Expert Voices

Questions & Answers relating to cultural and background experiences

Do you have a question that you’d like answered? Email us your question and we’ll get it answered for you.

Q1: What should you do if you suspect/feel you are being treated differently from the majority trainees in the lab, e.g., as hired help or a less-valued person in the leadership of the lab?

By the lab mentor
By the other trainees in the lab
By technicians in the lab

Q2: What should a graduate student do if mentor tells her/him to try for “lesser” postdoc position or permanent position?

Q3: How would you suggest trainees who have trouble dealing with critical comments on their science or writing learn to handle it better?

Q4: Are there times when a trainee might have to challenge his/her mentor about why something was done or not done? What is the best way to do that?

Q5: If English is not a trainee’s first language, is it important that they learn to write and speak more fluently in order to be successful as a scientist?

If so, what is a good way to gain that knowledge or experience?

Q6: How important is networking for trainees and scientists?

• Is it especially important for minority scientists?
• Is it especially important for women scientists?

Q7: How does a trainee find a balance between being confident and firm vs. being seen as aggressive?

Q8: Is it perceived by others to be a sign of weakness if you ask them for help in reading a draft manuscript or listening to a practice talk or lecture?

Q9: Is it important for minority trainees to have minority as well as majority mentors? If so, why?

Q10: Does a trainee need more than one mentor?

Q11: How does someone identify a good mentor?

Q12: Do minority or women candidates tend to negotiate positions and hiring packages differently than majority candidates?

• If so, what are the pros and cons to their approach?
• Should they do anything differently?

Q13: What should a scientist do if he/she thinks he/she is being overlooked for promotion opportunities or preferred Com. assignments?

Q14: Who is/are the best people to look to for support as a new investigator, e.g., chair, dean, senior colleagues?

Q15: What is the best way to deal with being the only minority or woman in a department or on a Com.?

Q16: Other Comments:

Q17: Advice Panel volunteers from Advisory Board

Q18: What should you do if you suspect/feel you are being treated differently from the majority trainees in the lab, e.g., as hired help or a less-valued person in the leadership of the lab?

By the lab mentor

Joe Dunbar
Instructor, PST Live Courses
Past Chair, Wayne State Univ. SOM

Before you rush to judgment you should seriously evaluate whether you are actually being treated differently. If the offending person is the lab mentor a positive approach should be a first step. One positive approach that I would suggest would be to ask the lab mentor to participate in all aspects of the
**Greg Florant**

- Instructor, PST Live Courses
- Past Chair, Porter Physiology Develop. Com.
- Member, Education Com.
- Past Member, Women in Physiology Com.
- Professor, Colorado State Univ.

First, one should have a one-on-one conversation with the mentor. You should express your views and back them up with facts and/or observations. If you feel that you're not getting anywhere or being dismissed, then you should go to your mentor's boss (Chair of the Department or Dean) and discuss the situation. If nothing results, you should see the Human Resource people.

**Keith Jackson**

- Instructor, PST Live Courses
- Asst. Prof., Univ. of Louisiana Sch. of Pharmacy, Monroe

First speak with the other members of the lab, the graduate students, technicians, post docs, etc. Ask them in confidence their opinions of your mentor? Do they enjoy working in the lab? Why did they choose your mentor's lab to work in? This information will first allow you to determine if you are being single out or if the lab in general feels the same way as you. After speaking with the other lab members, I would organize and outline the information gained from the lab, along with your feelings on paper and speak with your mentor directly. Let your mentor know in a respectful way from your notes that you are feeling mistreated and also the incidences, and specific actions, which caused you to feel this way. During the meeting, try to establish a regime that will be amenable to both you and your mentor.

**By the other trainees in the lab**

- Discuss the situation with the trainees; they may feel the same way. I would do this first. If all of you (Trainees) feel that communication is lacking and that you're all being treated unfairly or significantly different, then have a group meeting with the mentor. If nothing is resolved at that meeting, then perhaps one on one meetings with the mentor and his/her boss should be initiated.

**Joe Dunbar**

- Instructor, PST Live Courses
- Past Chair, Wayne State Univ. SOM
- Associate Vice President of Research, Wayne State Univ. SOM

Before you rush to judgment you should seriously evaluate whether you are actually being treated differently. If you are being treated differently by the other trainees first confirm your suspicion and then directly ask the individual why do they feel it is necessary to treat you differently. In most cases this approach is more effective on an individual basis.

**Keith Jackson**

- Instructor, PST Live Courses
- Asst. Prof., Univ. of Louisiana Sch. of Pharmacy, Monroe

Organize your feelings on paper noting the incidences and specific actions by the other trainees that have caused you to feel this way. Speak to the other trainees individually and let them know your feelings and that you would like these actions to cease. If the situation doesn't change to your satisfaction, inform
your mentor of the problems that you are having, and let your mentor know that you have spoken with the other trainees directly about the problem, yet nothing has changed.

**Keith Jackson**
- Instructor, PST Live Courses
- Asst. Prof., Univ. of Louisiana Sch. of Pharmacy, Monroe

Organize your feelings on paper noting the incidences and specific actions by the technicians that have caused you to feel this way. Speak to the technicians individually and let them know your feelings and that you would like these actions to cease. If the situation doesn't change to your satisfaction, inform your mentor of the problems that you are having, and let your mentor know that you have spoken with the individuals directly about the problem, yet nothing has changed.

**Joe Dunbar**
- Instructor, PST Live Courses
- Past Chair, Wayne State Univ. SOM
- Associate Vice President of Research, Wayne State Univ. SOM

Before you rush to judgment you should seriously evaluate whether you are actually being treated differently. If you are being treated differently by a technician the first approach would be to state directly to the technician that you expect to be treated in a professional, respectful manner. If it is not corrected you should express your concerns to the laboratory mentor.

**Greg Florant**
- Instructor, PST Live Courses
- Past Chair, Porter Physiology Develop. Com.
- Member, Education Com.
- Past Member, Women in Physiology Com.
- Professor, Colorado State Univ.

Speak with the technician. If nothing changes then speak to their boss's.

**Francisco Andrade**
- Past Member, Career Opportunities in Physiology Com.
- Member, Women in Physiology Com.
- Assoc. Prof., Univ. of Kentucky COM

If a mentor suggests a “lesser” postdoc or permanent position, there is a disagreement on career goals. The trainee should initiate a discussion on personal career goals and expectations with the mentor. The mentor may have a more realistic view of the student's potential, or the perception of the new job as “lesser” may be incorrect. In any event, the trainee should get his/her mentor's opinion but always keeping in mind that it is just an opinion. The final decision is the student's.

**Keith Jackson**
- Instructor, PST Live Courses
- Asst. Prof., Univ. of Louisiana Sch. of Pharmacy, Monroe

Organize your feelings on paper noting the incidences and specific actions by the technicians that have caused you to feel this way. Speak to the technicians individually and let them know your feelings and that you would like these actions to cease. If the situation doesn't change to your satisfaction, inform your mentor of the problems that you are having, and let your mentor know that you have spoken with the individuals directly about the problem, yet nothing has changed.

**Frank Belloni**
- Chair, Communications Com.

The student should begin by trying to understand the mentor’s recommendation.
Does the mentor share the student's perception about which position is the "lesser"? If not, why not? Why does the mentor recommend one position over the other? Is it based on a perception of the student's abilities? Perhaps the mentor feels that the student's personality or work habits would be poorly compatible with those of the supervisor in the student's "preferred" position? Or, the mentor might feel that the student would acquire a greater number of new skills in the "lesser" position because the "preferred" lab use a similar set of techniques to those the student already has?

The student should reflect on this input in order to benefit from its valid insights, without accepting it uncritically as authoritative.

The student should try to construct a case as to why the "preferred" position is good for the student's professional development. This could help the student come to an informed opinion, could serve as a basis for discussion of the options with the mentor, and could provide the underpinnings of a "sales pitch" when it comes to persuading the new supervisor to hire the student.

The question implies that the student is trying to decide which position to "try for" or "apply for." If so, why should the student not apply for both positions, since there is no guarantee that either one will be offered?

In the end, the student should remember whose career is of interest here. The student should take the mentor's recommendations under advisement, but not regard them as obligatory.

The graduate student needs to understand that the mentor should only be providing guidance and educated opinions to help the students make informed decisions, and to that end, the ultimate decision lies with the student. The students should realize that their mentor has been through the process before and brings a different and more informed perspective that doesn't necessarily mean its correct, but this is not a right or wrong answer. Regardless, the student should seek more than 1 opinion and speak to people from different institutions to get various perspectives. "Lesser" in one person's eyes doesn't necessarily translate across all backgrounds and perspectives. "Lesser" is relative so they have to understand that.

One of the most important relationships during graduate training is the one between the mentor and student. While personalities may differ, the more honest and forthright such a relationship is, the more beneficial the training will become. Several programs review the progress of their students on a yearly basis. In such reviews, the mentor
and training faculty (Com. members) should provide a list of accomplishments as well as areas of professional skills that need to be developed. With such a yearly review, the student should be quite aware of whether he/she should pursue a top-level postdoctoral and/or faculty position. The implementation of such reviews usually identify the areas of improvement that are needed to attain such a position. A student should seek such a formal review on a yearly basis regardless of whether it is required by the training program and such reviews can be performed by the thesis Com.

Despite every effort to develop into a top-level graduate student or post-doctoral fellow, the progress of some individuals is slower than others. In these instances, the advisor may suggest that the student should pursue a lower-level position. Before becoming discouraged, the student should do several things. First, the student should have a honest conversation with the mentor regarding such advice. For example, are there certain professional skill sets that the student needs to improve in order to succeed in a competitive or top-level environment? If a honest yearly review is performed throughout graduate school, such improvements should not be surprising. Second, the student should seek advice from other faculty or thesis Com. members. As a current investigator, I always sought advice from numerous faculty members at every stage in my career. Some of this advice differed from one person to the next, but I have always been able to make a confident decision once I received feedback or advice. In the end, mentors or Com. members may still advise a student to seek a “lesser” position. In these instances, the mentors or Com. members may be trying to identify an environment in which the student can succeed which is vitally important as a career. At times, these “lesser” or alternative options may provide additional time for the student to further develop necessary professional skills (as a faculty member, I continue to develop mine) or these other options permit the student to take advantage of the skills the student possesses. In these instances, the mentor may suggest that the student apply for teaching positions rather than a research track. The advice is designed to take advantage of the skills the student possesses. In the end, the student should always have candid conversations with the mentor and Com. members throughout their graduate training regarding career choices the professional skill development.
Q3: How would you suggest trainees who have trouble dealing with critical comments on their science or writing learn to handle it better?

Cassandra Delgado-Reyes
Course Coordinator and Faculty Specialist, Texas Interdisciplinary Plan, Univ. of Texas at Austin

It's all about perspective. If science and science communication weren't criticized, we would never have credible knowledge. The foundation of science and research is criticism. This is how we test whether our new knowledge holds water. Why do we trust peer-reviewed literature more than Wikipedia? Would you want to take an experimental drug that had not been criticized by a diversity of experts for every possible flaw that may have been overlooked the first time?

We will never be the ultimate expert on everything. Creating new knowledge is a collaborative effort - what is perceived as criticism should be handled as part of the discovery process. Getting different perspectives on the problem you are trying to solve or communicate makes the science stronger and the communication clearer. It's not about ego. It's about the bigger picture and why we do science - to learn how nature works and pass along what we learn.

William Galey
Past Chair, Career Opportun. in Physiol. Com. Past Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies, Univ. of New Mexico SOM Director of Graduate Science Education Program, Howard Hughes Medical Institute

First, remember it is only through correction we can get better. Second, try to learn that the criticism is of the work or the writing, not of you as a person. Third, remember that science is by its nature a very critical and exacting discipline and it creates and rewards those who are critical and exact. That doesn't mean that they are your enemies as a matter of fact they may be your best friends.

Carole Liedtke
Instructor, PST Live Courses Past Chair, Women in Physiology Com. Past APS Councillor Professor, Case SOM

First, look at the critical comments because some individuals are just always critical. From the remaining, ask what the critical comments mean to and about the trainee - is the trainee taking the remark personally. Encourage the trainee to become more objective and not read into the comments.

Sean Stocker
Instructor, PST Live Courses Past member, Trainee Advisory Com. Asst. Prof., Univ. of Kentucky COM

One of the hardest issues to adjust to during graduate school and a research/teaching career is critical feedback from colleagues and mentors. These critical comments are received in different forms and with different tones or attitudes. The biggest adjustment or challenge is to identify how this can strengthen your career, science, or teaching. Typically, I will initially read through such comments, set it aside, and then return to the comments a few days or weeks later once any emotion has passed (let's face it, not all comments are complementary). At this point, I try to approach critical comments from a perspective that these comments will improve my research, teaching, or training. In essence, the more feedback that I receive, the better scientist, teacher, or mentor I will become. Several people never receive "honest" feedback so if
you are an individual that has people who are providing honest and critical comments regarding your science and writing, you should consider this an enormous advantage for your training and career. The challenge for you is how can you incorporate these comments to make yourself a better scientist or teacher. Approach these comments as "ADVICE" rather than "critiques".

Q4: Are there times when a trainee might have to challenge his/her mentor about why something was done or not done? What is the best way to do that?

**Keith Jackson**
*Instructor, PST Live Courses*
*Asst. Prof., Univ. of Louisiana Sch. of Pharmacy, Monroe*

Begin with a literature search on the topic, so that you can be well informed on the topic of interest. Next organize your views on paper, trying to highlight if other labs have done certain techniques differently or if the literature is in agreement/contrast to your findings. Try to work through the problem in a logical format on paper noting, which experiments you would like to perform and why. Highlight which experiments or studies will allow you to gain evidence to determine if your views should be in line with the literature or perhaps the current literature is in error due to point 1, point 2, etc. Once you have completed your brainstorming, present your views to your mentor with an open mind. With open dialogue between your mentor and yourself, you will be able to come to an agreement on what should be done.

**Patricia Molina**
*Instructor, PST Live Courses*
*Chair, Porter Physiology Development Com.*
*Past Chair, International Com.*
*Chair, Louisiana State Univ. HSC, New Orleans*

The best approach is to think things through prior to approaching the mentor. Give some thought to the possible motivations behind your mentor’s decision. Once you have done that, ask to have a few minutes to get his/her insight into the decision process. Express what part of the decision you are having a difficult time reconciling. State your point of view and ask for clarification on those issues that are of concern. Do not approach a mentor with a challenging and disrespectful attitude. Remember that he/she may have a justification for the decision made.

**Cassandra Delgado-Reyes**
*Course Coordinator and Faculty Specialist, Texas Interdisciplinary Plan, Univ. of Texas at Austin*

In my mind, a trainee isn’t learning much unless they can eventually challenge their mentor. It shows that their understanding of the area is growing, original questions are being formed, and the trainee is coming into his/her own by thinking independently. How you present the challenge, however, can mean the difference between a higher level of understanding and strained trainee/mentor relationships.

Be aware of how your mentor works. Does he/she like a spirited discussion and the excitement of being challenged or does he/she tend to be sensitive to challenge? Are they a morning person and more likely to be approachable first thing in the morning or...
should you wait until the 5th cup of coffee has begun to kick in? Be aware of how YOU work as well. Do you get jazzed up on energetic debate or does the thought of conflict make you queasy? Being challenged can elicit a physiological defense response in most people that may or may not be conducive to an effective discussion.

In the spirit of learning and not argument, ask your mentor what the rationale for the decision was. Feel free to ask clarification on points that are unclear to you. Then ask them if you can bounce your ideas off him/her. If they disagree with your approach, ask why their approach is the better choice. Make it clear that it’s a matter of learning for you, not a battle of wills. But you have to believe this – take this attitude to heart! You are there to learn and even if it results in the wrong decision in the end, you will have learned something. If all else fails and there is a conflict of personality, choosing your Com. members wisely is always beneficial. Having an impartial party who knows your area and can help evaluate disputes in protocol is a great help.

Sean Stocker
- Instructor, PST Live Courses
- Past member, Trainee Advisory Com.
- Asst. Prof., Univ. of Kentucky COM

As a faculty member and mentor, I would be surprised and concerned if my trainees (graduate students/postdoctoral fellows) did not ask or question why something was done or not done. This is a natural step in the learning process. In a laboratory, it becomes quite easy to simply follow a recipe or protocol to perform an experiment. However, it is equally important to understand why certain buffers are added or why a drug given at this dose. On a larger scale, I value input or questions from my trainees regarding experimental design or even grant ideas. Such questions force me to either defend my ideas or change my working hypothesis. Despite this, the student may feel uncomfortable but also compelled to question why a specific experiment or analysis was or was not performed (sometimes, we may even disagree). One can certainly be forthright and blunt about the situation – this can change the tone and attitude of the conversation, and, at times, push the individuals involved to be defensive. Alternatively, you can simply indicate that you do not understand and can they explain the thought process to you (even though you may have though it through). Then, simply ask questions at different stages in the conversation regarding the logic or experimental design. In some way, you are not indicating at the beginning that you completely disagree with a decision but through a non-confrontational conversation you are likely to either learn why something might not be done or make a reasonable suggestion for why something should not be done. People (students and mentors) are usually more willing to
discuss/debate a topic if you can eliminate any confrontation or defensive comments. In more than 1 instance, I asked my mentor whether I could go ahead and perform the experiment in my spare time and we usually agreed that I could.

Q5: If English is not a trainee's first language, is it important that they learn to write and speak more fluently in order to be successful as a scientist?

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Yes because publishing papers and writing successful grants hinge on being able to write well and thus convey your message. Speaking well allows them to translate their thoughts more coherently, which is important to success.

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Yes, without a doubt. The ability to communicate is a skill that needs to be developed and maintained by all scientists.

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It is a very important component of your development as a citizen of the scientific community. Just as when you move in to a new neighborhood you want to meet your neighbors and get to know the leaders of the community, the same holds true for the world of science.

If so, what is a good way to gain that knowledge or experience?

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Ideally, getting a good basic understanding of the language, spoken and written should be done early on. Local community colleagues and undergraduate schools offer courses in English as a second language. Those are good places to get basic grammar and spoken English skills. Interacting with English-speaking students and colleagues is also useful in acquiring the hearing skills needed to feel comfortable in participating in English conversations.

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Taking advantage of every opportunity to do public speaking (conferences, schools, teaching etc.) is a great way to improve their speaking skills. There is no better way to improve writing skills than to practice writing.

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Practice, practice, practice. Volunteering for oral presentations to his/her lab group or department, writing abstracts, writing up his/her results as an exercise. Any activity that makes the trainee present his/her science to others is a good way to get comfortable in a foreign language.
**Q6: How important is networking for trainees and scientists?**

**Francisco Andrade**  
- Past Member, Career Opportunities in Physiology Com.  
- Member, Women in Physiology Com.  
- Assoc. Prof., Univ. of Kentucky COM  

Networking is just another way to communicate. It is important to be a part of the larger scientific community, establish communication with other scientists and potential collaborators and maintain links with colleagues.

**Frank Belloni**  
- Chair, Communications Com.  
- Past Chair, Career Opportunities in Physiology Com.  
- Past Chair, Education Com.  
- Dean of Graduate School, New York Medical College  

Networking is important for any trainee or scientist. It opens up opportunities for collaboration or future positions. It can offer the advantage of being a “known” entity when being considered for grant funding, manuscript publication, inclusion in symposia, etc.

**Cassandra Delgado-Reyes**  
- Course Coordinator and Faculty Specialist, Texas Interdisciplinary Plan, Univ. of Texas at Austin  

Although networking is one of the hardest skills to master for scientists and especially for trainees, I have realized it really is one of the most important things you will learn. The adage, “It’s not what you know, but who you know” has more truth than most of us would like to admit. So does the idea of being in the right place at the right time. Networking helps in finding out when and where to be to get things done.

**Joe Dunbar**  
- Instructor, PST Live Courses  
- Past Chair, Wayne State Univ. SOM  
- Associate Vice President of Research, Wayne State Univ. SOM  

Science is essentially a profession/culture where the exchange of ideas is of paramount important. And, this collaborative nature of science is becoming more important. Thus, it is extremely important for minority scientists to develop a network as wide as possible for their research career. Also, cultivating a number of people that know you as well as your work is also important in getting a position and facilitating career advancement. The importance of networking is a priority for minority scientists, women scientists, and scientists in general.

**Greg Florant**  
- Instructor, PST Live Courses  
- Past Chair, Porter Physiology Develop. Com.  
- Member, Education Com.  
- Past Member, Women in Physiology Com.  
- Professor, Colorado State Univ.  

Extremely important. People want to associate a name with a paper or research area. This helps both groups to get to know each other and to talk about issues in a more friendly atmosphere.

**William Galey**  
- Past Chair, Career Opportun. in Physiol. Com.  
- Past Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies, Univ. of New Mexico SOM  
- Director of Graduate Science Education Program, Howard Hughes Medical Institute  

As I have grown in the field of science I have realized that it is a very social endeavor. Maybe it is because we value the intellect so much and one can generally evaluate the quality of the mind through discourse networking is an important way we evaluate and connect with others in our field. Sure there are folks who are bright but behave badly but they have a tough time in science as in most fields. Also, since our field is more “results oriented” and less “interpersonally directed” we use the personal interactions (networking) as a kind of unspoken tool to effectively gain knowledge and interact with others in sharing such things as our jobs and our opportunities. It allows us to get inside the

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http://www.the-aps.org/education/profskills/expertvoices.htm

5/31/2011
In today's environment, networking is necessary for many aspects of a career in science. Just keeping up with the frontier of science, new methodologies, new models. The job market for PhD trained scientists is much more fluid today with many more opportunities to apply knowledge and training and to expand: state department, commerce - export control, regulatory agencies, pharmaceutical industry, biotech, chemical industry, professional societies, and so on.

Networking and collaborations are powerful tools in today's scientific community. Scientific conferences provide the easiest forum for a new graduate student or young scientist to meet and establish relationships with other scientists. For a majority of early trainees, it is difficult to understand all the science presented at these conferences and so much of the time can also be spent meeting people. It is usually a good idea to read a few papers from a laboratory that has submitted abstracts to the conference one is attending. Through the establishment of these relationships, scientists discuss theories and hypotheses. In many instances, two scientists or laboratories collaborate to approach an idea from a new perspective (a technique, a novel cellular mechanism). Trainees can additionally benefit from networking when it comes times to look for a postdoctoral position, faculty position, or other career path. Various schools and companies advertise job openings, but the chairs of such search/job Com.s are people who have could have met at conferences and networked. This means that they may recognize your name when your application is placed on your desk or they may even approach you at a conference or via email regarding the job vacancy because of their previous interactions with you.

Networking is especially important and powerful for minority and women scientists. As minority and women scientists, we often have to fight a little harder to establish ourselves and our interests. Creating a network of fellow scientists with the same mission to help support our efforts lessens our feeling of isolation and strengthens our position. For example, I never knew how many scientists felt as I did about the
questionable quality of life for minorities in higher education and academia until I started talking to fellow scientists. Enough of us got talking and catalyzed a change in attitude. Recently, I attended a workshop in Washington, DC sponsored by the National Academies whose sole purpose was to find out how to improve retention of minority and women scientists in tenure-track research positions. One of the issues that was taken seriously for the first time was addressing concerns about quality of life in academic science for minorities and women. The network of scientists who voiced this as a concern gave credence to this as an issue and it is now being considered by the NSF and NIH. If this isn't a testament to the power of networking, I don't know what is.

We know that science and our career don't happen in a vacuum. Science and our lives revolve around a web of personal interaction and the more connections we make, the better. Networking doesn't have to be insincere or especially involved. It could be as simple as catching a speaker after his/her talk and asking a question about the research. Networking is not limited to researchers in your area, either. Some of the most powerful, well-connected people in our profession are the institutional and professional society administrators who run all the behind-the-scenes business. Simple courtesy and small demonstrations of appreciation go a long way in laying the groundwork for building a relationship. You may be the first one they contact when they get wind of an awesome grant or position opening up.

Networking is extremely important for all trainees and scientist, whether they are from a majority or minority background. There is an increasing emphasis from all funding agencies to have multiple institutions and individuals from diverse research backgrounds on all grants. This allows granting agencies to maximize grant dollars by spreading funds across multiple institutions. In addition networking allows one to identify individuals performing techniques and studies of interest to them. Knowledge of job opportunities, research interest, available funding, and getting individuals excited about your research is all done via networking. If the right individuals are excited about your research obtaining a position, a grant and publishing will be less difficult.

The importance of networking is a priority for minority scientists, women scientists, and scientists in general.

YES—particularly since there are so few
minority scientists. You are going to be recognized anyway...so take advantage of having "big names" in the field get to know you.

Patricia Molina

Patricia Molina

I don't believe that's the case. Networking is important for all scientists.

Frank Belloni

The importance of networking applies to everyone, as noted above. In one sense, however, it might be additionally important for minority scientists. There is value in networking with people who may have had similar experiences or faced similar challenges to those faced by the trainee or young scientists. The insight they have gained from these experiences may allow them to provide helpful advice.

William Galey

Yes, I think it is especially important since many are not in the "insider" group, they need the opportunities afforded by networking to gain the needed knowledge of opportunities.

Carole Liedtke

Yes, what better way to learn how others of the same 'minority' got where they are at today, how they handled situations of discrimination or harassment, what special skills are needed to succeed, and where job opportunities are.

Rudy Ortiz

Networking, regardless of your background is critical to the success of any new investigator. Because science is becoming so interdisciplinary and methodologies are becoming more technical, not everyone can do all things well, so it's important to find colleague that help promote an individual's research goals. Plus, networking provides new opportunities to get involved in different areas of work. Networking opportunities not only benefit the PI, but their students/post-docs as well.

* Is it especially important for women scientists?

Patricia Molina

Yes, it provides a support network that can be critical in your developmental trajectory. Networking makes you a member of a larger community and provides access to information, a powerful tool in science.
### Carole Liedtke

- Instructor, PST Live Courses
- Past Chair, Women in Physiology Com.
- Past APS Councillor
- Professor, Case SOM

Yes, because there is a glass ceiling for women — very, very few women make it to top administrative positions. In academia, a very low % are full professors, so networking is really necessary for advice on focusing on the job requirements, publication, grant writing, whatever is necessary for the current job to succeed. How to tell? Read your CV each month - make certain that, at the time of promotion, you have a very strong CV. Women also should seek objective advice — someone other than a spouse or family member or someone not in their department.

### Cassandra Delgado-Reyes

- Course Coordinator and Faculty Specialist, Texas Interdisciplinary Plan, Univ. of Texas at Austin

Networking is especially important and powerful for minority and women scientists. As minority and women scientists, we often have to fight a little harder to establish ourselves and our interests. Creating a network of fellow scientists with the same mission to help support our efforts lessens our feeling of isolation and strengthens our position. For example, I never knew how many scientists felt as I did about the questionable quality of life for minorities in higher education and academia until I started talking to fellow scientists. Enough of us got talking and catalyzed a change in attitude. This past June, I attended a workshop in Washington, DC sponsored by the National Academies whose sole purpose was to find out how to improve retention of minority and women scientists in tenure-track research positions. One of the issues that was taken seriously for the first time was addressing concerns about quality of life in academic science for minorities and women. The network of scientists who voiced this as a concern gave credence to this as an issue and it is now being considered by the NSF and NIH. If this isn’t a testament to the power of networking, I don’t know what is.

We know that science and our career don't happen in a vacuum. Science and our lives revolve around a web of personal interaction and the more connections we make, the better. Networking doesn't have to be insincere or especially involved. It could be as simple as catching a speaker after his/her talk and asking a question about the research. Networking is not limited to researchers in your area, either. Some of the most powerful, well-connected people in our profession are the institutional and professional society administrators who run all the behind-the-scenes business. Simple courtesy and small demonstrations of appreciation go a long way in laying the groundwork for building a relationship. You may be the first one they contact when they get wind of an awesome grant or position opening up.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Joe Dunbar</th>
<th>The importance of networking is a priority for minority scientists, women scientists, and scientists in general.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frank Belloni</td>
<td>The importance of networking applies to everyone, as noted above. In one sense, however, it might be additionally important for women scientists. There is value in networking with people who may have had similar experiences or faced similar challenges to those faced by the trainee or young scientists. The insight they have gained from these experiences may allow them to provide helpful advice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francisco Andrade</td>
<td>The problem of most trainees is the opposite: being seen as timid. It's fairly rare that a trainee will be seen as too aggressive. Most of us start by being shy and afraid to engage in discussions (seen as “antagonizing”). Some never get past that stage. Others learn that presenting our viewpoints in a firm and concise manner is intellectually stimulating and a great way to initiate valuable scientific and social interactions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassandra Delgado-Reyes</td>
<td>The two most important things you can do to establish a reputation of confidence are to ask questions and to listen. Approaching situations with absolutes in mind is the quickest way to fall under the “aggressive” category. In asking questions that are relevant and significant and then carefully listening to the answers, you can present your argument in the most informed manner. As you listen, practice tact and empathy so that when you have to stand firm on an issue, you not only have the facts, but understand what the stakes are for those involved. Aggression often comes across as selfish and inconsiderate while confidence is associated with careful consideration and informed conclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Dunbar</td>
<td>This is a difficult call because there is a broad range of non-objective variability on both sides, i.e., the trainee’s personality, the personality of other individuals in the laboratory and the research/academic setting. The focus of the trainee should be on what he/she wishes to accomplish or the research the goals you have set for yourself. The degree of aggressive behavior necessary to attain your goal will vary, but, it should not be over the top.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg Florant</td>
<td>The trainee can be confident and firm by backing up their actions/statements with facts and well-thought-out arguments. By remaining calm and low-key but clearly (using “good” English!) laying out their position, people will listen and believe. If you lose control and shout and make statements...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Role and Affiliations</td>
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</table>
| William Galey               | Past Chair, Career Opportun. in Physiol Com.  
Past Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies, Univ. of New Mexico SOM  
Director of Graduate Science Education Program, Howard Hughes Medical Institute | It is a fine line, but I think you can pick up on the effect your behavior has on people. Be aware, and learn to read the unspoken behaviors of other without being overly responsive (reactive) to them. Sometimes it is good to ask a good friend, a mentor or a colleague if they think you seem "aggressive" or just "assertive". |
| Sean Stocker                | Instructor, PST Live Courses  
Past member, Trainee Advisory Com.  
Asst. Prof., Univ. of Kentucky COM | This is a difficult question (particularly for a competitive individual). The best way to approach these situations is to understand that science is always evolving. As new techniques and knowledge becomes available, theories and ideas will change. The biggest piece of advice is to avoid being confrontational and close-minded to new ideas. In addition, one needs to know the literature in a detailed and informative manner and be able to discuss it. Otherwise, this usually gives the impression that one is aggressive and outwardly pushing his/her ideas forth without acknowledgement of previous work in the field. In the end, science is not a matter of who is right and wrong, but how things work. If we were always right and knew how things worked, there would be no reason for us to conduct experiments and pursue scientific questions. |
| Frank Belloni               | Chair, Communications Com.  
Past Chair, Career Opportun. in Physiol Com  
Past Chair, Education Com.  
Dean of Graduate School, New York Medical College | This should never be a problem. Asking for someone else's critical appraisal of your work can elicit very helpful feedback no matter how senior you are. It is especially important for trainees and young scientists to seek such input. In general, colleagues are very understanding of, and usually flattered by, such requests because they themselves sought similar guidance when they were in your position. Even if their remarks seem critical, you can gain in their estimation if you respond by improving the manuscript or talk. The only caution I would raise is that the "draft" you ask them to review should represent a fairly complete effort on your part. You don't want to present such a sketchy effort that they feel they are wasting their time or are being asked to do your work for you. |
| Cassandra Delgado-Reyes      | Course Coordinator and Faculty Specialist, Texas Interdisciplinary Plan, Univ. of Texas at Austin | No. If anything, NOT asking for their help would seem unprofessional. Even the greatest writer has an editor and the greatest orator practices their speech. The manuscript and lecture you are preparing is not going to be for your eyes and ears only. Since they are being prepared with an audience in mind, the audience should be involved. The information you are trying to... |
communicate will always sound fine in your head because the train of thought you are following is already understood. When outside eyes and ears hear the communication, you have the opportunity to clarify your ideas into a polished work that will ALWAYS be better than if you had not asked for help.

Carole Liedtke
- Instructor, PST Live Courses
- Past Chair, Women in Physiology Com.
- Past APS Councillor
- Professor, Case SOM

Not here at my Univ.. We actually encourage graduate students and postdocs to seek just this kind of help. Jr. faculty often find others to help with this.

Q9: Is it important for minority trainees to have minority as well as majority mentors? If so, why?

Francisco Andrade
- Past Member, Career Opportunities in Physiology Com.
- Member, Women in Physiology Com.
- Assoc. Prof., Univ. of Kentucky COM

It is important for trainees be comfortable with their mentors in order to facilitate an interaction that is unbalanced to begin with (in terms of experience and power). Some female and minority trainees relate better to advisors of the same gender or racial/ethnic background and tend to search them out early in their careers. Trainees should also keep in mind that mentors are not bosses and should include people from outside their immediate research groups. In that sense, whether the mentors are minorities or not is not very relevant. What matters is to have 2 or 3 good, solid scientists have the trainee’s best interest at heart and are not shy about giving an honest opinion.

Cassandra Delgado-Reyes
- Course Coordinator and Faculty Specialist, Texas Interdisciplinary Plan, Univ. of Texas at Austin

Yes! Remember; don’t judge a book by its cover. Get to know people. The white guy sitting in the Department Chair position could just have easily come from a low socio-economic background and be the first in his family to go to college and know more about where you’re coming from than the African American woman who came from a privileged background and a long family history of PhD’s.

Diversity works both ways. You need someone who can relate to what you’re going through as a minority, but you should also open your mind and seek out different perspectives in majority mentors. There is no rule to say you can only have one mentor. Different mentors have different strengths and weaknesses and therefore, different things to offer. It's worth learning from as many as will offer their counsel with your best interest in mind.

Joe Dunbar
- Instructor, PST Live Courses
- Past Chair, Wayne State Univ. SOM
- Associate Vice President of Research, Wayne State Univ. SOM

All trainees should have a variety of mentors. Minority mentors can be especially beneficial to minority trainees, particularly they can be used as a sounding board for perceived socio-cultural issues. On the other hand a minority mentor in the trainee’s specific scientific discipline is not essential.

The importance of a minority trainee having
a minority mentor lies only in the fact that, by and large, minority mentors will have had experiences similar to that of the trainee and can discuss with the trainee how to deal with potentially difficult situations (e.g. racial issues). However, there are times when having a non-minority mentor is good too, for example, when these mentors have opportunities to give to the trainee that a minority mentor may not have. Furthermore, non-minority mentors are sometimes better advocates for minority trainees because their counter-parts will listen to them.

The importance of a minority trainee having a minority mentor to a certain extent depends on the individual. For instance, if the trainee comes from a background which included only or mostly minorities then the need to have a minority mentor in some capacity is greater. Minority trainees from very diverse or mostly majority backgrounds tend to have less of a need for a minority mentor. However, no matter the background of the minority trainee having a minority mentor or guidance in some capacity tends to make the educational experience better. In that the minority individuals will have ready access to someone that they can talk to and identify with when needed. Therefore, the need for minority trainees to have minority mentors is overall very important to them.

Yes, ideally there should be no distinction between a “minority scientist” and a “non-minority scientist”. The sooner you can trade the label of minority for “excellent”, “outstanding” or “successful”, the better off you will be.

Nevertheless, a combination of mentors can provide an excellent perspective with insights on how to overcome barriers for advancement among minority scientists to a perspective on your performance coming from a non-minority mentor.

Personally, I don’t know that it was “important” to have a minority mentor, it just so happened to be that my mentors were minorities, but more than anything else, they were the best fit for my research program. I originally picked them because they were among the best at what they did, not because they were minority. But they all did serve as ideal role models and had great insight for me that the other students couldn't appreciate as much.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title and Affiliation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keith Jackson</td>
<td>Past Chair, Porter Physiology Develop. Com. Member, Education Com. Past Member, Women in Physiology Com. Professor, Colorado State Univ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identifying a good mentor is sort of like choosing a good soul mate, in that very similar tangible qualities have to be present in both situations. First, you have to identify an individual with similar research interest as your own. Second, you have to identify an individual that you feel you can talk with and tell just about anything to them. Third, you have to identify an individual that you can trust and that trust you, for you must always feel that this individual has your best interest at heart. Forth, you have to identify an individual with a comparable work ethic as your own, such as a mentor that begins the day at a good time for you; starts at 6am vs 10am, expects you to work 24 hours a day and 7 days a week for 365 days a year vs 8-10 hour days and allows you to take time off when needed, etc. Fifth, you have to identify an individual with a group or lab environment that you can work with in that these are the individuals that you will be with for the majority of your time. Identifying the previously mentioned qualities in a potential mentor usually comes through trial and error. Begin by visiting the several different labs, and speaking with the members of the lab as well as the potential mentor. Ask each individual about their typical work day? Ask your potential mentor, what qualities they look for in a good trainee. In addition, ask your potential mentor, about his expectations of incoming trainees. If time is available, try to visit the lab on a day, when experiments are being done and try to sit in on a few of the studies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rudy Ortiz</td>
<td>Instructor, PST Live Courses Early Career Professional Service Awardee Member, Porter Physiology Develop. Com. Past Member, Trainee Advisory Com. Asst. Prof., Univ. of CA, Merced School of Natural Sciences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Identifying a good mentor is at times an issue of luck, but a student should in the process of selecting a mentor evaluate the success of that person. Do they publish often? What is the quality of the work? What is their history of mentorship? Do they have a good or great history of success with their previous students? What is the success of the students that have come through that individual’s lab? These are just some of the questions students should ask themselves when trying to evaluate if a person is a good mentor. In my opinion, they need to interview the potential mentor to make sure their personalities mesh well. The students need to realize that they will be working w/ this person for the next 4+ years and they need to be able to get along and work well together.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sean Stocker</td>
<td>Instructor, PST Live Courses</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The majority of new graduate students likely do not focus on the mentor too much but rather see whether the science or laboratory</td>
</tr>
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Identification of a good mentor can make an enormous difference in the development of a scientist. Here are a couple of questions that one might ask. First, ask what the current funding status is for the laboratory – this may seem blunt but a necessary and critical question in the research arena – if there are no or limited funds available over the next several years, you are at a large disadvantage versus other students. Second, ask how many students or postdoctoral fellows has the mentor trained previously and what are they doing now (good postdoctoral positions, faculty jobs?). Moreover, you should ask for contact information regarding the past students and postdoctoral fellows. Those individuals who have already left will likely be more honest than those currently in the laboratory and will also have the added insight of how the mentoring/training prepared them. If you are considering a younger faculty mentor, they may not had the opportunity to train students previously. In these instances, you may ask the mentor about a co-advisor – this should not offend the mentor as most schools require a co-advisor for Asst. Prof.s.

Third, you should inquire into a possible rotation (6-8 weeks) if considering a laboratory – not all programs require a rotation but the majority will permit one. Finally, ask what ideas the mentor has to help develop your professional skills – critical reading, writing, experimental design, presentation skills. This is one question that is rarely asked and may catch a number for faculty members. However, there will be some that have a specific answer and these faculty members are usually the individuals who will be good mentors.

A good mentor has had experience and success relevant to your profession or career, is able to appreciate the challenges that you – the “mentee” – face, can translate the insight gained from this experience into advice, guidance or cautions applicable to your situation, and is willing to do so. The “simple” answer to this question – i.e., how do you identify a good mentor – is to identify individuals who possess such attributes.

Look for individuals in your department or institution who are respected by their peers. Such respect usually indicates that they have interacted positively in the past. They might ask “good” questions at seminars and journal clubs, reflecting insight or a desire to understand the speaker’s point of view. Do other students or trainees like yourself seek this individual’s advice? Does the individual express an interest in how your studies or research is progressing? You might ask the individual for advice or an opinion on small matters, which would reveal the individual’s willingness to entertain your request as well.

http://www.the-aps.org/education/profskills/expertvoices.htm
as the quality of the advice offered.

It is important to recognize that you are not limited to having only one mentor, nor is your research advisor your only option. Your research advisor is likely to provide very valuable guidance beyond that related to your research project per se, but you may have different mentors for different aspects of your career.

Q11: Does a trainee need more than one mentor?

Joe Dunbar
- Instructor, PST Live Courses
- Past Chair, Wayne State Univ. SOM
- Associate Vice President of Research, Wayne State Univ. SOM

The answer is definitely yes. No one mentor can serve all of the support requirements for any trainee.

William Galey
- Past Chair, Career Opportun.in Physiol. Com.
- Past Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies, Univ. of New Mexico SOM
- Director of Graduate Science Education Program, Howard Hughes Medical Institute

There are few individuals who can fulfill all the needs you will have in developing your career. So, it is usually necessary to have more than one mentor. However, at some points in your career you will need only a single mentor at other times you will need more. Remember! No one approach fits all situations and hence you must develop your career with guidance and advice from many but recognize that too much advice without processing it yourself can be as bad as too little input.

Rudy Ortiz
- Instructor, PST Live Courses
- Early Career Professional Service Awardees
- Member, Porter Physiology Develop. Com.
- Past Member, Trainee Advisory Com.
- Asst. Prof., Univ. of Ca, Merced School of Natural Sciences

Do they “need” more than 1? No. Can they or will they have more than 1? Yes. Having more than one provides broader perspectives on various topics and improves the networking opportunities. Having more than 1 is not a bad idea, but having too many can become problematic, especially if their personalities (i.e., egos) do not mesh well.

Sean Stocker
- Instructor, PST Live Courses
- Past member, Trainee Advisory Com.

A trainee does not necessarily need more than one mentor but the trainee should be interacting with various people (Com. members, other faculty members, other trainees) to receive feedback on research, professional skill development, and career advice. In some instances, the student may become involved in a project that is already an established collaboration between two laboratories and therefore, it becomes natural to have two mentors. These two mentors can have different philosophies on training, etc but the advantage is that the student will be exposed to both perspectives and can decide what is best for them. At the same time, a student with one mentor can be exposed to various perspectives through interactions with Com. members and other faculty.

Q12: Do minority or women candidates tend to negotiate positions and hiring packages differently than majority candidates?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position and Experience</th>
<th>Thoughts or Advice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patricia Molina</td>
<td>Instructor, PST Live Courses, Chair, Porter Physiology Development Com., Past Chair, International Com., Chair, Louisiana State Univ. HSC, New Orleans</td>
<td>I am not sure that there is a rule for how both negotiate positions. My experience says that minorities tend to “settle for less” and have less confidence on their ability to ask for more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg Florant</td>
<td>Instructor, PST Live Courses, Past Chair, Porter Physiology Develop.Com., Member, Education Com., Past Member, Women in Physiology Com., Professor, Colorado State Univ.</td>
<td>They should!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francisco Andrade</td>
<td>Past Member, Career Opportunities in Physiology Com., Member, Women in Physiology Com., Assoc. Prof., Univ. of Kentucky COM</td>
<td>Probably not, but my sample is very small. I think that the information available online and from personal communications (that networking again) has resulted in more uniform attitudes towards negotiation and expectations regarding startup packages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Galey</td>
<td>Past Chair, Career Opportun. in Physiol. Com., Past Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies, Univ. of New Mexico SOM, Director of Graduate Science Education Program, Howard Hughes Medical Institute</td>
<td>If so, what are the pros and cons to their approach?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg Florant</td>
<td>Instructor, PST Live Courses, Past Chair, Porter Physiology Develop. Com., Member, Education Com., Past Member, Women in Physiology Com., Professor, Colorado State Univ.</td>
<td>Should they do anything differently?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francisco Andrade</td>
<td>Past Member, Career Opportunities in Physiology Com., Member, Women in Physiology Com., Assoc. Prof., Univ. of Kentucky COM</td>
<td>The answer will also depend on what kind of institution they are negotiating with--- minority, industry or college, or research Univ..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Galey</td>
<td>Past Chair, Career Opportun. in Physiol. Com., Past Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies, Univ. of New Mexico SOM, Director of Graduate Science Education Program, Howard Hughes Medical Institute</td>
<td>The advice I give to all trainees and junior faculty looking for new jobs is to get information re salary/benefits for equivalent positions and geographical area, and to ask for what they realistically need in order to establish their research. In other words, don't necessarily ask exactly for what Dr. John Doe asked last month, but ask for the resources (financial and technical) needed to accomplish the objectives of the candidate's research.</td>
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Recent studies show (see the Washington Post, July 2007) that it is very hard for women to ‘get a fair shake’ in salary negotiations in almost any business situation. It is also well known that women are generally compensated less well than men. I would always suggest that women be informed what other have received, firm in their demands, aware of the unique skills they bring as an individual and that they are in some ways more valuable than their male counterparts to the organization to which they are considering. Make sure your needs are being met before seeking to come to an agreement.
Minority scientists should strive overall for excellence and not for special concessions or favors or opportunities. However, when deserving they should be steadfast in pursuing adequate recognition and compensation. There are plenty of excellent opportunities available to enhance their development. You want to be recognized for how great you are and not hired or recruited because of the color of your skin or your ethnic background. You want to bring excellence to the institution and do not want to be recruited to fulfill a quota or to satisfy the mission of diversity.

Q13: What should a scientist do if he/she thinks he/she is being overlooked for promotion opportunities or preferred Com. assignments?

Joe Dunbar

- Instructor, PST Live Courses
- Past Chair, Wayne State Univ. SOM
- Associate Vice President of Research, Wayne State Univ. SOM

In most academic/scientific careers at some point in time almost everyone will feel that they are being overlooked for a plum assignment. One important thing that can be done is to make it a point to inform the decision makers of your career goals and aspirations so that oversights are not based on misperceptions of your career interest. Minority scientists can follow this same logic. Promotions and assignments are the results of earned achievement, confidence generated in the decision makers and your training.

Frank Belloni

- Chair, Communications Com.
- Past Chair, Career Opportun. in Physiol. Com.
- Past Chair, Education Com.
- Dean of Graduate School, New York Medical College

Your choice of actions will vary greatly depending upon the facts of your particular situation. You want to avoid two “errors” that may come back to haunt you later on. On the one hand, you don’t want to passively accept unfair treatment. It will cause you personal stress and it may embolden others to treat you unfairly in the future. On the other hand, you don’t want to overreact and attract animosity that did not exist before.

To begin, find out the facts. If this is a promotion, ask your chairman or supervisor why you were passed over. You may find that he or she intends to put you up for promotion during the next cycle, or feels that you need to accomplish something further – another publication, another grant, etc. – to meet the promotion Com.’s standards. If you still disagree with this decision, there may be a mechanism at your institution that would allow you to advance your own name for consideration for promotion. Be cautious here. Often such “alternative” mechanisms are in place to allow a faculty member of other employee to bypass an intransigent or hostile supervisor or chair. You don’t want to create such hostility.

With regard to a Com. assignment, there may be many factors that are considered in making such assignments beyond your individual qualifications. For example, often
Com.s are constructed to avoid overrepresentation of members from one particular department or unit. The best approach here might be to express your interest in serving when a future opening occurs, either on this Com. or a similar one. People who put Com.s together often struggle to find individuals willing to serve, so your expression of such eagerness will usually be appreciated and "rewarded" with a subsequent assignment.

First, be proactive. Generally one knows when a “plum” Com. appointment is going to happen or when one is due to be considered for promotion. I suggest that you make your case in an organized, clearly thought-out and unemotional manner before the decision is made by the decision maker or the leader of the group making the decision. It is always harder, if not impossible, for a decision to be reversed and decision makers aren’t always aware of the unique qualities you have for a particular job or that you are interested in the position. Make sure you let them know ahead of time what you would like.

If the decision is not made in your favor…
After close and careful self evaluation or the result, confront the decision maker in a friendly and collegial but firm manner. Ask why you weren’t selected and what you can do to have a more favorable outcome next time. Try to maintain your professionalism and yet let them know you are disappointed with the result. Be careful “bad mouthing” the result or the decision maker doesn’t help your position.

Talk to your immediate supervisor, but be prepared! There may actually be a reason for a delay in some desirable opportunities, so listen carefully. Develop a plan to discuss with your supervisor: what you have accomplished that makes you a candidate for promotion or Com., what you think you need to do to have a more favorable outcome next time. Try to maintain your professionalism and yet let them know you are disappointed with the result. Be careful “bad mouthing” the result or the decision maker doesn’t help your position.

Volunteer for Com. assignments is one way to increase the chances of being included. Promotion is a more difficult issue. The issue should be discussed with his/her mentors to determine whether the perception of being due for promotion is correct. If that is the case, the issue should be brought up to the institution’s attention; the mechanism depends on whether the scientist is in academia, industry or government.
Q14: Who is/are the best people to look to for support as a new investigator, e.g., chair, dean, senior colleagues?

Keith Jackson

As a new investigator, try to seek advice from as many sources that are available to you. As a new investigator, one has to get up...
Asst. Prof., Univ. of Louisiana Sch. of Pharmacy, Monroe

Rudy Ortiz
• Instructor, PST Live Courses
• Early Career Professional Service Awardee
• Member, Porter Physiology Develop. Com.
• Past Member, Trainee Advisory Com.
• Asst. Prof., Univ. of CA, Merced School of Natural Sciences

I think Sr. colleagues that have well developed research programs and a sound history of mentorship w/ Jr. faculty are great people to have available to seek advice and support. Often times a department chair or dean is too busy w/ administrative duties that it is unrealistic to expect to get much of their time, especially when you need an immediate answer to a career-related question. Even previous mentors that are at a different institution can continue to provide much needed support and advice, so keeping close contact with them is a good idea.

Sean Stocker
• Instructor, PST Live Courses
• Past member, Trainee Advisory Com.

The person that you may seek advice from will likely differ depending upon the situation; for example, a new investigator will likely look to a departmental chair in regard to promotion timelines, distribution of effort (teaching versus research), and financial resources. On the other hand, a new investigator may contact another Asst. Prof. (or postdoctoral fellow) regarding the transition from a trainee to a faculty member (or graduate student to a postdoctoral fellow). It very much depends on the situation and need advice. For example, when I began applying for faculty jobs and scheduling interviews, I talked with 2-3 departmental chairs as well as 3-4 Asst. Prof.s in order to gain insight into the process from two different perspectives: 1) from the interviewer, and 2) from the interviewee. As a faculty member, many, but not all, institutions and departments have formal mentoring programs or offices for both postdoctoral fellows and junior scientists (graduate students usually have a Com.). For example, as a new Asst. Prof., I was asked to identify a teaching mentor and research mentor within our department. I regularly meet with both mentors as well as other faculty members regarding my development/progress as a teacher and researcher. The advice and mentoring program has been invaluable for my development and success. Such relationships can be established even without a formal program in place. In the end, the best piece of advice.

This depends upon what type of “support”
Frank Belloni
- Chair, Communications Com.
- Past Chair, Career Opportun. in Physiol Com.
- Past Chair, Education Com.
- Dean of Graduate School, New York Medical College

If you need seed money or equipment, you should start with your chair. If they cannot provide it directly, they would be able to point you in the right direction for internal sources of such support. For example, most universities have an internal research support grant program.

You might also approach your institution's office of sponsored research. They would have a good idea of the various agencies or foundations that might be interested in supporting your work, and they could help in applying for such external support.

If you are looking for individuals who might provide collaborative support for your work, you can ask your chair or any of your senior colleagues for guidance. They would know which other researchers in your institution or nearby might have the type of technical expertise that you are seeking.

Of course, when you are first hired as a junior faculty, you should develop a plan for getting your own research program started. That plan should include realistic estimates of your equipment, facility and manpower needs, as well as financial support for supplies, animals, etc. This should be the basis of your negotiation with your chair about the "start-up" package that would accompany your job offer.

Carole Liedtke
- Instructor, PST Live Courses
- Past Chair, Women in Physiology Com.
- Past APS Councillor
- Professor, Case SOM

Some departments here appoint a mentoring Com. of three faculty, with one outside the department, to guide the new investigator. Without this formal structure, ask the department chair for suggestions. The chair or other faculty might suggest others who share similar researcha interests or teaching expertise.

William Galey
- Past Chair, Career Opportun. in Physiol. Com.
- Past Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies, Univ. of New Mexico SOM
- Director of Graduate Science Education Program, Howard Hughes Medical Institute

All of the above! But be aware of the unique perspective and needs each brings to your situation. Generally it is wise not to play one off against the other and always try to maintain your professional attitude. It is amazing how petty and unprofessional some of your colleagues will be and how some will try to use you to "fight their battles". Just be careful and be above reproach!

Patricia Molina
- Instructor, PST Live Courses
- Chair, Porter Physiology Development Com.
- Past Chair, International Com.
- Chair, Louisiana State Univ. HSC, New Orleans

Excel, excel and then excel. Show those around you that you are as capable as or better than anyone around the table. Do not demand special attention or consideration. Be a team player. Have as your goal making your ethnic or racial background become an asset in your work. Do not use it as a handicap. Prepare, work hard and deliver. You are paving the road for those in the
First of all, don’t panic and don’t feel pressured to be the voice of all minorities or women. Be true to yourself and your interests while striving to be a critical thinker and team player.

You may be able to overcome the sense of isolation and singularity by finding a minority mentor who can help you effectively work in this situation. Find out if your institution houses an Office of Diversity and see what resources they have for minority support or mentor matching. These diversity initiatives are becoming more popular as the issue of diversity makes more press.

Seek out mentors through your professional societies (http://www.the-aps.org/careers/careers1/mentor/index.htm), online support sites (http://www.mentornet.net/) or by networking at national science conferences (Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students - http://www.abrcms.org; Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science - http://www.sacnas.org). Many times the additional moral support is all you need.

As a minority you have to accept the fact that there will be a small number of you on most occasions. Once you are comfortable with the fact, work hard to accomplish your goals and build the bridges that will allow you to be successful in your career, on a Com. or in any academic group.

BE YOURSELF! Express your opinions and make sure that you know what you’re talking about. Speak clearly and concisely. Make clear and rational arguments when stating a particular position. Admit when you’re wrong or have a weak case. Listen carefully to what’s being said before speaking. THINK.

Don’t just let them discuss the “minority” part with you. Be involved in ALL aspects of the decision making process that the Com. represents.

What an impact you can have if you remain objective, professional, and non-critical of others and issues. Agree to a work load that is suitable for you now - you can always do more in the future after you have learned the ’ropes’ and shown you can work with others on Com. projects. You will be asked to suggest others for the Com. so be prepared with a short list of names – do not focus only on minorities or women, but who is best for the job and will do the work.

Don’t ever let anyone make you feel like a failure because you are not following in their
footsteps. Diversity in academic research is not what it should be and we should all work towards correcting it, but you must be true to your priorities. You are earning the highest educational degree available. Only a very small fraction of the population has gotten as far as you have already come. Be proud of your accomplishments! Follow your passions and be a role model for those coming after you. Be a mentor whenever possible, encourage those who struggle, and love what you do.

**Greg Florant**
- Instructor, PST Live Courses
- Past Chair, Porter Physiology Develop. Com.
- Member, Education Com.
- Past Member, Women in Physiology Com.
- Professor, Colorado State Univ.

The most important piece of advice that I can give is this: ALL people have good ideas. Use your brain and develop your ideas and hypotheses. Trust your instincts and when you come up with a great idea and experiment, run with it! Don't think that you can't come up with good experiments and ideas. Have confidence in yourself!

**William Galey**
- Past Chair, Career Opportun. in Physiol. Com
- Past Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies, Univ. of New Mexico SOM
- Director of Graduate Science Education Program, Howard Hughes Medical Institute

When receiving advice from others, make sure you consider their perspective and what motives may behind their advice.