

# American Statistical Association Mentorship Program

Originally Prepared by Committee on Applied Statisticians

Updated by Biopharmaceutical Section Mentoring  
Committee

## Welcome

Congratulations on your decision to participate in the mentorship program for statisticians sponsored by the American Statistical Association (ASA) Biopharmaceutical Section. This program is designed to establish a mentoring relationship that will provide you with an opportunity to realize both your personal and professional development goals. Mentorship involves a partnership between two people working collaboratively to enhance skills, share knowledge and to experience growth through a mutually beneficial interaction. Mentoring is a proven strategy for reaching one's goals at any stage of life.

We appreciate your involvement in this mentorship program. The welcoming materials included here represent a variety of resources on mentoring relationships for both mentors and mentees. We encourage you to spend some time reviewing the contents of these materials before meeting with your mentor or mentee. This will help you understand the mentor/mentee relationship, develop some expectations of yourself and begin to formulate an outlook for your relationship.

Please don't hesitate to contact us ([biopharmmentoring@gmail.com](mailto:biopharmmentoring@gmail.com)) with questions, comments or feedback.

## Expectations of the Program

### *Overview of Mentorship*

The purpose of the mentorship program is for statisticians to enhance the practice of statistics through achieving personal and professional goals. This will commonly occur through sharing of knowledge and experience between a professional practitioner and someone entering the profession of statistics. The many ways in which people make career transitions into statistics, however, means that a constructive mentorship relationship can take many forms and may occur at any stage of life.

### *Mentor's Role*

A mentor will generally be an experienced statistical practitioner, perhaps older than the

mentee. Such an individual will be available to listen to and offer suggestions for situations the mentee may feel unprepared to handle on her own. The mentor's primary function is not to serve as an adjunct statistical consultant, but rather to advise the mentee on other matters of professional performance. Consequently, the support provided by the mentor will often facilitate the goals of the team to which the mentee contributes to or the mission of the employing organization. The mentor thereby contributes to enabling the mentee to adapt to the needs of the given circumstances. The following are some of mentor's roles:

- Teacher – share knowledge and experience
- Problem solver – identify resources and suggest alternative approaches
- Motivator – encourage and support
- Coach – offer positive and constructive feedback
- Guide – help mentee identify and set realistic goals.

#### *Benefits to the Mentor*

- A connection with skills and perspectives of recently trained professionals
- Development and enhancement of communication and leadership skills
- Satisfaction of passing on skills and knowledge that can enhance the career and personal growth of the mentee and contribute to maturity of the profession

#### *Mentee's Role*

A mentee acknowledges his intention to enter a new stage of development as a statistical practitioner by expressing a willingness to seek counsel on applying their knowledge and skills to the practice of statistics. Mentees seek to accelerate professional growth through a one-to-one relationship with a mentor. Mentees may choose to implement suggestions received from a mentor but will retain responsibility for their implementation in the fulfillment of their duties. The following are some of the mentee's desired traits:

- Learner – a strong desire to learn new skills and abilities
- Decision maker – take charge of your professional development
- Initiator – be willing to explore new challenges
- Risk taker – be willing to fail and then to recover
- Goal setter – set challenging goals.

### *Benefits to the Mentee*

- An introduction to the organizational culture and the applied statistician's role
- A source of professional/social contacts with other applied statisticians in the field – “plugs you into the power network”
- A role model
- A source of encouragement and motivation leading to greater self-confidence and esteem
- A sounding board for questions about methods of analysis and communication of results
- Help in establishing professional development plans, career goals and acceleration of their achievement.

### **Mentorship Lifecycle**

Mentoring has a finite life cycle consisting of four stages.

- Establishing rapport
- Identifying directions
- Making progress
- Moving on

**Establishing rapport** involves the mentor and mentee working together with mutual respect for each other's roles. Each will need to exchange views on what the relationship is and is not. They should agree to work together in a way that is mutually satisfactory – for example whether the mentor is prepared to accept unscheduled telephone calls or e-mails, or whether all contact should be scheduled in advance. They will also need to set up a way of calling meetings that covers frequency, duration and method of contact (i.e. e-mail, telephone, other communication methods). Part of establishing rapport may be for the mentor to gain an understanding of various characteristics of the mentee's employer, and thus the culture in which they the mentee works. If the mentor or mentee feels there may be conflicts of interest or the possibility of security breaches, care will be needed to avoid such interactions.

If in establishing rapport a mentor or a mentee feels that they are not well matched, either party may initiate withdrawing from the program.

**Identifying directions** is likely to be the stage in the mentorship life cycle during which there is the most intensive contact between mentors and mentees. It will involve the two parties in a relationship working together to diagnose the mentee's interests and goals.

While setting priorities, mentors will need to be sensitive to the fact that they have a responsibility for offering guidance to the mentee. Mentees should be encouraged to freely discuss early stage objectives. The primary outcome of this stage should be a personal development plan with target dates and agreed outcomes, drawn up and agreed upon between mentors and mentees.

**Making progress** once objectives and priorities have been set and a personal development plan agreed upon is the next stage of the life cycle. During this stage, mentor and mentee will frequently review progress against the agreed plan, adapting it as necessary. They may wish to refine the frequency with which reviews should be carried out. The mentee is responsible for raising concerns outside of set review times so that problems can be dealt with expeditiously. Periodic review of progress by both mentor and mentee is important. Mentors should help mentees to assess the value to them of each activity engaged in as soon as possible after its completion.

The final stage of the life cycle is **moving on**. A natural point for beginning to make plans for moving on is when the mentor and mentee jointly feel the mentee has reached the goals established at the outset. The structured mentoring relationship will normally end when the mentee attains his or her goals. However, if both parties are willing to continue the relationship it will be necessary to revisit how they see it evolving, and to revisit the informal agreement.

## **Logistics of Program**

### *Matching Mentors and Mentees*

Mentors and mentees are matched based on their CVs and the results of a short matching survey. If you feel you are not a good match for your mentor/mentee, please discuss your concerns with your mentor/mentee. Perhaps new topics should be discussed that will work for both mentor and mentee. If your relationship with mentor/mentee is not working out as you had hoped, it's OK to terminate your relationship.

### *Modes of Contact*

Telephone calls, video conferencing (e.g. Google Hangouts, Skype, Zoom, Microsoft Teams) and face-to-face meetings are great ways to establish rapport, identify directions, make progress toward goals, and discuss moving on. Emails could be useful supplements to the above modes of contact but should not replace scheduled meetings.

### *Interactions*

The **first meeting** should be initiated by the mentor. Provide contact details such as your

email, telephone number, times when you are available to meet. Mentees, if you don't hear from your mentor prior to attending the JSM, please reach out to help facilitate the discussion.

Meetings may happen in person, on the phone, or through video conferencing. Please try to use low cost methods to meet. If the proposed methods do not work for your pair, please contact us at [biopharmmentoring@gmail.com](mailto:biopharmmentoring@gmail.com) as we may be able to help find alternate ways to meet.

In the first meeting, introduce yourselves. As a good ice breaker include things about yourself such as your name, where you work, how long you've been in the workforce, the types of projects you are currently working on, and/or your statistical interests. Next, discuss what you hope to gain from your mentorship experience. Mentees, be as specific as possible in your comments to start moving towards a strong mentor/mentee relationship. Then continue to work through either introductions or topics specific to your interests. At the end of each meeting, it may be helpful to summarize key points discussed and to confirm the next time you will meet. Please see the lifecycle discussion for more details.

### *Frequency of Meetings*

Mentors and mentees should plan to have their introductory meeting by the end of the JSM. If one or more person is not attending the JSM, then the meeting will likely be not in person. Otherwise make an effort to meet at least once at the JSM. It may be at a social mixer, walking through a poster session or the marketplace, for a meal, or before or after a talk. As time permits, consider asking your mentee (or mentor) to spend some time with you at JSM to get to know one another. About one meeting per month is typical, but your specific needs and schedules will determine what the appropriate frequency is for you.

To maintain momentum, additional meetings are expected throughout the year. We recommend that each mentor/mentee pair meet about once a month between August and December of this year. You can then choose to meet monthly or bi-monthly after the new year until next year's JSM. We recommend that you have at least 3 meetings before December this year.

### *Moving On*

This program is a voluntary opportunity and we hope you take advantage of this opportunity. As members of this program, we ask that you continue to meet for a full

year, with monthly meetings at the beginning and as needed thereafter. If your experiences warrant extending the relationship, we encourage you to continue to meet after the program is complete.

We will have a survey to measure your satisfaction with the program. Participants will be asked to complete the survey mid-program and at the end of the mentorship program. The survey results will be analyzed and discussed with key ASA stakeholders in anticipation of the next mentorship cycle.

Assuming the program goes well, the results of the analysis and discussions will then feed into future recommendations. We may also ask you to nominate others for a mentorship program and/or ask you to serve as a mentor or mentee in the future. Your satisfaction and participation are paramount to our program. Thank you for participating.

## **Mentor FAQs**

*My mentee has asked me for advice on methodology to apply to a specific problem, as though I was a consultant.* Technical advice is absolutely within the range of expected conversation. As a mentor, you need to establish which methodological material you are comfortable sharing. You may not be in a position to answer a question, either because you don't know the answer or because what you do know is proprietary or confidential information. You as the mentor need to set the boundaries with your mentee.

*I feel that my mentee's career path is moving away from statistics.* Part of the journey for your mentee may involve them deciding if statistics is the right career field for them. Be supportive regardless of what path they choose. Ultimately, if they make a career move and change professions, you should probably discuss whether the mentorship should continue or not.

*My mentee seems to have lost interest... (alternatively) My mentee gets in touch with me far more frequently than I imagined, and I just don't have the time to respond.* The frequency of the interaction should be established early in the relationship so that both sides have clear expectations. Deviations from the agreed upon frequency interaction should be discussed politely.

*My mentee complains about an employer's unreasonableness in not allowing the mentee to take the training that they think they need. Should I intervene?* As a mentor, focus on supporting the mentee rather than intervening directly. Help them identify ways for them to learn and grow within the environment they're in. You could look for free or lower cost options for training, or depending on the motivation of the mentee, there may be certain

investments your mentee is willing to pay for themselves.

## **Mentee FAQs**

*My mentor doesn't give me as much attention as I feel I need: what should I do?* You should establish a frequency of interaction that both you and your mentor are comfortable with and committed to following. If they have not been able to meet as planned, you should politely work with them to re-schedule. If after multiple attempts you have been unable to meet, you will need to consider finding a new mentor.

*The advice I am getting from my mentor is completely at odds with what I am getting from my line manager, in terms of what training/continuing education I should be taking. Whose advice should I take?* Ultimately, you as a professional are responsible for your own career development. Don't dismiss either person's recommendations immediately, but carefully lay out a plan that will help you grow, recognizing that your employer will have areas they will want you to focus on. Talk with your manager regarding your development goals and work to find middle ground if necessary.

*I would like to reply to a job advertisement, but the post is in my mentor's organization. Can I do so?* We can't think of a reason why you shouldn't apply for the position. In fact, you may want to let your mentor know when you do so. Depending on the nature of your interactions, your mentor may wish to exclude themselves from the interviewing process.

## **Sample Mentoring Program Evaluation**

1. What did you like best about the mentoring program?
2. What did you like least about the mentoring program?
3. What were the elements of your mentoring agreement with your mentee/mentor?
4. Did your mentee/mentor honor your agreement?
5. How would you rate the time commitment of the mentoring program?
6. How many meetings did you have with your mentee/mentor?
7. To what extent did mentoring address the development needs of your mentee/mentor?
8. Was the mentoring welcome package useful in introducing the mentoring program?
9. What is your overall rating of the mentoring program?
10. What additional comments would you like to make to improve the mentoring program?

## **List of Program Resources**

Mentoring Program Committee of the ASA Biopharmaceutical Section webpage:

<https://community.amstat.org/biop/aboutus/sub-committees/mentoring>

Additional resources on mentoring:

<https://community.amstat.org/tshs/mentoring>

<http://community.amstat.org/CAS/mentoring1/new-item/clearinghouserresources>