

Workshop on Effective Mentorship in Research Communication: Some Cases

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Case 1: Getting Off to a Good Start

Ann is a new PhD student, and young faculty member Dr. Mary Brown will be her mentor. Each looks forward to the mentoring relationship and is eager to make it work well. However, in the past each has had some not-so-good experiences related to mentoring. What can Ann and Dr. Brown each do to help ensure that this new mentoring relationship succeeds?

Case 2: Feedback That Facilitates

Looking back to her own years as a PhD student, Dr. Mary Brown recalls receiving feedback on her writing from her mentor, Dr. Priscilla Potts. Dr. Potts often made brilliant changes in Mary's writing. But after receiving the feedback, Mary would feel so demoralized that she hardly could write for the next week. Now that she is a mentor herself, she feels determined to provide feedback in a more supportive way. What would you recommend to her?

Case 3: The Mired Mentee

Zeke, a PhD student, finished some research a month ago and is writing a paper about it. He is to meet weekly with his mentor, Dr. Kevin Yates, to discuss his progress. However, 3 weeks ago he missed the appointment because he had a cold, last week he missed it because he was behind on grading, and this week he missed it in order to pick up his child at school. Dr. Yates wonders what is happening and what he could do to help. What do you think?

Case 4: Too Similar

Beth, a PhD student, has drafted a paper and given it to her mentor, Dr. Robert Jones, for review. Reading the discussion section, Dr. Jones notices a paragraph that seems strangely familiar. On checking, he finds that, except for a word or two per sentence, the paragraph is the same as one in a paper that he has published. How do you suggest that Dr. Jones proceed?

Case 5: A Variety of Venues

Craig, a PhD student, has completed an epidemiologic study in his home region. When he presents it at a department seminar, the attendees urge him to submit a paper. A classmate suggests sending it to *Science* or *Nature*. The associate editor of the university journal encourages Craig to submit it there, noting likelihood of publication in the next issue. Someone else says to obtain a list of journal impact factors and decide accordingly. Craig seeks advice on the matter from his mentor, Dr. Linda Moore. How do you suggest that Dr. Moore proceed?

Case 6: Too Good to Be True

After her paper is rejected by a top journal, Liz, a PhD student, is trying to decide where to submit it next. She receives email from a journal seeking submissions. According to the email, this open-access journal (*The Consolidated Journal of Sciences and Humanities*) has a publication fee of only \$99, completes peer review within 2 weeks, and then posts accepted papers within 1 week. When Liz looks at the journal's website, she notes that the editorial board contains many famous scientists, including Marie Curie and Jonas Salk. Liz excitedly tells her mentor, Dr. Arthur Adams, about this journal. How should Dr. Adams proceed?

Case 7: Instructions on Instructions

Don, a PhD student, wants to submit a paper to a journal published by a prestigious society in his field. On looking at the instructions to authors from the journal, he is surprised to find that they are almost 20 pages long. "No one would pay attention to such long instructions," Don says to his advisor, Dr. Peter Clark. "I'm sure the copyeditors at the journal will correct any problems once my paper is accepted." How should Dr. Clark proceed?

Case 8: A Shortcut or Not?

June, a PhD student eager to graduate, obtains two interesting results from a study. When she next meets with her mentor, Dr. Lucy Sloan, June says she would like to write a paper about one of the results and another paper about the other, thus completing the two-paper requirement for graduation. How should Dr. Sloan proceed?

Case 9: Too Great a Barrier?

Fred, a PhD student, submits a paper to a good peer-reviewed journal. When the paper is accepted contingent on revision, Fred feels discouraged. However, his mentor, Dr. Susan White, explains that revisions usually are required, and Fred starts working on the revisions. Fred finds that in general the proposed revisions improve the paper or at least do not harm it. However, he finds that one of the proposed revisions would introduce a major inaccuracy. Alarmed, Fred tells Dr. White that he wants to withdraw the paper and submit it to another journal. How should Dr. White proceed?

Case 10: An Inconveniently Timed Absence

Jill, a PhD student, is first author of a paper that has been accepted by a journal. Jill receives from the journal an email message stating that she will receive page proofs electronically next Wednesday and then will have 48 hours to review them and inform the journal of any errors. However, Jill has long been scheduled to do field work all next week in a region without Internet access. Jill asks her mentor, Dr. Rita Mills, what she should do. How should Dr. Mills proceed?

Case 11: Title Troubles

Meg, a PhD student, is about to submit a paper to a journal. On rereading the instructions to authors, she notices that she must submit a running title. Puzzled, Meg calls her mentor, Dr. Pam Woods, for advice. How should Dr. Woods proceed?

Case 12: An Authorship Decision

Mike, a PhD student, is about to submit a paper about some of his research. Department member Dr. Ronald Tracy allowed Mike to use some equipment in his lab in the research, and he now asks to be listed as an author. Mike approaches his mentor, Dr. Ellen Curtis, for advice. How should Dr. Curtis proceed?

Case 13: What's in a Name?

Sarah Smith, a PhD student, is writing a paper. She worries that she will be confused with some of the other researchers with the same name, including one in a closely related field. During a meeting with her mentor, Dr. Hildegard Lukaszewski-Benedetti, she expresses this concern. How should the mentor proceed?

Case 14: No Madness in the Methods

Tess, a PhD student, is writing a paper on some research that used a variety of methods. Some methods that she used are very well known in her discipline. Some others are not well known but have been described in detail in the literature. And one method was newly developed by Tess herself. Tess asks her mentor, Dr. Sally Stone, how detailed her methods section should be. How should Dr. Stone proceed?

Case 15: Being Double Sure?

Dr. Willard Wells, a mentor and highly respected clinician, is preparing a paper on a series of noteworthy clinical cases. He shares a draft with his mentee, Ruth, and points out proudly that extensive data on each patient appears in both the text and an accompanying table. "You just can't be too thorough," he says. Ruth isn't so sure, though, about repeating so much information. How should she proceed?

Case 16: Nothing to Hide

Jane, a PhD student, has drafted the discussion section of a paper. Her mentor, Dr. Laura Hill, says the draft is good overall but advises Jane to add a section on strengths and limitations of the research. Jane respectfully expresses concern that noting strengths would seem immodest and that calling attention to limitations would increase the likelihood that the paper would be rejected. How should Dr. Hill proceed?

Case 17: An Amorphous Introduction

Ed, a PhD student, proudly shows his mentor, Dr. Rachel Reed, the introduction he has drafted for his paper. Dr. Reed perceives that this introduction includes some good content but that it is at least twice the appropriate length for the target journal and that it has no discernible structure. How should Dr. Reed proceed?

Case 18: A Reference Request

Gail is a PhD student, and Dr. Clifford Miller is her mentor. Dr. Herman Nelson, another faculty member, has a lab down the hall and does related research. Dr. Nelson hears that Gail is writing some papers and asks her to cite a few of his articles as references, so he will have a higher citation count when considered for promotion. Gail doesn't think the references are very relevant, and she wonders whether she should discuss the situation with her mentor. What would you advise?

Case 19: Aghast at an Abstract

Ken, a PhD student, is about to submit a paper to a journal but obtains an additional result from his study. “It’s too much trouble to rewrite the paper,” Ken says to his mentor, Dr. Betty Logan. “I’ll just add the new result to the abstract.” How should Dr. Logan proceed?

Case 20: Poster Perils

Vince, a PhD student, has submitted an abstract for a poster presentation, and it has been accepted. “I know I’m really busy finishing my dissertation,” Vince tells his mentor, Dr. Richard Lee, “but there’s not much to a poster. I’m sure I can do mine the day before the conference.” What should Dr. Lee say to Vince? What main guidance about poster presentations might he provide?

Case 21: Speaking of Presentations

Hong, a PhD student, has submitted an abstract for an oral presentation at a conference, and it has been accepted. She admits to her mentor that she worries about presenting, as her native language is not English. Her mentor, Dr. Lupita Hernandez, reassures her, noting that she herself is a non-native speaker and has given many successful talks at conferences. Dr. Hernandez says she will give Hong some general advice on presenting at conferences and some advice especially for non-native speakers of English. What main points should Dr. Hernandez include?

Case 22: Gratitude and Grant Proposals

Ann (from Case 1) has now completed her PhD, thanks in part to the excellent mentorship from Dr. Mary Brown, and she has accepted a position at another university. As a faculty member there, Ann (now Dr. Ann Wilson) is expected to obtain research grants. Grateful for the mentorship that Dr. Brown has provided over the years, Ann seeks her advice again. Dr. Brown has obtained some grants and has peer reviewed grant proposals, and so she is well prepared to respond. What points should she emphasize about preparing grant proposals?

Case 23: Lectures for Learners

Lynn, a PhD student, hopes to obtain a position that includes a substantial amount of lecturing. Therefore her mentor, Dr. David Black, arranges for Lynn to give some lectures in a course that he coordinates. What main advice should Dr. Black give Lynn about giving effective lectures? How do you recommend that Lynn document her lecturing skill?

Case 24: Small-Group Woes

John, a PhD student, is a small-group leader in an undergraduate course in his field. John goes to see his mentor, Dr. Amanda Parker, because he feels the small-group sessions are going poorly. Among other things, John says, few students make comments or ask questions, and one student keeps launching into lengthy discourses. What might be some underlying problems? How might Dr. Parker help John improve the situation?

Case 25: At the Science Café

Lynn (in Case 23) quickly becomes known as an excellent lecturer, and she is invited to speak at the local science café, a monthly event that members of the public attend

to learn about science. Therefore Lynn asks her mentor, Dr. David Black, for advice on speaking in such a venue. How do you suggest that Dr. Black proceed?

Case 26: In the Media Spotlight

Craig (from Case 5) ends up publishing his study in a leading journal in his specialty. His university disseminates a news release about it, and a radio reporter, a television reporter, and two newspaper reporters ask to interview him. Craig has not been interviewed for the popular media before, and so he seeks advice from his mentor, Dr. Linda Moore, who has been interviewed many times. How should Dr. Moore proceed? What suggestions should she make?

Case 27: Writing for the Public Too

Zeke (from Case 3) overcomes his writer's block and finds that he likes writing, both for peers and for the public. He tweets a lot and has a relatively popular blog. Now a magazine has invited him to submit an article about his research field. Zeke approaches his mentor, Dr. Kevin Yates, for advice. Dr. Yates has not written for popular magazines but recalls that his colleague Dr. Laura Hill has done so. How might Dr. Yates proceed? What advice should one or both the mentors provide?

Case 28: Looking Ahead

The PhD students in these cases are about to graduate. They appreciate the guidance their mentors have provided in research communication (as well as in other realms), and they want to provide such guidance when they themselves have mentees. They also want to keep learning about the evolving field of research communication. What do you suggest?

