

# Mentoring for Independence and Moving On: Evolving Roles for Postdoctoral Mentees

Postdoc Section GREAT Group

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# The Evolution

- **2000** Benefits for Postdocs at Universities
- **2001** Policies for Postdocs at Universities
- **2003** National Postdoc Association (NPA) founded
- **2004** NAS “Bridges to Independence”  
Career Transition Awards (K awards)  
Mandate for mentoring & training career skills
- **2005** National Career Development Efforts  
Careers Outside Academe Critical Conversation
- **2006** The AAMC “Compact” Defines Responsibilities-  
for Mentors and Mentees
- **2007** AAMC GREAT Group Postdoc Section Created  
“Postdocs are Trainees” NIH
- **2008** NIH/NSF --Skills to be acquired and outcomes  
Over 100 Postdoc Offices



# Evolution of Expectations of Mentees

- National Expectations - The Compact
- University Expectations - Postdoc Policies
  - **Postdoc Offices Formed** to Support New Expectations for Mentees
  - **Mentees' Role Evolves** with New Attitudes
    - Role as prime mover and attitude this is my right, and my responsibility



# Evolution of Roles of Mentees

1. Mentee responsible for **directing own career**
2. Mentee responsible to **investigate career options**
3. Mentee responsible to **use opportunities and develop skills necessary for chosen career path**



# First Evolving Role: Mentee Prime Mover of Own Career

Compact AAMC “I acknowledge that I have the primary responsibility for the development of my own career”

## In Research

- Growth in independent research
- Communication to mentor and others
- Learning continually

## In Chosen Career Path

- I am the driver, not the mentor



# Message in Postdoc Orientation

## “Your Goals During Postdoc Training”

- Goal One – Research

- \*\*Publish –first author
- \*\*Capture funding
- \*\*Network
- \*\*Communicate
- Establish a “Track Record of Performance in Research”

- Goal Two --Finding and Directing own Career Path

- \*\*Explore career options
- \*\*Learn career skills
- \*\*Use opportunities
- \*\*Communicate
- Establish a “Track Record of Interest and Skill in the Chosen Career”



# Possible Mentee *Challenges* in Accepting Responsibility for Career

- Change in attitude from graduate student
- Overcoming personality and/or ethnic predisposition
- Communicating personal topics or career path decisions

# Second Evolving Role: Mentee is Prime Investigator of Career Options

Compact: “I recognize that I must take a realistic look at career opportunities and follow a path that matches my individual skills, values, and interests.”

- Assume: Postdoc can pursue various career paths without reservation.



# Mentee *Challenges* from Role Two

- Mentee ventures **outside of “comfort zone”**
- Some mentees may not possess the **“people skills” required** for exploring careers



## Third Evolving Role: Mentee Seeks and Uses Career Development Training

Compact AAMC: “I will actively seek opportunities outside the laboratory (e.g. professional development seminars and workshops in oral communication, scientific writing, and teaching), to develop the skill set of professional skills necessary to be successful for my chosen career.”

- Assume: Mentee research training does not prepare the Postdoc for all careers



# Mentee *Challenges* from Role Three

- Change Mentee's attitude and time management to explore and use outside opportunities/training
- Change of Mentor's attitude toward career development and postdoc role
  - Mentee may fear mentor disapproval of time away from lab

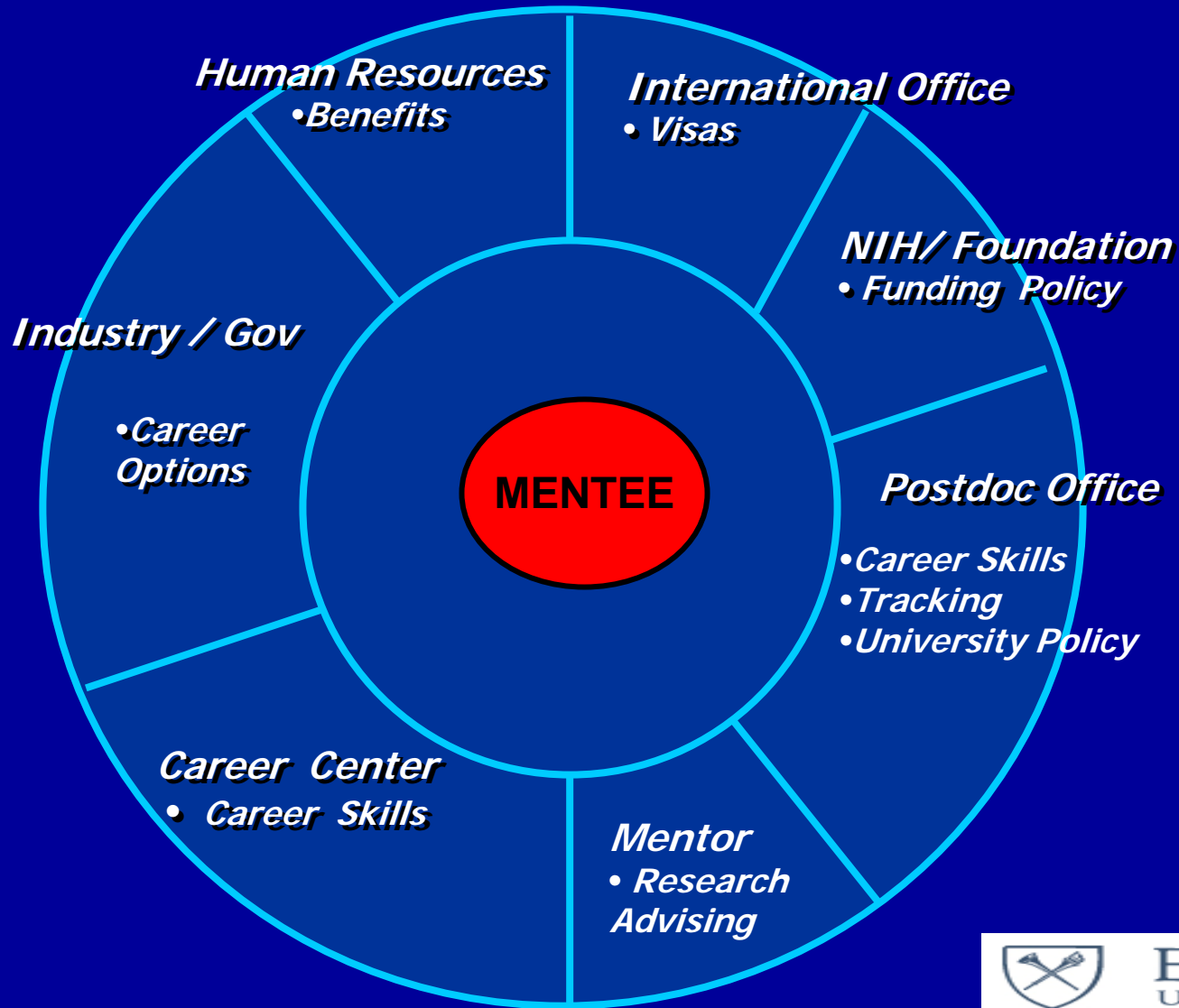
**The Postdoc Office  
The University  
The Nation**



**“It Takes a Village”**

**TO SUPPORT MENTEE’S NEW ROLES**

# Agency and Function



# How have PDO's responded to support Mentee's new roles?

## In Planning for Careers

- New Postdoc Orientations (72%)
- Individual Career Development Plan (IDP) (39%)
- The Annual Progress Report – an evolving effort and may be an evolving career goal (47%)
- Bioscience Career Fairs
- “What can you do with a Ph.D.?” Events
- Examples of Best Practices



# How have PDO's responded to support Research Training?

## In Planning for Research

- Grant Writing Workshops
- Science Writing Workshop
- Postdoc Research Symposiums
- How to Manage a Lab Series
- Workshops on CV/Resumes, Interviewing, Applying for a Job, etc
- Examples of Best Practices



# How have the University & Village responded to support Mentees' roles?

- International Office Workshops (63%)
- ESL Courses
- Regional Industry/Pharma Events
- Tuition remission by Universities
- University Postdoc Associations
  - Social Events (71%); Liaison to Administration (63%); Career Programs (51%); Orientations (37%)
- Examples of Best Practices



# Has the evolution of Mentees' roles resulted in a better world??

- **OUTCOMES for the University – Building of Bridges**
  - Using and bridging resources of entire University
  - Multiple University Programs and Faculty asking for similar Career Development supports for trainees and Junior Faculty
  
- **OUTCOMES for Mentors**
  - More creative ideas from active not passive mentees
  - Mentees' communication better (written and oral)
  - Mentors compete to be recognized as “Outstanding Mentor”
  
- **OUTCOMES for Administrators**
  - Professional behavior of mentees in administrative issues



# Evolving Roles for Postdoc Mentees: 2008 and Beyond

- **Creator of collaborations** and ideas
- Emerging Independence of **professional versus “hired hand”**
- Possibly required **“competencies”** during postdoc training?

# What is needed in the future?

How will we know whether the evolving roles of mentees are and will lead to success for both mentees and the research enterprise?

