do issues of experience arise in this case study? How might a mentor help each mentee, regardless of whether the mentee's goals are similar to the mentor's experience?
- How might non-research interests and personal goals or obligations play into a mentee's decision about career path? How might the mentor draw these factors out in discussion with mentees?