



What is mentorship? "...a transformational activity involving a mutual commitment by mentor and protégé to the latter's long-term development, as a personal, extra organizational investment in the protégé by the mentor, and as the changing of the protégé by the mentor, accomplished by the sharing of values, knowledge, experience, and so forth" (Scandura & Schriesheim, 1994).

Why mentor undergraduates?

Mentoring undergraduates provides benefits for both mentor and mentee:

- For the mentor:
 - Broadens interpersonal skills
 - Structuring the project and assigning mentees tasks increases the mentor's own knowledge
 - UG work contributes to and expands knowledge about the project
 - Improves and enriches the instructional process
 - Transfers "academic DNA"

- For the mentee:
 - Broadens interpersonal skills
 - Challenges thinking and connects learning to the production of scholarship
 - Develops untapped intellectual potential
 - Increases career awareness
 - Increases self-efficacy, self-confidence and professionalization

How should I mentor undergraduates?

For undergraduates conducting original research mentorship is crucial to demystify assumptions regarding research ability and progress by:

- Introducing students to expectations of research in your discipline
- Investing time early to support project selection and planning
- Providing positive yet constructive feedback
- Setting clear and well-scaffolded expectations
- Gradually giving the student/researcher more autonomy

Undergraduate research assistance can provide extensive benefits to faculty research, *but* don't underestimate the time that it takes to be a good mentor! Instead:

- Structure the project clearly and define clear time-bound objectives
- Explain the context of the project and how the work they are performing fits the big picture
- Define clear expectations and emphasize the importance of timely and professional communication
- Be patient as students learn to do the job

How can Mentoring Be Inclusive?

Research suggests that mentoring can lead to increased retention and continuation among women, racial minorities, and first-generation college students. You may be able to better connect with mentees from a variety of backgrounds if you:

- Prioritize building a relationship of trust before demanding immediate results
- Don't assume shared norms of communication; remember that what you intend to convey may be different than what students receive
- Consider ways to help students avoid stereotype threat – that is, the student's feeling that their errors and failures confirm stereotypes about groups they belong to
- Pair criticisms with assurances that the student is capable of meeting those standards
- Think about ways that diverse experiences and perspectives can be a source of strength for your research rather than an obstacle to be overcome in the service of predetermined projects
- Remember that respect is a two-way street

Sources and Additional Resources

[10 Tips to Mentoring Undergraduate Researchers](#) (Colorado State University)

[Salient Practices of Undergraduate Research Mentors](#) (Elon University)

[Mentoring Undergraduate Research Handbook, 2nd Edition](#) (Mentored Undergraduate Research and Creative Endeavors, Georgia College)

[Mentoring Research and Best Practices White Paper](#) (University of Alabama Plank Center)