

# STEM 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 are currently mentoring two researchers. Both are very talented and hardworking. Briar has clearly communicated a career goal that is outside of academia. The other student, Campbell, is set on becoming a professor. 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 Briar asks for help, 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?