



Optimizing Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Mentoring Practices

**Accomplished Community that Cultivates Excellence
and Success in Science (ACCESS) Program**

Faculty ACCESS Workshop

Facilitated by: Dr. Kelly A Diggs

[Kelly A Diggs Consulting LLC](#)

Dr. Kelly A Diggs



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Additional Resources:

- [Mentoring Self Reflection Document](#)
- [Mentoring Compacts/Contracts Examples – ICTR – UW–Madison](#)
- [Mentoring Alignment Toolkit](#)
- [IDP Templates for Early-Career Investigators](#)
- [Expectations Checklist for Mentees](#)

Links for Slide Presentations

- [Presentation Slides \(May 2023\)](#)
- [Wellness Session \(May 2024\)](#)
- [Wellness Session \(Mar 2025\)](#)
- [Presentation Slides \(May 2025\)](#)
- [Wellness Session \(March 2026\)](#)
- [Presentation Slides \(May 2026\)](#)

Workshop Description

Researchers often are not trained for their crucial role of mentoring trainees. Acknowledging this gap, researchers and curriculum developers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison developed an evidence-based research mentor training program called *Entering Mentoring*, an interactive mentor training curricular series designed for research mentors across career stages and disciplines. The training is designed to help mentors develop skills for engaging in productive, culturally responsive, research mentoring relationships -- relationships that optimize the success of both mentors and mentees. This interactive experience is aimed at promoting discovery and understanding.

During this training, you will experience the *Entering Mentoring* curricula. These curricula address important topics and concepts in research mentoring by creating learning communities and engaging mentors in activities, assignments, case studies, and facilitated discussions to solve mentoring dilemmas and share successful mentorship strategies. Themes include: aligning expectations, addressing equity and inclusion, articulating your mentoring philosophy and plan, and maintaining effective communication.

Learning Objectives:

In this workshop, participants will:

1. Increase their knowledge and skills of evidence-based research mentoring competencies
2. Reflect upon and identify characteristics of effective communication to improve communication with diverse mentees.
3. Design, align and clearly communicate expectations for the mentoring relationship
4. Increase understanding of and concrete strategies to address equity and inclusion and their influence on mentor-mentee interactions

Definition of Mentorship

Mentorship is a professional, working alliance in which individuals work together over time to support the personal and professional growth, development, and success of the relational partners through the provision of career and psychosocial support.

(from the [National Academies Report "The Science of Effective Mentorship in STEM"](#))

Principal Facilitator Biography

Kelly A Diggs, PhD

CEO, Kelly A Diggs Consulting, LLC and Science on a Dime



Dr. Kelly A Diggs is the founder and CEO of Kelly A. Diggs Consulting, LLC, a Virginia SWAM-certified black-owned and woman-owned micro-business dedicated to broadening representation, access, and belonging within the STEMM workforce through evidence-based mentorship and leadership development, justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) training, institutional consulting and strategic planning, and science outreach.

She is also a Senior Principal Facilitator and Consultant with the NIH-National Research Mentoring Network (NRMN) and the Center for the Improvement of Mentored Experiences in Research (CIMER). Since 2014, she has worked with over 100 colleges, universities, non-profit organizations, federal agencies, medical institutes, and even those in the private sector to support culture shifts

in work environments and to navigate conversations about culture, inclusivity, accessibility, and education for research scientists, executive leadership, students, and the general public. Her curricular expertise includes the NIH-funded mentorship education series, *Entering Mentoring*, *Facilitator Training for Entering Mentoring*, and *Culturally Aware Mentoring (CAM)*.

Dr. Diggs earned her BS in Biology from Alabama State University (2005) and her PhD in Biology and Biomedical Sciences from Washington University in St. Louis (2010), where she was the recipient of the NIH-Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award, Chancellor's Graduate Fellowship, Edward Bouchet Graduate Honor Society, and a National Cancer Institute Postdoctoral Supplement. Dr. Diggs currently resides in the metro DC area with her two children, Matthew and Miranda. In her spare time, she loves to travel, attend concerts, and complete home improvement projects.

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Aligning Expectations

Introduction

One critical element of an effective mentor-mentee relationship is a shared understanding of what each person expects from that relationship. Problems between mentors and mentees often arise from misunderstandings about expectations. Importantly, expectations change over time so frequent reflection and clear communication is needed to maintain a collaborative relationship.

Learning Objectives

Mentors will have the knowledge and skills to:

1. Effectively establish mutually beneficial expectations for the mentoring relationship
2. Clearly communicate expectations for the mentoring relationship
3. Align mentee and mentor expectations
4. Consider how personal and professional differences may influence expectations, including differences across disciplines when working in multidisciplinary teams

Checklist: Common Expectations for Mentors¹

Instructions: Below is a list of functional expectations for mentors. Which are your most fulfilling roles as a mentor? Which are your most challenging? (choose up to 3 for each). With your mentee, discuss your expectations and how they might impact your mentoring relationship.

1. Role modeling of appropriate faculty member attitudes, values and behaviors, such as:

- ☐ How to develop and maintain a professional network
- ☐ How to negotiate a difficult conversation with a colleague
- ☐ How to respond to a critical review of an article

2. Direct teaching of academic competencies and norms, including:

- ☐ Academic values and the role these values have in maintaining the academic enterprise
- ☐ Alternative perspectives
- ☐ Unwritten "rules of the game" in the department, discipline, school and university
- ☐ History, traditions, governance, and leaders of the department, discipline, school, and university
- ☐ Management of external funds, academic misconduct, and conflict of interest

3. Direct teaching of research competencies, including:

- ☐ Reviewing and synthesizing the literature
- ☐ Refining a research question
- ☐ Identifying funding sources for research
- ☐ Preparing human subjects approval requests
- ☐ Developing a research design
- ☐ Preparing a data collection strategy
- ☐ Managing data sets
- ☐ Analyzing data and interpreting results
- ☐ Selecting journals for results dissemination

4. Offering the mentee a collaborative role in research by:

- ☐ Analyzing data
- ☐ Recruiting subjects
- ☐ Co-authoring articles and grants
- ☐ Identifying supplemental projects

5. Providing advice for:

- ☐ Strategies for handling difficult work situations
- ☐ The merits of serving on particular committees or review panels
- ☐ Where to send study data
- ☐ Finding and securing resources
- ☐ The pros and cons of different academic appointments

¹ Adapted from: Bland, C.J., Taylor, A.L., Shollen, S. L., Weber-Main, AM, Mulcahy, P.A. (2009). Faculty Success Through Mentoring: A guide for mentors, mentees, and leaders. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. pp. 81-84.

- ☐ Pacing work towards promotion
- ☐ Suggestions for balancing "work and life"

6. Reviewing work and career progress by:

- ☐ Critiquing drafts of grant proposals and research papers and presentations for national meetings
- ☐ Reviewing goals, plans and annual performance review and promotion packets

7. Advocating for the mentee's success by:

- ☐ Protecting research time
- ☐ Giving exposure and visibility by providing the junior faculty member with assignments that increase visibility to organizational decision makers and exposure to future opportunities
- ☐ Reducing unnecessary risks that might threaten the mentee's reputation
- ☐ Showcasing mentee's work/accomplishments
- ☐ Recognizing talents
- ☐ Providing opportunities for participation in professional activities
- ☐ Providing access to key people and resources

8. Offering encouragement by:

- ☐ Demonstrating enthusiasm and confidence in the mentee's successful future
- ☐ Conveying positive regard
- ☐ Serving as a sounding board
- ☐ Providing a forum in which the mentee is encouraged to talk openly about anxieties and fears
- ☐ Providing moral and emotional support
- ☐ Giving positive feedback

9. Other expectations:

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

Tool: Mentoring Contract

Mentoring Compacts (also known as contracts, agreements, or charters) are written documents used to articulate expectations between mentors and mentees. They differ from an Individual development Plan (IDP) which focuses on short and long-term career plans and are focused on expectations for the working relationship on a daily or weekly basis. Compacts vary in their format and level of detail. It is recommended to revisit and revise them over time. Compacts provide mentors and mentees an opportunity to reflect upon, and articulate, their expectations and bring them into alignment.

Written expectations documents like compacts are important equity tools because: they (1) make invisible expectations visible, and (2) level the playing field among mentees.

Mentoring Compacts can cover a range of topics, including:

- Research productivity (designing experiments, writing, lab notebooks, timelines, etc.)
- Authorship (policies, timing of decisions, raising questions, etc.)
- Time (work hours, vacation, sick leave, etc.)
- Communication (frequency of meetings, preparation for and follow-up for meetings, method of communication, annual reviews, etc.)
- Respect (being a good team member, contributions to lab climate, acknowledging work of others, use of phones/ earphones in the lab, etc.)
- Professional development and networking (attending meetings, conferences, department/ campus seminars, IDPs, etc.)
- Resolving conflicts (when to bring up issues and with whom, negotiating institutional resources, etc.)

Compacts provide mentors and mentees an opportunity to reflect upon, and articulate, their expectations and bring them into alignment.

UAB CENTER FOR CLINICAL AND TRANSLATIONAL SCIENCE MENTORING CONTRACT²

This contract is intended to serve as a guideline to facilitate communications between a trainee (mentee) and his/her mentors. It is suggested that the document be thoroughly reviewed and completed by the mentee and his/her mentor individually, and then jointly review and discuss each person's answers in order to reach an agreement. The mentee should re-write the agreed upon answers before the contract is signed and dated by him/her and each mentor. The mentee is responsible for keeping the contract and reviewing/updating it as necessary.

1. What type of assistance does the mentee want from the mentor in achieving their career goals over the next 1-3 years? Where does the mentee hope their career will have taken them in five years?

2. What expectations do the mentor(s) have of the mentee?

3. What expectations does the mentee have of the mentors?

4. How often will you meet?

5. When and where will you meet?

6. For how long?

² Hook, Edward W III and Audrey Wrenn. *UAB Center for Clinical and Translational Science Mentoring Contract*. (<http://www.uab.edu/ccts/TrainingAndEduc/Documents/Mentor%20Contract%20-%203%20pages.pdf>)

7. Who will be responsible for scheduling the meetings?

8. What will meeting topics include?

9. What will be the ground rules for discussions? (E.g., confidentiality, openness, candor, truthfulness, etc.)

10. If problems arise, how will they be resolved?

11. Any concerns the mentee wants discussed and resolved?

12. Any concerns the mentors want discussed and resolved?

13. How will you know when the mentoring relationship has served its purpose and needs to be terminated?

14. We have agreed that our initial meetings will focus on these three topics:

a.

b.

c.

15. Any additional areas/issues you want to discuss and agree to?

Mentee Signature

Date

Mentor Signature

Date

Mentor Signature

Date

Recommendation: Review [Alignment Phase Checklist](#) to ensure all key areas are addressed before signing.

Tool: Priorities for Mentoring (“Mentoring for What?”)³

To be completed by both the mentee and mentor.

Prompt for Mentee: It is important to become clear about what your priorities are for professional development. This will enable mentor-mentee pairs to make priorities for how they will use their time together. Identify your top 4 or 5 areas of need.

Prompt for Mentor: It is important to become clear about what areas you feel you are most able to support in a mentee’s development. Identify the top 4 or 5 areas you feel most able to provide support to your mentee.

Prompt to Both: Compare your results. A “good” mentor-mentee relationship does not require a match between responses. The results (as indicated by degree of alignment between mentee needs and mentor ability) will help you start a conversation about the areas within which: (1) the mentor can provide the mentee with direct support; or (2) the mentor is better suited to focus their efforts on helping the mentee seek out resources they need from other mentors.

Domain of Mentoring Need	Mentee Need	Mentor Ability	Notes
Oral Communication			
Written Communication			
Managing Difficult Conversations			

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Managing Expectations			
Domain of Mentoring Need	Mentee Need	Mentor Ability	Notes
Work-Life Balance			
Affective (e.g., motivation, self-confidence, emotional support)			
Public Speaking			
Networking with Funding Sources			
Networking with Community Stakeholders			
Networking with Research Community			

Data Analysis			
Methods and Research Skills			
Domain of Mentoring Need	Mentee Need	Mentor Ability	Notes
Frameworks, Models			
Collaborating with Community Stakeholders			
Grant Writing			
Evaluation			
Writing for Community and/or Non-Academic Stakeholders			
Research Resources			

Research Integrity and Ethics			
Authorship			
Domain of Mentoring Need	Mentee Need	Mentor Ability	Notes
Career Options			
Job Opportunities			
Organizations			
Other:			
Other:			

Tool: Mapping Your Mentoring Network⁴

Prompt for Mentor and Mentee: Based upon the results indicated in the worksheet titled “Priorities for Mentoring,” utilize this worksheet to identify the constellation of mentors who will support the professional development priorities of the mentee.

Domain of Mentoring Need	Mentor - At My Institution	Mentor - External to My Institution	Mentor - Community Partner	Have No Mentor	Do Not Need a Mentor
Oral Communication					
Written Communication					
Managing Difficult Conversations					
Managing Expectations					
Work-Life Balance					
Affective (e.g., motivation, self confidence, emotional support)					

⁴ © 2016 Melissa McDaniels and the Center for the Improvement of Mentored Experiences in Research (www.cimerproject.org)

Domain of Mentoring Need	Mentor - At My Institution	Mentor - External to My Institution	Mentor - Community Partner	Have No Mentor	Do Not Need a Mentor
Public Speaking					
Networking with Funding Sources					
Networking with Community Stakeholders					
Networking with Research Community					
Data Analysis					
Methods and Research Skills					
Frameworks, Models					

Collaborating with Community Stakeholders					
Domain of Mentoring Need	Mentor - At My Institution	Mentor - External to My Institution	Mentor - Community Partner	Have No Mentor	Do Not Need a Mentor
Grant Writing					
Evaluation					
Writing for Community and/or Non-Academic Stakeholders					
Research Resources					
Research Integrity and Ethics					
Authorship					
Career Options					

Job Opportunities					
Domain of Mentoring Need	Mentor - At My Institution	Mentor - External to My Institution	Mentor - Community Partner	Have No Mentor	Do Not Need a Mentor
Organizations					
Other:					
Other:					

Tool: Process of Mentoring (The “How” of Mentoring)⁵

<u>EXPECTATIONS – GENERAL COMMUNICATION</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
Through what channel will we communicate? (e.g., email, text, cell phone, other)	
What is our expectation for a timely response?	
Are there certain days of the week or times of the day we prefer to communicate? Are there “sacred” times during which no communication should occur?	
To what degree is the content/context of our conversations confidential?	
What should we do if confidentiality is a concern?	
How should we handle conflict if it arises?	
<u>EXPECTATIONS – PROJECT MEETINGS</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
How often should we meet and for how long?	

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What channel should we use for these meetings (e.g., Skype, Zoom, other)?	
What should a mentor do in preparation for a project meeting?	
What should a mentee do in preparation for a project meeting?	
How goal oriented or free form should our meetings be?	
If one of us needs to cancel, what should we do?	
How should we follow-up on meetings? (e.g., communicate advice taken, information promised, support offered)	
<u>EXPECTATIONS – FORMAL FEEDBACK</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
In what form and how often will a mentor give the mentee feedback on project progress?	
How much time should be allowed to review short documents?	

How much time should be allowed to review longer documents? (e.g., grants, manuscripts)	
<u>EXPECTATIONS – WORKING WITH OTHER MENTORS</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
What other mentors will be involved in the mentee’s experience?	
How will the mentor interact with other mentors (if at all)?	
<u>EXPECTATIONS – COLLABORATION</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
Co-Authorship: Will we consider it? Under what circumstances?	
Grant Collaboration: Will we consider it? Under what circumstances?	
<u>OTHER EXPECTATIONS</u>	<u>NOTES</u>

Maintaining Effective Communication

Introduction

Good communication is a key element of any relationship and a mentoring relationship is no exception. As research mentors, it is not enough to say that we know good communication when we see it. Rather, it is critical that mentors reflect upon and identify characteristics of effective communication and take time to practice communication skills in the session and with their mentees.

Learning Objectives

Mentors will have the knowledge and skills to:

1. Provide constructive feedback
2. Communicate effectively across diverse dimensions including various backgrounds, disciplines, generations, ethnicities, positions of power, etc.
3. Identify different communication styles
4. Engage in active listening
5. Use multiple strategies for improving communication (in person, at a distance, across multiple mentors, and within proper personal boundaries)

Case Scenario: “Saying No” (CTR)⁶

Dr. Hill is a new clinical faculty hire in the Department of Psychiatry with a clinical appointment in pediatric psychiatry. She is also a recent recipient of an independent NIH Career Development Award. In part, due to the percent effort requirements of the grant, Dr. Hill found her first year on this grant very challenging, as she struggled to balance clinical responsibilities and research productivity. However, in just the last few months, Dr. Hill has figured out a schedule and an organizational system that is working well for her. She now feels that her research program is moving forward and she is meeting her clinical responsibilities. However, last week, Dr. Hill’s clinical department chair asked her to serve on a committee to develop a new anxiety treatment program for elementary-aged students. While she would be the only woman and underrepresented minority on the committee, it will require committee members to take on specific tasks outside of the meeting time. Dr. Hill cannot imagine finding time for this committee without both her research productivity and clinical obligations suffering. Dr. Hill feels that she must say no to her department chair but fears the repercussions both in terms of their relationship and the chair’s opinion of her.

Guiding Questions for Discussion:

1. What are the main themes raised in this case?
2. What advice could you give this scholar for framing a conversation with her advisor? Who else could she talk to?
3. What strategies have you used to assure that your mentee’s time is adequately protected? Your time?
4. How would you advise a scholar who is receiving conflicting career advice? No advice (due to lack of mentorship, sponsorship, etc.)?
5. How do we support scholars in identifying appropriate mentors? Navigating multiple mentors?

⁶ Adapted from Robert, S., Asquith, P. (2017). *Mentor Training for Clinical and Behavioral Researchers*. New York, NY: W.H. Freeman & Company.

Case Scenario: “Saying No” (v2)⁷

Your ACCESS mentee, Dr. Johnson, is a second-year Assistant Professor at Big10 U. Although she was assigned a mentor at her home institution, Dr. Johnson found her first year very challenging. In particular, she struggled to balance her teaching responsibilities with her research productivity. However, in just the last few months, she has figured out a schedule and an organizational system that is working well. She is finally feeling that her research program is moving forward and teaching is getting easier. However, last week, Dr. Johnson’s department chair asked her to join the chair’s new task force. While the task force’s charge appears to have potential to enhance her department, Dr. Johnson cannot imagine fitting the service request in without her own current research suffering. Dr. Johnson feels she must say no to her department chair, but fears the repercussions both in terms of their relationship and the chair’s opinion of her.

Guiding Questions for Discussion:

1. How would you advise Dr. Johnson on how to navigate this situation?
2. What important considerations should be discussed before Dr. Johnson decides (i.e. risks)?
3. What other key stakeholders should be involved in the discussion?
4. What strategies have you used to assure that your mentee’s time is adequately protected?

⁷Adapted from Robert, S., Asquith, P. (2017). *Mentor Training for Clinical and Behavioral Researchers*. New York, NY: W.H. Freeman & Company.

Activity: Active Listening

Role	Step 1: Share/Listen (2 min)	Step 2: Discuss (3 min)	Step 3: Debrief (5 min)
Speaker	Share a current mentoring relationship challenge.	Develop a plan to resolve the situation.	Listen to feedback from observer, ask questions, provide reflections on experience.
Listener	Practice active listening skills.	Ask clarifying questions and help the speaker develop a plan.	Listen to feedback from observer, ask questions, provide reflections on experience.
Observer	Observe and note tone, body language, facial expression, etc.	Observe and note tone, body language, facial expression, etc.	Report on observations. Did the listener actually understand the problem the speaker described?

Additional Resources:

- [Communication Styles Inventory](#)
- [Strategies to improve Interpersonal Communication](#)

Articulating Your Mentoring Philosophy and Plan

Introduction

Reflecting upon your mentoring relationships is a vital part of becoming a more effective mentor. This is especially important immediately following a mentor-training session so that you can consider how to implement changes in your mentoring practice based on the training. Reflection on your mentoring practice at regular intervals is strongly encouraged.

Learning Objectives

Mentors will:

1. Reflect on the mentor-training experience
2. Reflect on any intended behavioral or philosophical changes across the mentoring competencies
3. Articulate an approach for working with new mentees in the future

Mentoring Action Plan

Competency	What can I do differently in the future?
Maintaining Effective Communication	
Aligning Expectations	