

Perspectives

Faculty Vitae

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For this issue of Perspectives, we solicited narratives about mentoring relationships from faculty and selected leaders in academic medicine. Each was asked to consider his or her own experiences as a mentor or protégé, and to provide insights on effective mentoring practices.

As you reflect upon your own experience as a mentor or protégé, what have you learned about successful mentoring relationships?



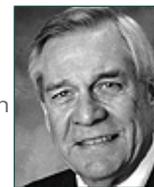
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Some of the most satisfactory aspects of my career, both as a department chair and as a dean, have been the ability to develop mentoring relationships with both faculty and students and to help them in various ways in the different phases of their careers. Most of us have multiple mentors for different aspects of our careers, and I don't believe that any of us ever outgrow our need for mentorship. For a protégé, having a mentor who you know gives you honest advice and who is your strong supporter is a wonderful advantage. For a mentor, seeing students and faculty whom you have mentored grow in their academic career can be as satisfying as seeing your children grow and flourish. The relationships should be marked by honesty, respect, and mutual goals and values. It is also important to recognize when another mentor can fulfill the protégé's needs better than you can yourself and to work with your protégé to find the appropriate mentor for him or her.

I myself am amazed and humbled by the large number of mentors to whom I owe so much. Perhaps the best way we can say thank you to those who have helped us is to continue to provide mentorship and support to others in their career pathways.



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His mentor:
Robert Klocke, M.D.
Professor Emeritus
Department of
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As a non-traditional student, I entered into medical school and completed residency without giving a great deal of thought as to the scope of medicine outside of patient care, which has always been my first love. Upon completion of my first year as a junior attending, the chair of my department, Dr. Robert Klocke, sensed my lack of focus and after several discussions, gave me the opportunity to participate in a year-long primary care faculty development program at Michigan State University.

Over these past 10 years, my career choices have always been made after counsel with Dr. Klocke. He helped me to identify and develop my interests and strengths, guided me at key decision points, and continued to do so even after his retirement. He helped me to understand all the different career options and the joy assuming these roles. It was this mentoring experience that made me understand my role and options as an academic physician with primary focus as a clinician educator.



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Her protégé:

Marina S.
Touillaud, M.S.
Doctoral student in
Epidemiology
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I always yearned for the attention of knowledgeable mentors, hoping to be chosen from the masses for the grooming and nurturing that would launch my career. To this day, I believe success and satisfaction may have arrived sooner had I spent less time pondering who would be my mentor, and more time focusing on how to be a good protégé to my mentor.

Marina Touillaud already knew a lot about how to be a good protégé when she found me. She modeled desirable qualities and taught me that being a good protégé enriches the mentoring relationship and prepares one to capitalize upon whatever opportunities arise. Encouraging me to hire her as my first research assistant, Marina showed great initiative in figuring out everything I didn't know how to do, including complementing my big picture goals with her detailed-oriented plans. To my delight, Marina is about to complete her doctorate and is well-equipped for being both an outstanding protégé and mentor.

Marina taught me the importance of being a good protégé. My relationship with Marina has showed me first hand how to become the person that everyone wants to mentor.

This is some of what I have learned:

- **Plan regular meetings.** To maintain focus on your career objectives and productivity, bring a one-year career plan/timeline for review to highlight areas for your mentor's support. Unlike hallway chats, scheduled sessions make issues addressed official and important.
- **Listen fully without being defensive, even if the message is delivered painfully.** Learning to distinguish the message from its delivery will keep you focused on the useful information, not stuck on hurt feelings.
- **Stay in touch.** Shortly after each important meeting, summarize points briefly by email to ensure clarity and agreement and to facilitate follow-up.
- **Seek out feedback frequently and make small adjustments accordingly.** Waiting until it is forced upon you may compel you to make big changes that are hard to implement quickly.
- **Recognize that mentoring comes from many directions: above, below, and sideways.** Cherish it in all forms and express gratitude to those who help you.
- **Help your mentors conserve their time and energy.** Mentors are more likely to help those who require the least effort to mentor. Mentoring is greatly rewarding, particularly when a protégé is productive and successful from minimal help.



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Her mentor:

Edith Gomberg, Ph.
D., M.S.W.
Professor of
Psychology
Department of

Psychiatry
University of Michigan School of
Medicine

I met Professor Edith Gomberg when I was a graduate student at The University of Michigan School of Social Work in Ann Arbor. Dr. Gomberg immediately impressed me as a consummate professional and charismatic woman. I took every course she taught and still have my notebooks with her words of wisdom. She was demanding of herself and was a wonderful role model. I still recall her important messages to me: respect other disciplines; learn one therapeutic modality well but have respect for the others; network; publish; give back to the profession; learn from your patients because they will be your best teachers, and always check your spelling!

When I left Michigan to take my current position, she helped me organize my CV, provided a list of negotiating questions and gently reminded me that as a social worker I would be an invited guest in another culture — the culture of medicine. I would go back to Ann Arbor once a year to get my "Edith fix" and absorb her wisdom. When e-mail became part of the culture, I consulted her regularly. Edith Gomberg was a treasure and I feel fortunate to have had her as a teacher and mentor for 25 years.



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The process of moving to Washington for the second time in my life caused me to have vivid memories of the role played by a mentor in my first move to this city exactly 24 years earlier. At that time, I was a resident completing training at the University of Colorado, the institution that also was home for my undergraduate and medical degrees. I was fortunate to begin working with a new junior faculty member, Dr. Robert Freedman, who was an active physician researcher and neuroscientist. While my fellow residents and I viewed him as an excellent attending and teacher, none of us was wise enough to be actively seeking out mentors. When Dr. Freedman presented me with an opportunity to pursue research projects with him, I assumed that this was simply part of the routine faculty-resident relationship. Only in hindsight do I see how gently but skillfully he was broadening my horizons; helping me see the excitement in blending clinical practice with science and the potential joys in life as a faculty member.

My strong inclination at the time was to remain in my "comfort zone" — assuming a junior faculty position at the institution I knew so well and working with Dr. Freedman in his laboratory. Having me do so certainly would have been in his interest, as he finally would have gotten a return on his earlier investment of time and energy in me. Rather than support that, however, he forcefully insisted that, after having all my education at the same institution, it was in my interest to broaden my intellectual horizons. Despite my reluctance, he proceeded to shepherd me through securing a position as a fellow at the National Institutes of Health. Little did I imagine that what I thought might be a two-year detour to the east would become a career path that ultimately would lead to the privilege of serving as AAMC President.

Only now do I fully appreciate the ability to entirely set aside self-interest and the generosity shown by my friend and colleague Bob Freedman (who now chairs his department in Colorado and is a member of the Institute of Medicine) in pushing me "out of the nest." It is this form of generosity that I believe may be one of the key characteristics distinguishing those who mentor from those who merely teach.

— Edited by Jennifer Leadley