

MAXIMIZING MENTORSHIP: FACULTY AND TRAINEE FALL WORKSHOP SERIES

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In an effort to provide an opportunity to have on going conversations about mentorship issues, this past Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 the Atlanta Society of Mentors ([ASOM](#)), Emory and GT Chapters, organized three series of workshops for mentors and mentees. The goals were to gauge community interest, pilot a workshop series for different audiences, share perspectives with each other, and raise awareness of resources and approaches.

- > *How do you approach productivity issues?*
- > *How do you manage different styles and needs?*
- > *How do you hold others and yourself accountable?*
- > ***How can you be a great mentor or mentee?***

Universities have long been working toward supporting faculty and trainees to answer these questions as they engage in PhD training. While successful mentorship initiatives exist at both institutions, there could always be better and more accessible programs and resources.

The very nature of a PhD program is predicated on the guidance from a primary faculty member to a trainee. This training requires 3-5+ years of sustained mentorship through the ebbs and flows of various academic, research, and life phases. The mentee and mentor both bring elements of their lives and mindsets into their work that can positively, or not so positively, affect each other's ability to effectively communicate, understand, and execute as expected.

When elements of mentoring relationships are working well, things get done and it's almost effortless to manage communications and expectations. When things are not going well, issues linger and productivity suffers. When people aren't delivering or have differing expectations, things can get frustrating and those frustrations can stick around for years if they go unresolved. Accountability becomes something that needs to be addressed and tough situations develop that both mentors and/or mentees are not always well prepared to handle.

We all know effective mentorship is very dependent on the individual mentor and mentee. There are many common foundational elements needed for good mentoring relationships – but there is no one-size-fits-all approach that can be taught to ensure successful outcomes for everyone. People simply have different preferences and expectations, so they will require different approaches and levels of accountability along the way. Essentially the lesson is: What works for one mentee/mentor pair might not work for the next. Therefore, by exposing faculty and trainees to a variety of perspectives and frameworks (*e.g.*, Self-Management, and Conflict Management), they will ultimately be better equipped to assess and respond to challenges and differences. Training in effective mentoring is particularly important for new faculty, before they run into problems with their mentees.

Therefore, in Atlanta we set out to pilot 3 series of workshops to provide a platform to address these issues. For all three, we asked participants to commit to attend the whole series and we awarded a certificate of completion to those who attended the majority of the sessions. For the Emory faculty participants who completed the majority of the series, we also sent a letter to their Chairs to acknowledge the hours they spent in the workshops. Since these were pilots, at Emory the initial target audience was limited to biomedically related disciplines. At GT, it was advertised to all disciplines. For additional details, email thutto@emory.edu.

EMORY FACULTY SERIES ran from August - September 2016

- 8 workshops offered, 1 hour each, every Friday from 1:00-2:00
- 43 participants (16 received a certificate for attending at least 6 of the 8 workshops)
- Primarily co-facilitated by senior faculty
- Material inspired by modules from the Center for the Improvement of Mentored Experiences in Research ([CIMER](#)) and National Research Mentoring Network ([NRMN](#))
- *Topics: Series Introduction, Communications and Setting Expectations, Diversity and Cultural Issues, Conflict Management, Keeping Students on Track, Promoting Professional Development, Mentoring and Diversity, and Self-Awareness and Self-Management with the Birkman Method Assessment*

“I will start providing mentees with IDPs, I will be more explicit in discussing expectations, and I will be (even more) mindful of how my words might be interpreted differently by my mentee depending on their potentially different background and lived experiences.” – Emory Faculty

EMORY TRAINEE SERIES ran from October - November 2016

- 7 workshops offered, 1.5 hours each, every Wednesday from 11:30-1:00
- 26 participants (9 received a certificate for attending at least 5 of the 6 workshops)
- Primarily co-facilitated by senior PhD students and postdocs
- Material was trainee-driven and developed by trainee facilitators and staff
- *Topics: Defining Expectations in Mentoring Relationships, Self-Awareness and Self-Management with the Birkman Method Assessment, Time Management, Establishing a Positive Lab Environment, Conflict Management, Tying it all together—end of series discussion, Self-Awareness with Birkman - Part 2 (added due to high interest)*

“I realized that running into misunderstandings with your PI is not unique to me, and that it is not inappropriate as a grad student to initiate a conversation to resolve the problem.” – Trainee

GEORGIA TECH FACULTY SERIES ran from January - March 2017

- 7 workshops offered, 1 hour each, every Friday from 1:00 – 2:00
- 22 participants (11 received a certificate for attending at least 5 of the 7 workshops)
- Co-facilitated by faculty and staff
- Most material was directly implemented from [CIMER](#) modules
- *Topics: Series Introduction, Communication and Setting Expectations, Diversity and Cultural Issues, Conflict Management, Fostering Independence, Professional Development, Self-Awareness and Self-Management with the Birkman Method Assessment*

LESSONS LEARNED (*Insights are from formal and informal surveys and conversations*)

- There ARE communities of faculty/trainees who want this support and will participate
- Balance series with discussion based sessions and content delivery/resources
- Faculty and students noted they'd like to have joint sessions
- Participants found that having the same people come each week (requiring commitment) was important and useful. There is value in the exchange of ideas between faculty.
- Workshop length should be at least an hour and a half to allow for participants to ease into the topic and allow for proper discussion without rushing
- Workshops should be focused. Do not try to cover too much in one session
- Consider developing workshop materials in the form of a workbook, handouts/binders, and/or journal so participants can organize their resources and work from each session
- Having a central place to upload documents is very helpful
- If there are multiple facilitators, they too should commit attendance to the whole series

These series were a collaboration with Tami Hutto (Emory/GT), Edward Morgan (Emory), Nael McCarty (Emory), Keith Wilkinson (Emory), Cathy Johnson (Emory), Sonia Laurie (Emory), Elizabeth Littauer (Emory), Amanda Marie James (Emory), Kyla Ross (GT/Emory), Ruth Poproski (GT), Jana Stone (GT), Ingeborg Schmidt-Krey (GT), Jennifer Hassler (GT), and additional faculty, postdoc, and PhD student facilitators.