



POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLAR MENTORING GUIDELINES

At UC San Diego, postdoctoral experience emphasizes scholarship and continued research training under the oversight of a faculty mentor.

“Faculty mentors are responsible for guiding and monitoring the advanced training of Postdoctoral Scholars. In that role, faculty mentors should make clear the goals, objectives, and expectations of the training program and the responsibilities of Postdoctoral Scholars. They should regularly and frequently communicate with Postdoctoral Scholars, provide regular and timely assessments of the Postdoctoral Scholar’s performance, and provide career advice and job placement assistance.” (APM 390-6 – Responsibility).

The following are best practices and resources for faculty who serve as postdoctoral mentors.

I. Howard Hughes Medical Institute. Making the Right Moves: A Practical Guide to Scientific Management for Postdocs and New Faculty

Complete manual is available at

<http://www.hhmi.org/resources/labmanagement/moves.html>

What is mentoring?

Scientific mentoring is a personal, one-on-one relationship between a more experienced scientist and a junior scientist through which the trainee receives guidance and encouragement that contributes to professional development.

Why should you be a good mentor?

Good mentoring should be viewed as an essential ingredient for ensuring that the postdoctoral-mentor relationship is professionally productive. Mentors also often mention deriving personal satisfaction in helping nurture the next generation of scientists.

Traits of a good mentor

- *Accessibility*: An open door and an approachable attitude.
- *Empathy*: Personal insight into what the trainee is experiencing.
- *Open mindedness*: Respect for each trainee’s individuality and for working styles and career goals that may be different from those of the mentor.
- *Consistency*: Acting on your stated principles on a regular basis.
- *Patience*: Awareness that people make mistakes and that each person matures at his or her own rate.
- *Honesty*: Ability to communicate the hard truths about the trainee’s chances of success.
- *Savviness*: Attention to the pragmatic aspects of career development.
- *Trust*: As a mentor you are privy to considerable information about your trainee, including accomplishments, failures, financial situations and possibly even personal information. Information should be treated as confidential so your trainees feel they can trust you and share their ideas and problems with you.

Strategies for Effective Mentoring in your Lab

- Make everything a learning opportunity
- Set specific goals and measures of accomplishment
- Encourage strategic thinking and creativity
- Uphold professional standards
- Impart skills
- Provide networking opportunities
- Give moral support

Related Links:

- Entering Mentoring
http://www.hhmi.org/resources/labmanagement/downloads/entering_mentoring.pdf

II. UCSD Postdoctoral Scholar Mentoring Program: Guidelines for Faculty Mentors

Orientation

- Introduce the postdoc to the research team, department administrators, and other colleagues.
- Ensure the postdoc is aware of policy and guidelines that apply to him/her.
- Familiarize the postdoc with the equipment, ordering supply process, lab procedures, and standing meetings of the lab.
- Discuss funding expectations. Is the postdoc expected to apply for fellowships or will s/he be supported on training and/or research grants?
- Discuss research expectations. What knowledge is s/he expected to have and what will be taught? What are the research milestones?
- In collaboration, complete an [Individual Development Plan \(IDP\)](#)

Education/Training

- Discuss the postdoctoral core competencies: scientific knowledge, research skill development, communication skills, professionalism, responsible conduct of research, and leadership and management skills.
- Work toward achieving these skills during the postdoctoral training period.

Evaluation

- The mentor shall conduct periodic reviews with the postdoc but no less than once per year (APM 390-25-a) in order to assess the postdoc's performance and provide feedback.
- The [annual review](#) should assess the postdoc's progress to date, strengths, areas needing improvement, and potential for a research career in the discipline.

Career Preparation

- Assess the postdoc's talents and skills and discuss career options.
- Encourage the postdoc to engage in networking activities (introduce to colleagues at professional meetings, seminars, via email).
- Offer opportunities for the postdoc to develop supervisory skills by allowing him/her to supervise students or other research staff.
- Encourage research independence
- Encourage senior postdoc to apply for NIH K99/R00, BWF-CASI or other grants that will provide bridge funding for independent research.
- Inform and encourage postdocs to participate and attend seminars provided by the [Office of Postdoctoral Scholar Affairs](#) and other campus resources.

- Encourage postdocs to gain teaching experience by allowing them to give a lecture in the classroom, co-teach, present a seminar, or teach a summer session course. Workshops are available through the Center for Teaching Development.
- Assist with the job search (review CV, applications, interview format and questions, presentation, and write letters of recommendation)
- Encourage postdoc to actively seek opportunities for professional experience and advancement (e.g., volunteer on committees, help organize meetings)

III. Mentoring Postdocs and NPA Core Competencies

Postdocs are in training, yet they are highly skilled scientists. Therefore, it is important to strike a balance between directing postdoctoral work and treating them appropriately as colleagues. Encourage them and give them the help they need in setting research and career goals, but give them sufficient independence so that they can move toward an independent research career.

The National Postdoctoral Association developed a postdoctoral training and mentoring guideline called the Core Competencies. They are:

1. Scientific Knowledge
2. Research Skills Development
3. Communication Skills
4. Professionalism
5. Leadership and Management Skills
6. Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)

UCSD's Office of Postdoctoral Scholar Affairs offers workshops for items 3-6. This information can also be found on the [professional development website](#).

IV. Additional Resources

The American Physiological Society

www.the-aps.org/careers/careers1/mentor/guide.htm

Association for Women in Science (AWIS)

www.awis.org/careers/mentoring.html

Entering Mentoring: A Seminar to Train a New Generation of Scientists

http://www.hhmi.org/resources/labmanagement/downloads/entering_mentoring.pdf

Center for AIDS Research (CFAR) mentoring program

<http://cfar.ucsf.edu/mentoring>

Individual Development Plan

<http://opa.faseb.org/pdf/idp.pdf>

Gladstone Institute at UCSF Mentoring Standards

www.gladstone.ucsf.edu/gladstone/site/postdoc/section.php?id=938

MentorNet

www.mentornet.net

National Postdoctoral Association (NPA)

<http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/site/c.eoJMIWOBIRH/b.3485793/>

UCSD NCLAM

<http://nclam.ucsd.edu>

UCSF The One Minute Mentor

<http://acpers.ucsf.edu/mentoring/OneMinuteMentor.pdf>