

Getting the Mentoring You Need

Building your developmental network

A robust individual social network allows for greater access to information, resources, and developmental support that is needed to achieve important career stage transitions and to thrive professionally. If mentoring is to be facilitated by networking, then it stands to reason that individual faculty members need to personally manage this process. Support for this approach is noted most clearly by Blickle et al. (2009) who argue that the practice of networking is “the real driver of early career success and career satisfaction.” (p. 99) Where connection to informal networks is lacking, career dissatisfaction can result. In the recent (2012) SU ADVANCE faculty survey, women faculty perceived exclusion from informal networks to be a greater problem for career success than male faculty did. Building these networks, however, takes effort. Use the information here, and tools included in the Tools section of this booklet, to help you set goals, identify your network needs, and build your developmental network.

Self-Management

Self-initiated mentoring makes the individual an active agent increasing the likelihood of receiving the mentoring needed and improving one’s ability to be responsive to changing circumstances.

Best Practices: Your Role

1. **Self-awareness:** Leverage your strengths and remediate weaknesses (See List of Strengths in the Tools Section)
2. **Understand the lens you use** to set expectations for yourself and others. Recognize how your experiences impact your expectations, including how you ask for and receive support. Mentoring is culturally specific and should be negotiated by individual pairs (Harley, 2005).
3. **Create a career plan.** See Mentee Needs and Goal setting later in this section and the corresponding worksheets/tools.
4. **Initiate contact** with mentors based on your plan.
5. **Clarify, reinforce and prioritize your goals** and action plans with a mentor.
6. **Expect guidance** from a mentor, not a rescue.
7. **Be prepared** for each meeting.
8. **Be an active and respectful participant.**
9. **Mutually formulate and observe the ground rules;** confidentiality, time expectations; conflicts of interest, etc.
10. **Express appreciation.**

Engaging others in your development plans should not stop at tenure nor should your developmental network stop at the borders of the campus.

Developmental Domains

Mentoring priorities for career success

The following critical areas of development are based on Syracuse University faculty feedback and the work of Jung H. Yun and Mary Deane Sorcinelli (2009). Use the following in conjunction with the “Goals by Domain” worksheet found in the **Tools** section of this booklet.

1. ***Navigating the University & Community***
Understand the academic and department culture, policy and expectations; learn what is rewarded; meet key people; establish and elevate your on-campus reputation; understand service expectations, including which are advantageous to your career.
2. ***Excelling at Teaching:*** Identify resources to support teaching (such as developing new courses, pedagogical techniques, and effective use of technology); manage a productive and inclusive classroom; use social media, outreach and interdisciplinary/global curricula.
3. ***Excelling at Research/Scholarly Productivity:*** Identify resources to support research; develop a research/writing plan; identify sources for funding; collaborate wisely; solicit substantive feedback on manuscripts, concept papers, grants, etc.; publishing; supervision and lab management.
4. ***Maximizing Your Advancement: Tenure, Promotion and Evaluation Results:*** Details on the standards by which you will be judged and how they are measured; how to target your outputs for the next advancement opportunity; understand specific steps in the tenure process; develop an exceptional tenure and/or promotion dossier; interpret feedback on the annual and three-year faculty reviews; identify over-preparation and “when enough is enough,” goal setting post-promotion; develop as a leader.
5. ***Creating and Maintaining Work-Life Balance:*** Understand your core values and goals; prioritize/balance teaching, research, and service; develop time management, communication and organization skills; attend to quality of life issues such as resolving dual career needs, childcare, and affordable housing; learn about family leave and other policies; find confidants to provide affirmation and serve as a sounding board and role models; hold yourself accountable for what really matters to you.
6. ***Developing Professional Networks:*** Develop a trusted set of mentors from your social network for your developmental network; establish substantive, career-enhancing relationships with faculty and researchers who share similar interests; identify and develop opportunities for collaboration. Develop the skills to become a mentor and act as a mentor for other faculty.
7. ***Acting Within Your Discipline:*** Develop a national and international reputation; editorial boards and review panels; self-promotion; leadership in professional associations; awards and nominations; presentations at high impact conferences or other universities; cultivate an intellectual community; engage in entrepreneurial endeavors (intellectual property, working with industry, etc.); effective use of online presence and tools.

What are your goals?

Mentee Needs and Goal Setting

Foundation for success

Generally speaking, goals arise from an assessment of your current state (of performance, of activity, etc.) compared to a desired state. Some professional development goals are broad *career* goals. For example, you might desire to take on a more influential role in your discipline or department.

You may also have goals related to specific (and strategically chosen) performance criteria associated with whatever position you currently hold (e.g., postdoctoral associate, junior faculty, senior faculty). These *performance* goals typically sound like “qualify for a faculty appointment” or “get promoted.”

Finally, some goals are short term (e.g. “publish two papers”) while others are longer-term (e.g. “develop a research center”). In all cases, the best goals are **SMART**:

SMART Goals

are S = Specific (& strategic)

M = Measurable

A = Achievable (& challenging)

R = Realistic (& results –focused)

T = Time Bound

DOMAIN	SMART-er Goal	Not-so-SMART
Navigating the University & Community	Learn two new strategies for negotiating with colleagues during the summer.	Advice on adapting to the department culture.
Excelling at Teaching	Have a list of course expectations and policies before teaching my first course.	Thinking through difficult situations that you need to negotiate
Excelling at Research/ Scholarly Productivity	Submit two well-written, program-aligned, competitive funding proposals by the end of the current academic year.	Developing an effective research and funding plan
Maximizing Advancement	Understand steps and expectations of the review process in my department, College, and University before the start of spring term my first year.	Information about tenure and promotion process in your department and at the University
Creating and Maintaining Work-Life Balance	Be able to spend stress-free time with family/friends/on an important activity during non-work hours.	Balancing personal interests and family time with work expectations
Developing Professional Networks	I will have a support network of three local people before the end of the first semester.	Connecting with someone with whom you can share experiences based on identity markers e.g. gender, race, class, sexual orientation, parenthood, etc.
Acting within your Discipline	Have identified one promising emerging opportunity for contributing to the discipline as a result of attending annual conference.	Advice about participation in professional organizations and conferences

Some other (semi) SMART goals might include:

- o Spend one hour each week reviewing my own career goals and career development plan.
- o Feel more in control of my time and my schedule.
- o Understand the requirements of academic leadership at my institution.
- o Identify three possible collaborators at other Universities.
- o Identify first and second tier journals for my work.
- o Develop a writing practice.
- o Choose service activities wisely.
- o Help acquiring or improving skills, such as how to give a talk, how to supervise research assistants, managing classroom dynamics, etc.
- o Get feedback from others on how they perceive my strengths and weaknesses.
- o Identify entrepreneurial opportunities.
- o Learn more about effective collaboration.

One final note about goal setting: Knowing more about *both* your strengths and challenges will help you in the goal setting process. Significant career success is founded on the ability to self-assess and leverage your strengths not just remediate your weaknesses. Identifying and aligning your strengths with your broad career goals will lead to a higher level of performance. The checklist of strengths in the **Tools** portfolio may be of help in doing this.

Tools

The last section of this booklet contains *Tools for Developing, Supporting, and Leading*. The worksheets and checklists in the *Tools* section can help with planning and assessing your network. Forms are available to download at <http://suadvance.syr.edu>

Documenting Your Efforts:

Using the *Goal Development by Domain* worksheet (see **Tools**, available online at <http://suadvance.syr.edu>) may be helpful in articulating long (2-4 years) and short (1-2 year) term goals by domain.

Using the *Developmental Network Plan* worksheet may be helpful in reviewing individual goals with your Developmental Network Coach (or other mentor) to assist in refining the goal, identifying key activities, targeting resources, and identifying those in your network who can help you reach your goal.

Adapted from the Michigan State University Faculty Mentoring Toolkit. Luz, C.C. (Ed.) (2011). Faculty mentoring toolkit: A resource for faculty, mentors and administrators at Michigan State University (NSF ADVANCE Grant #0811205). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, and from <http://myidp.sciencecareers.org/ProjectGoals/QuickTips> authored by C.N. Fuhrmann, J.A. Hobin, B. Lindstaedt, and P.S. Clifford.

The Ongoing Relationship with a Mentor

Defining the relationship

Once you feel comfortable, work out the details and negotiate a mentoring agreement. The agreement may be formal & written or informal & verbal depending on the topic, the role of the mentor, and anticipated length of commitment. A sample agreement is provided in the **Tools** section. Together, answer the following questions:

- What are the goals?
- What are our expectations and responsibilities to each other?
- What are the confidentiality expectations?
- How often should we meet?
- How will we communicate? (meet face to face, phone conversations, email, or a combination)
- How much time are we willing to invest in mentoring routinely?
- Do we need a written agreement?
- What is the anticipated length of the mentoring relationship?
- What is the graceful exit plan?
- What if it doesn't work? Is there a no-fault exit strategy?

Building Trust: What Mentors Expect from Mentees and Vice Versa

Adapted from *Mentoring across differences; A guide to cross-gender and cross-race mentoring*, Washington, D.C.: Minority Corporate Counsel Association.

	Mentor Expects from a Mentee	Mentee Expects from Mentor
Competence	Intelligence, drive, interpersonal skills.	Mentor is capable of helping (skills training, contacts, organization knowledge, influence, empathy).
Reliability	Can be depended on to accomplish agreed upon tasks and to help the mentor if needed. (and appropriate).	Mentor can be depended on to help and to not betray the mentee's confidences.
Commitment	Mentee is committed to her/his own success: to the mentoring relationship and to the University.	Mentor is interested in the mentee as an individual and in helping them to succeed; has the mentee's best interest in mind.
Honesty	Mentee is willing to take reasonable risks: will be honest about needs and concerns: will seek help and feedback.	Mentor will give honest and constructive feedback and help the mentee to learn; will not belittle or judge them for what they do not know.
Character	Work ethic; strong confidentiality ethic; understanding each other's professional goals; speaking and acting with consistency; understanding faults without exploiting them; valuing the differences in perspective or cultures; avoiding public criticism; revealing and discussing conflicts of interest, addresses conflicts of interest, inquiring about unknowns rather than relying on assumptions, and willingness to address sensitive topics especially relating to implicit bias.	

Managing Connections

Building the network you need

Best Practices

- ✓ Mutually agree on the parameters and boundaries of how someone can help you achieve your goals. These might be spelled out in a mentorship agreement. This agreement does not necessarily need to be formally written but the topics should be discussed. (See Mentorship Agreement in the **Tools** section)
- ✓ Set a regular schedule.
- ✓ Build a fruitful relationship based on your development needs *and* the mentor's strengths.
- ✓ No one person can meet all your needs. Make sure that the mentor is a good fit.
- ✓ Attending events together – workshops, lectures and conferences – can help to facilitate discussion.
- ✓ Move forward when it is time. When goals have been achieved, a discussion on next steps can be beneficial. If the arrangement is not effective, be honest with yourself and seek support elsewhere.

Tips for Approaching a Mentor

"The strongest mentoring relationships spring out of a real, and often earned, connection felt by both sides." ~ Sheryl Sandberg, author of *Lean In* (2013, p.67)

Developmental Network Coach: Your first mentor (or most important contact) should have the ability to help you understand and operationalize the developmental networks model, help formulate basic career plans, and build a developmental network of mentors.

Look for the expertise you need: Choose a mentor that you truly respect; who has successfully done something you aim to do; not the biggest name or the highest rank. The best mentors are often also collaborators, but don't need to be.

First, simply ask for input on a single specific topic: Meet for coffee or lunch. Pay attention to how you react. Questions you can ask yourself include: Was it good advice? Was important information shared with me in a way that I could understand it easily? Did the meeting boost my confidence, motivation and/or enthusiasm? If this meeting demonstrates potential, arrange to meet again to discuss your goals and what you need from the person in more detail.

Communicate that you would value their advice and feedback: Explain why you're asking them in particular and how it relates to your plan.

Build Affinity: Find common ground through conversation. Mutual trust can develop from identifying shared experiences.

If the potential mentor seems hesitant: Ask for a referral based on your goals. Chances are, he or she will know someone who can be helpful.

Did You Know?

There is a potential for conflict of interest (Zellers et al, 2008) when a leader or someone whose primary role is in relaying performance criteria and providing feedback serves as a mentor. In this role their principle responsibility is to the organization not the mentee.

Communication

Listening and receiving feedback

Best Practices

- ✓ When meeting always give it your full attention.
- ✓ Be prepared to share your goals, needs, values and aspirations.
- ✓ Use good listening skills. See tips.
- ✓ Ask for feedback early in the relationship. See *Tips for Receiving Feedback*.
- ✓ Be prepared to discuss impact of culture or gender on how you each approach developmental relationships

Tips for Receiving Feedback

1. Being able to receive feedback is just as important as knowing how to give it.
2. Demonstrate openness to receiving feedback and to making changes based on what you have learned.
3. View feedback in terms of specific actions that need to change, not as a personal critique.
4. Take responsibility. Although explaining yourself helps you understand what to change, explanations are not excuses.
5. Keep the conversation focused on you (your behaviors, your actions). If someone else holds some responsibility for the outcome, address it with him/her separately.
6. Be aware of the context in which feedback is offered. Their opinion may affirm what you already know, or it may contradict your own view or a view you have received from another professional.

For more information . . .

There are multiple resources available for improving communication skill in these settings. Check with your network of advisors to find out what they have found most useful, how they have improved their communication skills, and what strategies they recommend.

Tips for Effective Listening

- Avoid interrupting.
- Keep the conversation on track.
- Pay attention to your nonverbal reactions.
- Show interest in what's being said – nod, smile, short verbal comments (yes, go on, etc.).
- Listen for, and allow, silence.
- Ask questions to start a conversation or gain clarity. “Can you tell me more about what you mean?” or “How would (*act/solution*) make a difference?”
- Paraphrase to clarify understanding - “My understanding of what you just said is...” or “What I think I heard is...”
- Summarize discussions and plans - “It sounds like you will” or “My next step is to...”
- Thank them for their assistance and ask how else they are able to help if you discover new needs as you attempt your plan, for example, “are you available to meet after [I try this new thing/I get the manuscript back]?”

Getting the Mentoring You Need

Final tips for mentees:

- 1. Be proactive**

Self-initiate and take control of building and managing your overall social network.

- 2. Cultivate mentors**

Within your social network, identify and cultivate individuals for your developmental network who can meet your information and advice needs. There should be functional diversity with navigators, sponsors, coaches, confidants and developmental network coaches within the developmental network.

- 3. Connect to multiple networks**

Mentors should come from multiple social networks. If your personal social network is exclusively within your department or program (present or past), you may want to consider adding mentors and connections from other departments, colleges, university offices or external organizations.

- 4. Cultivate both close & casual relationships ties**

Strong relationship ties should be with people you are close to and speak with frequently. Thus, they are highly motivated to help and vice versa. There are mutual benefits to both.

Weak relationship ties should be with people able to bridge other social networks that are currently or potentially important to advancement. These are more casual relationships with colleagues with whom you have infrequent communication.

- 5. Routinely assess gaps in your network**

What is missing? Who could help you bridge to other connections? How do you characterize your mentoring relationships?