

Thank you very much to all who participated in the January Online Discussion on Mentorships. For those who don't remember, the discussion began by asking who had participated in a professional mentorship, where had they found the opportunity, and what had they gained or hoped to gain from the relationship. Input was also sought from those who had been able to act as mentors, instead of just as mentees. Finally, what makes a good mentorship relationship?

Mentorships seemed to fall into broad categories:

- formal mentorships, either short- or long-term, or
- informal mentorships.

Formal mentorship opportunities were often found through professional organizations, a common first step for someone looking to build a professional network. Universities also often offer mentorship opportunities to recent graduates, pairing them with alums from previous classes.

Formal mentorships might be short or long term. Long-term mentorships can be set for a certain period of time, say a year, or might be open-ended, to be concluded by the participants themselves. Short term mentorships are frequently seen at conventions, where first-time attendees are paired with returning attendees. The first-timer is able to benefit from the other's prior experience, and be less overwhelmed by the size of the convention.

Informal mentorship-style relationships can arise between acquaintances or within a workplace, as when a junior professional works with a manager at their institution in order to learn skills for the future. These might never be formally labeled "mentorships" by the participants, but still provide the same benefits.

Overall, mentorships are considered very positive, helpful experiences, but also vary as widely as the people participating in them. People join them for a variety of reasons: networking, experience within an organization or field (and sometimes specifically *outside* of their own institution or field, for an outside point of view), or a broader perspective on things like resumes, interviews, professional development, or institutional politics.

Like any relationship, the most successful mentorships appear to depend on the compatibility of those participating. Similar communication styles are helpful, for example, or similar ways to approaching a problem. Mentors and mentees both must be able to listen to the other well, and communicate clearly what they wish to share.

Thanks again to all who participated.
Looking forward to what everyone has to say in February!