

Appendix 4A: Considerations for Mentors

- If you wait for talent to find you, you may miss people who operate in ways that do not draw attention to themselves.
- Give criticism as well as praise when warranted. Always present criticism in a private and nonthreatening context with specific suggestions for improvement.
- Help mentees learn what kinds of available institutional support junior persons should seek in order to further their own career development. Tell them about funds to attend a workshop, for example, or release time for special projects.
- Tell your protege if she asks for too much or too little of your time.
(Adapted from Fort, D. (ed.), *A Hand Up: Women Mentoring Women in Science*, Washington, DC: Association of Women in Science, 1993)
- Work toward a relationship in which the protege will feel free to ask questions and give you information. Proteges benefit in proportion to their comfort in asking questions of the mentor and mentors then observe where proteges are in their thinking. Further, if proteges feel comfortable sharing information, the mentor has a line of communication to other levels in the organization.
- Tell proteges where they stand -- how they are doing, whether they are meeting your expectations, and if they are showing what it takes to move up.
- Each institution has its own culture with often elaborate, conventions governing how things get done and what is valued. Therefore, following major meetings and situations, debrief the protege: interpret why you did what you did and offer an analysis of the players and their stake in the game; what the hidden agendas were.
- Develop clear parameters for the relationship. From the beginning, openly discuss how you will handle problems that can arise in mentoring women compared to men. Do not shy away from awkward issues because the unresolved issues are ones most likely to come back to haunt you.
- Establish a plan for legitimizing your protege. Because of cultural stereotypes and earlier isolation, special efforts may be needed to legitimate your female protege. If the mentor openly communicates the protege's worth and potential, this sets the stage for how the protege will be treated by others. Also don't assume women and minorities know the rules as you know them.
- Be sensitive to and deal firmly with slurs, offensive comments, and jokes made at the expense of women and minorities.
- Do not allow others to "exceptionalize" your female/minority proteges. Sometimes when a woman or minority does well, in an attempt to be complimentary, her or his performance is categorized as different from the way others of her or his race or gender would perform. If you allow the protege to be exceptionalized, it thwarts your attempts to develop an organizational attitude that talent comes in many packages and that the organization is devoted to identifying and developing it wherever it is found.

- Mentoring relationships end at some point. A relationship may die a slow death or it may be killed abruptly through disagreement or an act of betrayal. And, while you have accomplished the goals that initially brought you together, the history and personal attachment may interfere with both you and the protege letting go. These possibilities make ending the relationship potentially difficult. Remember that the ultimate goal of mentoring is successful career advancement; you want your protege to move on to bigger and better things.

(Adapted from Mertz, N., et al., *Executive Mentoring: Myths, Issues, Strategies*, Memphis, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1990)