

Interview Your Mentor Activity for Students

Try this with your students. Provide these questions (feel free to change these up relevant to your situation) to your students and ask that they set up an informal meeting with you (like at a coffee shop) and “interview” you. After your lab has a go at this, convene one of your normal weekly meetings and just listen to their feedback. You could get discussion started with a few prompts like, “What of my answers surprised you the most?” or, “Can you get mentoring from other members of the lab? The section? The department? The university?” Here’s the assignment:

INTERVIEW YOUR MENTOR ACTIVITY

Meet with your mentor and interview her/him about their mentoring/advising history and current practices. Don’t go more than 20-30 mins. Be sure that you and your mentor have time for this interview; don’t rush it. Inform your mentor that you will provide these responses in summary form back to the lab group. See if you learn something about your mentor and your professional relationship that you might not otherwise have learned after you complete this and discuss with the other students. Try these suggested questions:

1. When were you in school? What universities did you attend to get your degrees?
2. What was your thesis/dissertation about? What was the title of your project? How did you decide to do this project? Had you done much/any research before this project?
3. Describe your own mentor/advisor. Was this person open to sharing personal values and learning about differences in values of other people?
4. What about your mentor did you like?
5. What about your mentor did you dislike?
6. Were there other members of your committee who were more useful than your mentor?
7. List some of the things that you do now as a mentor/advisor that you learned from your mentor. List those things that your mentor (or others around) did that you would never do.
8. Does your approach to mentoring differ for a postdoc, an undergrad or a grad student?
9. What motivates you?
10. Is there anything that you want to add about the importance of mentoring or what I should learn as an up and coming professional/graduate student/faculty/researcher?