

ASA Section on Statistical Education Mentoring Program

The Mentoring Program of the Section on Statistical Education aims to provide career advice and mentoring to help participants achieve their professional goals. Participants are matched with senior statisticians who have strong records and who will serve as mentors.

This new project is aimed at connecting early career statisticians and statistics educators with experienced mentors working in statistics.

Mentors can help explore career options, answer questions during a job search, or provide advice on teaching and scholarship. Most importantly, they are available to answer questions and help make connections with the larger statistical education community.

New statistics educators at all levels (HS, AP, College, Graduate) are encouraged to apply to be matched with a mentor. Matches consider several criteria, including career interests, geographical location, and research area, with the goal of matching in at least one of these areas. The mentor request form allows mentees to specify the criteria that matter most to them.

More information can be found at <http://community.amstat.org/statisticaleducationsection/home>

I. Mentor's Role

The mentor listens to their mentee's professional priorities and goals, and offers suggestions and advice on how those goals may be achieved. The mentor's suggestions are not intended to be prescriptive, but rather to facilitate the development of an action plan by the mentee that best suits his/her needs. The mentor acts by:

- **Teaching:** sharing knowledge and experience. This is meant to focus on professional/career issues. The mentor may also give technical research advice, but they are not intended to act as a statistical consultant.
- **Problem solving:** identifying resources and suggesting alternative approaches/actions. The mentor should act as an advisor (suggests course of action and supports the mentee's decision), rather than direct mediator in work-related situations.
- **Motivating:** encouraging and supporting the mentee's professional development.
- **Guiding:** facilitating the mentee's goal-setting and action plan.
- **Coaching:** offering positive and constructive feedback.

II. Mentee's Role

The mentee communicates their professional interests, priorities, and goals to the mentor and listens to the mentor's suggestions and advice. The mentor's advice is not intended to be prescriptive, and the final decision and responsibility for its implementation rests with the mentee. The mentee will be faced with:

- **Learning:** developing new skills and abilities.
- **Decision making:** taking charge of his/her professional development.
- **Initiating:** exploring new challenges.
- **Risk taking:** willing to possibly fail and then recover.
- **Goal setting:** setting challenging goals that further his/her professional development.

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III. Mentor/Mentee Interaction

Once the Stat Ed Section Mentoring Committee communicates a matching to both mentor and mentee, both individuals are expected to become familiar with the other's professional trajectory and current status by sharing their CVs. Prior to any interaction, the mentee is responsible for considering the following:

- **Skills and interests**, including skills that the mentee feels are current strengths and skills that he/she wishes to develop. The two lists need not be long (3-5 items each) and may include both methodological/technical and more general pedagogical and professional skills.
- **Work/professional goals**, including strategic long-term goals as well as more immediate goals.
- **Overall hopes and expectations for the mentoring relationship**, including topics that are of primary interest and areas that the mentee would like to ask for specific support. Mentees should try to have realistic expectations in light of the time commitment expected of the mentors (ordinarily no more than about one hour per month).

Ideally, the mentee communicates a brief summary of their thoughts on these issues to the mentor in the form of an introductory email within one week of the initial matching.

Soon afterwards, we ask that the mentor suggest times for a phone or Skype call with the mentee. The structure of that interaction is flexible and adaptable to the needs and preferences of both individuals. The most effective mentoring interaction is one that works well for both mentor and mentee. The following are only suggestions:

- **Establish rapport** (10-15 minutes). Discuss professional and life trajectories and find common ground.
- **Discuss expectations** from the mentoring interaction (10-15 minutes). Is this focused on a very specific issue or potentially more long-term? What is the goal of the mentoring relationship?
- **Discuss goals and develop action plan** (30 minutes). First, discuss the mentee's strengths and weaknesses, as well as his/her professional goals (based on the writeup drawn up prior to the meeting). Then, for each goal, consider and discuss possible actions and associated timelines. Be as specific as possible. Discuss feasibility, appropriateness, and impact. Explore variations and alternatives. At the end of this interaction, it is desirable to draw up a list of 3-5 actionable items.

The mentor and mentee are encouraged to meet on a regular basis for the next 6-9 months (monthly half hour calls are recommended at a minimum, but this can be flexible upon agreement of both parties). During such subsequent contacts, the mentee's action plan should be reviewed, with specific attention paid to the actionable items and their timelines. Progress towards the stated goals is assessed. Goals and action plan are discussed and adapted as necessary—it is important to be concrete and realistic. It is anticipated that the time commitment for the mentor would ordinarily be no more than one hour per month.



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When the mentee is satisfied that their needs have been met, they should communicate with the mentor to indicate that no further interaction is necessary and informs their liaison from the mentoring committee.

If circumstances are such that either the mentor or the mentee feel that the interaction is no longer productive, we urge both participants to communicate this with one another clearly and respectfully. The decision to end the mentoring should be communicated with the liaison with the mentoring committee.

As a reminder, all interactions included in this program are governed by the ASA policy on a welcome environment (see below).

The Stat Ed section Mentoring Committee will periodically be in touch with both the mentor and mentee to assess the progress of the interaction and to obtain brief evaluations for the program. Participants will be asked to complete a short evaluation survey to learn and improve on the program. The main purpose of the survey will be to assess our mentor-mentee matching system and the overall effectiveness of the mentoring experience. The survey responses will be completely de-identified to ensure anonymity.

We hope that both mentors and mentees will find these interactions fulfilling and productive. Please do not hesitate to contact the Stat Ed Section Mentoring Committee with questions or comments.

THANK YOU!

Matt Hayat (mhayat@gsu.edu)

Policy on a Welcoming Environment

The Statistics Education Section of ASA encourages the free expression and exchange of ideas in an atmosphere of mutual respect and collegiality. The Statistics Education Section of ASA strives to foster a welcoming environment for all, as a professional society supporting open discussion of statistics and statistics education. Therefore the Statistics Education Section of ASA prohibits any conduct that is discriminatory, harassing, or threatening by any member to any other person engaged in the Statistics Education Section of ASA operations or activities. While the Statistics Education Section of ASA does not control the behavior of third parties, it requests that all individuals attending activities sponsored or co-sponsored by the Statistics Education Section of ASA or affiliated groups, conduct themselves professionally and respectfully toward other participants. Violations may be reported directly to the chair of the Statistics Education section or to Ron Wasserstein (Executive Director of the American Statistical Association, ron@amstat.org).