



Mentoring and Mentoring Up – Case Studies Workshop #2: Aligning Goals and Expectations

Case Study #1: Multiple mentoring layers (from *Entering Mentoring*, pp 35-36)

My adviser accepted a student for an undergraduate research experience without asking any of us graduate students if we had time for her. She was assigned to the most senior graduate student for mentoring, but he was in the process of writing his dissertation and had no time to help her with a project. He asked me if I would take her on and have her help me with my research project. I agreed, assuming that I was now her mentor and not understanding that she was expected to produce a paper and give a presentation on her research at the end of the summer.

We worked together well initially as I explained what I was doing and gave her tasks that taught her the techniques. She didn't ask many questions, nodded when I asked if she understood, and gave fairly astute answers when asked to explain the reason for a particular method.

However, I became frustrated as the summer progressed. Instead of asking me questions, she went to the senior graduate student for help on my project. He did not know exactly what I was doing, but didn't let me know when he and she were meeting. He even took her in to our adviser to discuss the project, but didn't ask me to be involved. As more of this occurred, the student became quieter around me, didn't want to share what she had done while I was out of the lab, and acted as though there was a competition with me for obtaining the sequence, rather than it being a collaborative effort.

I didn't think too much about this and didn't recognize the conflict. She obviously didn't like sharing the project with me, which was even more evident when she wrote the paper about our research without including my name. She didn't want to give me a copy of the draft to review and I only obtained a copy by cornering the senior graduate student after I overheard them discussing the methods section and asked for a copy. I wasn't provided a final version of the paper nor was I informed of when or where she was presenting the research until two days before her presentation when I happened to see her practicing it with the senior student.

I felt very used throughout the process and disappointed that I didn't see what was occurring and address it sooner. In fact, I am not sure if addressing it would have solved the problems I had—being stuck in between a student and the person she saw as her mentor. The difficult thing, for me at least, is identifying that there is a problem before it is too late to bow out or to bring all parties to the table to discuss a different approach to the mentoring. Do you have any suggestions for me? I don't ever want to encounter this again and would like to head it off as soon as I can recognize that it is occurring."

- *If you were the student in this case, how would you feel?*
- *What were some of the hidden goals and expectations for each person in this case? Underline the specific hidden goals and expectations in the text above.*
- *What could realistically have been done differently to have avoided the problems?*