Student Checklist for Successful Mentoring


Mentoring may be useful for:
- Selecting semester electives
- Identifying and obtaining scholarships
- Arranging and enrolling in Directed Study and Special Topic classes
- Arranging fall, winter and spring break professional experiences
- Selecting and arranging summer research and on-farm activities
- Selecting national professional meetings to attend
- Selecting a senior paper topic and performing associated research project
- Identifying independent certifications (e.g., BQA certification)
- Selecting 4th year elective blocks
- Selecting experiences at other schools
- Selecting preceptors and SIPEs
- Preparing a CV and position applications

Desirable mentor characteristics:
- Are available, accessible and responsive
- Provide opportunities and encourage mentees to take risks with reasonable likelihood of positive benefits
- Help mentees develop own agenda rather than using a “cookie cutter” or “carbon copy” approach
- Are open-minded, are willing to provide reasons for their opinions and are willing to discuss differences in opinion with mentee or other mentors in a neutral fashion
- Have prior mentoring experience

Finding mentors:
“Because all mentors have different strengths . . . , establishing a complement of multiple mentors capable of making diverse contributions is useful for mentees. . . . often multiple mentors are helpful for specific needs . . .”
- Potential mentors include agricultural animal faculty, other clinical and basic science faculty, more advanced peers with similar interests, practitioners active in your interest area, allied industry professionals, livestock producers and others
- Ask for suggestions from people you already know
- Seek recommendations from peers and from mentors
- Ask other informed people that you meet, such as pharmaceutical and technical service representatives, both for their advice and who they recommend for further advice
- Find multiple, complementary mentors, both junior and senior people, early and in multiple places and seek their advice, particularly if advice is conflicting for a significant decision

Success requires:
1. Clarity of purpose with focus on selected goals
2. Wisdom for decisions
3. Bias for action because knowing fails without doing
4. Openness to change; change is constant and the future is uncertain
5. Structure and self-discipline to achieve goals
6. Self-reflection and both giving and receiving feedback

Preparing for mentorship:
- Read “A Student’s Four Year Guide to Agricultural Animal Veterinary Medicine and Rural Veterinary Practice”
- Consider your work style, learning preferences and habits
  - How do you learn best—by reading, by listening or by watching? Independently or in a group?
  - Do you prefer structured, directive guidance, gentle suggestion, or supervision?
- Consider your knowledge and skill needs in the following areas:
  - Academic guidance – e.g., improving learning skills, developing collegial relationships
  - Curriculum guidance – e.g., course and block selection, preceptor selection, summer experience selection
• Personal development– e.g., creating work–life balance, building confidence, improving communication skills, managing time
• Professional development – e.g., improving clinical skills, professional information management, networking, establishing goals, choosing post-DVM training or jobs
• Applied research development – e.g., designing and executing studies, performing data management and analysis, collaborating, and writing study proposals and reports
• Business management and leadership development – e.g., business planning, service development, financial management, accounting, employee training and management, marketing and sales
• Industry knowledge development – e.g., understanding livestock enterprise economics, farm operation, animal husbandry, improving product safety and quality, social and environmental issues

• Write down your specific personal, professional and career goals for:
  o 3 months
  o 1 year
  o 5 years

The initial meeting with a new mentor:
• Share your background, values, expectations and future plans based on what you have thought about above
• If your mentor has already helped you, tell them how
• Send them a note after the meeting summarizing the discussion and your plans to proceed

Cultivating the mentor–mentee relationship:
• Agree on structure and objectives for this mentoring relationship
  o Establish mutual expectations and goals
  o Establish measures of progress and of success
  o Establish key responsibilities of mentee and of mentor
  o If further meetings are likely useful, establish a meeting frequency that is feasible, accounts for time commitments, and is adequate. A suggested frequency is twice a semester.
• Follow through on tasks

“Manage up”
• The mentee is responsible for the process moving forward and for information flows
  o Set goals and expectations and keep track of goals and progress
  o Be responsive and flexible
  o Direct the information flow
  o Establish a regular meeting schedule and provide an e-mail agenda and any questions in advance
  o Meet prior to major decision points, such as electives to take for semester, blocks to sign up for, preceptors to request
  o Discuss important extracurricular opportunities, such as national meetings to attend, and summer opportunities to engage in
  o Does this mentor prefer detail or a broad overview?
  o Does this mentor prefer e-mail, phone or both?
  o Is this mentor a “listener” or a “reader”?
• The mentee manages the meetings
  o Plan and set the meeting agendas
  o Ask questions to gain insight, verify or clarify ideas and show interest
  o Actively listen
  o When mentor disagrees, discuss reasons for opinions and ask for constructive feedback
  o If advice differs between mentors, raise these differences because understanding the reasons for differences, which may be due to different experiences and different perspectives, is important
  o Inform mentor of progress since previous meeting and ask what tasks are to be completed before next meeting

Mentoring closure:
• Establish how and when the mentoring process should end
• Discuss next steps and potential future mentors