Finding Your Five Mentors – and Your Sponsor

Naledi Saul

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Landing page
bit.ly/mentor-sponsor
What good work will we do together today?

In short, we’re thinking about intentionally building your professional community

**ASSESS**
The big issue that you would appreciate mentorship around in regards to the next 6-12 months

**DISCUSS**
the archetypes of mentors and the special situation with your PI – your research mentor

**BRAINSTORM**
how to find those mentors…

**CRAFT**
your invitation to engage – and take a moment to understand under which circumstances why people will talk to you

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ASSESS

The big issue that you would appreciate mentorship around regarding the next 6-12 months

Before you seek a mentor, you need to articulate your big adventure

Breakout Into Threes:

2 Minute Think:
• What is a big issue that you need to navigate over the next 6-12 months? (What's your big adventure?)

2 Minute Share:
• What is your big issue and why is it important to you? (What are the stakes?)
Selena Student

I’m in epidemiology graduate student coming up to the end of my training.

My advisor isn’t particularly knowledgeable about my area of work, so I would appreciate finding another mentor on campus – perhaps to sit on my thesis committee. **But who do I find and how do I ask?**

Edited from:
https://academia.stackexchange.com/questions/145548/covid-19-how-do-i-navigate-this-situation-with-my-advisor

Pradeep Postdoc

I am a cell and molecular biologist in academia, transitioning to become a senior scientist in Biotech R&D in the next year. I’m focused on learning transferable skills that would help me advance my new career in the biotech industry. **But what should I do? Options include:**

- **Online course on drug development** (offered on Coursera and MITx). **Rationale:** to learn about what it takes to turn an idea to a drug, something that I would be contributing to in the industry.

- **Taking a series of online courses equivalent to an MBA curriculum** (non-degree Specialization). **Rationale:** to learn new general business skills such as leadership, finance, operation management, accounting, and marketing.

- **Improving my computational biology skills** (I have basic R and Bash knowledge for basic RNA-seq analysis and all that jazz, but I would not call myself a computational biologist).

I understand that these all depend on what I ultimately want to do. But because I am not still certain about the future path, I would like to learn something is general and would definitely help regardless of what path I choose in the future.

https://www.reddit.com/r/biotech/comments/fi749l/working_form_home_learning_new_skills_suggestions/

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Homer! Greek Mythology! Odysseus went on an odyssey for 40+ years.

...and while he was away, his friend, Mentor, watched over and advised his son, Telemachus, from boyhood to adulthood.

A mentor is a person who positively influences a protégé/mentee’s (personal, academic, professional, spiritual, etc.) development.
3 reasons you need multiple mentors: #1: A range of needs

10 benefits a mentor could offer:

1. Time and attention
2. Advice and direction
3. Emotional support
4. Knowledge & skill development
5. Role modeling/inspiration
6. Access to resources
7. Access to opportunities
8. Access to your community/network
9. References/letters of recommendations
10. Protection

From the French word protégé: "one who is protected," Orig: from Latin protectere

...that great advice and mentorship really came from the goddess of wisdom, Athena, who spoke through Mentor.

3 reasons you need multiple mentors: #2: A circle of support

**The Guide**
People who show you the ropes in any new, complex or fraught setting or situation.

**Career Support**
People who offer guidance on how to position yourself to pursue and succeed in a particular career path.

**Clinical Support**
People who are content experts and help you learn the knowledge and skills required to develop in your discipline.

**The Sponsor**
This person is specifically dedicated to your advancement. They advocate for you, make introductions and advise you on how to position yourself.

**The Inspiration**
This is support from who has a specific skill or quality you wish to develop in yourself.

**The Friend/Fam/Therapist**
People who know and appreciate you, your strengths and weaknesses, and see the best in you.
And what’s the difference between a mentor and a sponsor?

3 reasons you need multiple mentors: #3: Role conflict

- Your PI is a special kind of mentor: a Research Mentor
- PIs sometimes experience role conflict when they need to
  1) make decisions, 2) communicate, 3) manage change, and 4) handle conflict

Your research mentor has multiple roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role**</th>
<th>Is responsible for…</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Traditional Mentor (advisor)</td>
<td>Career development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Educator (trainer)</td>
<td>Psychological support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Supervisor (manager)</td>
<td>Scientific knowledge</td>
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<td>Technical skills</td>
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<td>Critical and analytical thinking</td>
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<td>Identification of creative projects</td>
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<td>Performance</td>
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Your research mentor has multiple roles

- You usually don’t have differing interests with an advisor (mentor):
  Your goals are their goals for you. Your metrics of success are their metrics of success.
- But at times, almost everyone has different goals and benchmarks for success than their instructor and their supervisor.
Selena Student

My advisor is not particularly knowledgeable about my particular area of work and I’m not sure how supportive they will be. I need another advocate on my thesis committee.

I need some ‘Guide’ mentoring – I need to figure out how I am going to navigate this final stage of my training with my PI.

Also, I need some ‘Field’ mentoring – I want the space and time to bounce some of my ideas off of someone with expertise.

Activity 2: Describe what type of mentorship you need.
5 minutes each (10 minutes total)
Consider any of the 3 frameworks - or not - but try to describe to the other person what type of support you would like from your mentor.

Pradeep Postdoc

What should I do with this time to best position myself for industry?

I guess I’m looking for career mentors: people who are working at a start up and someone working at a more established biotech company.

I also just want to acknowledge that my PI is more a ‘cheerleader’ than a mentor in this area – they are super supportive, but not knowledgeable.
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Selena Student

My advisor is not particularly knowledgeable about my particular area of work and I’m not sure how supportive they will be. I need another advocate on my thesis committee.

• Who’s in your community?
• How do I find them?

Pradeep Postdoc

What should I do with this time to best position myself for industry?

BRAINSTORM

how to find those mentors… during this unusual time – and take a moment to consider why people would talk to you
When networking/finding mentors: There are 3 types of people in the world.

- **The farther people are from you, the more clear and concise you need to be**

1. People you know
2. People who are the same stage in their career
3. People who know your friends or colleagues
4. People 1-2 stages ahead in their careers
5. People you don’t know at all
6. People who are senior in their field

- **Pick a few institutions** – look at their webpages/research areas. What is the focus of their work – does it mirror my interests?

- **Ask OCPD Program Director for help:** Anyone at CCSF, USF, SFSU that I can talk to?

- **Check LinkedIn/UCSF Connect** to see if any UCSF alums at teaching institutions

- **Any panels coming up? Can I speak with the panelists?**

- **George, who was in my breakout group at this session, suggested their friend, Mae Jemison, at Amherst!**

- **Ask friends. Put it out there!**

- **I’m going to FASEB in October – I’ll look at participants to see if anyone at potential target institutions**

- **What about Min, who met at a conference?**
Connecting With Your Community: Linkedin.com
Connecting With Your Community: UCSFConnect.com
Connecting With Your Community: #2: UCSFConnect.com

Evelyn Chang
Associate at Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati
San Carlos, California, United States of America
Law Practice

Willing to help

* Willing to introduce others to my connections
* Willing to answer questions about my field/Conduct informational interview
* Willing to speak on campus about my career

User type: Alum (Degree and Certification)

Send message
Connecting With Your Community: #2: UCSFConnect.com
Connecting with your community: UCSFConnect.com
“Start with who you know

Activity 3: Identify potential mentors

5 minutes each (10 minutes total)

Identify one - two people you might like support from and why

(don’t think about how you’ll do it yet - let’s just stay with a specific person or archetype for right now.)
What good work will we do together today?

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Selena Student

My advisor is unavailable and I’m not sure about the professional etiquette of discussing this with my advisor or how to move forward.

Pradeep Postdoc

What should I do with this time to best position myself for industry?

- Why will people talk to you?
- How to approach people.

CRAFT

your invitation to engage – and taking a moment to consider why people would talk to you
Don’t specifically ask “will you be my mentor?” Instead frame your invitation as a small ask on your big adventure.

Want a strong relationship? Start small and give it time!

- Ask one question or for one piece of advice
- Ask a person to review (one piece) of a document (your aims, your CV, etc.)
- Ask to meet for 20 minutes of a person’s time for 1 topic/question
- Ask for a 30-minute informational interview (multiple topics)

…and build your relationship as you complete your adventure.
In Your **Personal World**

- **Love**
- **Attraction**
- **Familial Ties & Obligations**
- **Friendship**
- **Affection**
- **Respect**

**VS**

In Your **Academic/Professional World**

- **Colleagues**
- **Collaboration**
- **Curiosity**
- **Productivity**
- **Affinity**
- **Respect**

"Why will people help you?"
Why people in your professional community would help you?

1. Because you’re doing interesting work
2. Because you’re doing interesting work that could also forward their goals
3. To share their knowledge
4. Because they have hard won lessons
5. To repay a favor
6. To help a friend
7. They have the time/interest to do so
8. Because they wish someone had helped them
9. Because they consider it part of their job
10. You have an affinity to each other; they see themselves in you
11. Because they like something about you
12. Because you remind them of someone
13. Because you asked respectfully

You may not know why at first contact, but if you want to strengthen the relationship, you need to make if your goal to find out
My advisor is unavailable and I’m not sure about the professional etiquette of discussing this with my advisor or how to move forward.

- Why will people talk to you?
- How to approach people.

What should I do with this time to best position myself for industry?
Dear Dr. Parker,

I am a cell and molecular biologist completing my postdoc at UCSF, and for the past two months and have been speaking with UCSF alumni who have transitioned to industry about their experience. I was wondering if you would be willing to chat with me for about 20-30 minutes about your position as a team leader at Genentech.

I was particularly hoping to speak with you, as I see from your LinkedIn profile that you’ve moved between smaller start-ups and more established biotech companies.

I can be flexible to your schedule, and thank you in advance for considering my request. Please feel free to learn a little about my background from my LinkedIn profile at linkedin/PradeepP.

Regards,

Pradeep

Your approach needs to include 5 things:

1. Who you are (including your Affinity, Bond or Connection if there is one)
2. What you want
3. Why you’re asking them
4. A thank you for considering your request
5. How they can find out more about you
The basic structure of an informational interview: 4 parts

- I want to explore different postdoc opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>Future</th>
<th>Advice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ What their role is now</td>
<td>▪ What prepared them and positioned them for their postdoc?</td>
<td>▪ What opportunities open up for them 5-10 years in the future b/c of the postdoc</td>
<td>▪ What advice to they have for people seeking to succeed in their career path or their specific role.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Why did you choose this lab? How was it a good fit with your interests and career goals?
2. What is a typical day/week like?
3. What do you enjoy about your work/this lab?
4. What is most challenging about this postdoc?
5. What do you appreciate about our PI? Can you describe the ways they have helped you meet your training and career goals?
6. How did you organize your postdoc search?
7. What skills/experiences/support do you recommend developing before starting your postdoc?
8. What do you appreciate about our PI? Can you describe the ways they have helped you meet your training and career goals?
9. What factors helped you determine which postdoc was right for you? (mentors, etc.)
10. What opportunities open up for you based on the skills and experiences you developed here?
11. How long do postdocs seem to stay in the lab? What’s the main source of funding?
12. What is the one thing you wish you had known before choosing postdoc?
13. What types of research/levels of experience does a person need to have to really succeed in this lab? (Are they prepared to teach new skills? Does the PI have time? Etc.)
Putting it all together: Sample timing for a 30-minute conversation

- I want to know more about postdoc positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>3-5 minutes</td>
<td>Thank you so much for meeting with me. Let me start by saying that Dr. X says hello, and how much I appreciate them for connecting us. As I shared in my email, I'm in my last year at the biochemistry program at UCSF, and for the past two months, I've been speaking to people who chose postdocs in the areas of X and Y and located in Z part of the world. I've also been trying to make a specific point to meet fellow UCSF alums. I was thrilled when you agreed to meet with me, as I see you've been able to design a career that has allowed you to move between the public and private sectors; I'm particularly intrigued by your role in the governmental affairs office for the University of California. So, thank you for agreeing to talk with me about your career path.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Present | 3-5 minutes | 1. Why did you choose this lab? How was it a good fit with your interests and career goals?  
2. What is a typical day/week like?  
3. What do you enjoy about your work/this lab?  
4. What is most challenging about this postdoc?  
5. What do you appreciate about our PI? Can you describe the ways they have helped you meet your training and career goals?  
6. How did you organize your postdoc search?  
7. What skills/experiences/support do you recommend developing before starting your postdoc?  
8. What factors helped you determine which postdoc was right for you? (mentors, etc.)  
9. What is the one thing you wish you had known before choosing postdoc? |
| Past    | 3-5 minutes |                                                                                                                                 |
| Future  | 3-5 minutes |                                                                                                                                 |
| Advice  | 3-5 minutes |                                                                                                                                 |
| Close   | 1-2 minutes | Thank you so much for taking the time. I have a much better understanding of factors I should consider in choosing a postdoc. Thank you also for recommending X group – I'll join it. And thank you for recommending I chat with Selena Kyle. I will reach out to her. I'll definitely keep in touch. If I can ever return the favor – please reach out. |

Your Questions

I want to know more about postdoc positions
Dear Dr. Kent,

I’m in the sociology program at UCSF, and my research focuses on developing community interventions involving technology to tackle preventable diseases. I’ve been considering health policy and consulting as a career path, and for the past two months have been speaking with different professionals in the field.

I was wondering if you would be open to chatting with me for about 20-30 minutes about the field and your career path.

I was specifically interested in your background, because it is so diverse – your career path from your LinkedIn profile suggests you someone who has been able to apply their epidemiological expertise in the government, in think tanks, and in the private sector to truly make a difference in people’s lives.

Thank you for considering my request. My LinkedIn profile is DianaPrince/linkedin.com should you want to learn a bit more about me and my work.

Regards,

Diana Prince
Inviting someone to chat

Dear Dr. Jordan,

My K99 mentor, Marie Curie, suggested I reach out to you, as I shared with her that UPENN is the type of institution of interest to me. I'm wondering if you might have 30 minutes of time to chat with me about your experience at your institution.

To share a bit about my background, I'm an immunologist studying the role that Tregs play in type 1 diabetes. I've attached my CV to give you a sense of my background.

I realize that this is an exceptionally unusual time, so I would ask if you have any time in the next few months to chat. We could connect by Skype/Zoom/Facetime or phone if you are amenable; I can be flexible to your schedule.

Thank you for considering my request.

Barbara Gordon

Dear Dr. Spock,

I am a PhD student at UCSF, and for the past two months and have been speaking with UCSF alumni in health and science communications careers.

I was wondering if you would be willing to chat with me for about 20-30 minutes about your position as a researcher in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

I was intrigued by your perspective, as I see on your LinkedIn profile that you have researcher experience both at a governmental organization and in a nonprofit.

Thank you for considering my request. Please feel free to learn a little about my background from my LinkedIn profile at linkedin/bgordon.

Pavel Chekov

Dear Dr. Kenobi,

I know it's been a while, and I hope you're well. I'm finishing up my postdoc at UCSF in the next year and applying for tenure track R1 positions next fall. During this COVID-19 break, it seemed a good use of my time to begin working on my faculty application. I wonder if you would consider reading a draft of my research statement in the next few months.

It would be extremely helpful to your got perspective on my research program, because of your work on X, Y and Z. I would be grateful for any feedback you find necessary, but in particular, your thoughts on the scope of my work and its potential fundability would be most welcome.

If you are able, I defer to your preferred style of giving feedback (by email, video, phone, etc.)

Thank you for considering this, and I hope you're doing well during this unusual time.

Best,
Leia Skywalker
Your Turn! Invite someone to chat

Your Turn! Activity 4

4 minutes each

What’s your game plan? Based on what you’ve just heard – what’s 1-2 things you might do to approach a potential mentor?
What will we think about today?

**LISTEN**

to how to grow your professional relationship over time

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- Ask for a 30-minute informational interview (multiple topics)

…and build your relationship as you complete your adventure

**Be Collegial: Focus on being clear, concise and respectful:**

- Pay respect to their knowledge, expertise, experience. Tell them: why are you asking them?
- Thank them for their wisdom and support. They weren’t helpful? Thank them for taking the time
- Owe them: Let them know “If I can ever return the favor, please don’t hesitate to ask!”
Let people follow your adventure and see the dividends of their investment

Be Collegial: Reach out with updates

1. Whenever something the person said or did helps you/pays off

2. When you see/know something of interest to them (a contact, a paper, they post on social media)

3. Milestones (happy new year, etc.)
Let people follow your adventure and see the dividends of their investment

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<td>Chat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb.</td>
<td>Thanks again for the chat. It was helpful because of X. Would appreciate keeping in touch.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar.</td>
<td>Hope you’re well. Just wanted you to know that I did X (finished the paper, finished career exploration, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr.</td>
<td>I joined the Association of Women in Science. Thanks for suggesting it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Got positive feedback from Clark Kent from Amgen about my CV. Thanks for your help.</td>
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<td>Hope you’re well. This is a brief summary of what’s going on for me now.</td>
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Want more help? Visit us at career.ucsf.edu

Who can help?

- Informational Interview questions
- Sample LinkedIn profile
- Thank you notes
- Upcoming workshops
- Schedule counseling appointments
- Sign up to our listserv
- + more!
Our Fantastic Researcher Team, here for you!

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