



Understanding the Research Academy for Faculty and Postdoctoral Fellows Research Mentoring Program

How do I become an RAFFP Research mentor or mentee?

I'm looking for a mentor!

I'm ready to mentor!

Mentoring is a method for orienting and training people new to research, as well as a valuable means for supporting the development—even accelerating the professional growth—of more experienced researchers. Individuals who share knowledge, experiences and skills to benefit someone else provide valuable leadership.

RAFFP members can benefit from mentoring anytime during their career. Just as we need to be mentored in order to continually learn, we also learn through teaching others. Ultimately, RAFFP's value grows as an organization through the performance improvements of our members.

What is mentoring?

RAFFP's Research Mentoring Program is simple. This mentoring program links experienced professional researchers with someone looking for help in professional development.

What does a mentor do?

A mentor oversees the development of another RAFFP member, usually junior. He or she helps the mentee clarify goals and carry out a plan to reach those goals by sharing the insights and knowledge they have gained through their experiences. Typical roles of a mentor can include being a coach, teacher, motivator, counselor, guide, door opener, advisor and role model.

A mentor:

- Coaches the mentee in enhancing skills and intellectual development.
- Passes along organizational information (structure, politics, personalities).
- Provides candid feedback to the mentee about perceived strengths and developmental needs.
- Points out opportunities for the mentee to develop and demonstrate capabilities (as well as pointing out pitfalls to avoid).
- Advises the mentee on how to deal with real or perceived roadblocks.
- Serves as a sounding board.
- Encourages and motivates the mentee.
- Builds the mentee's self-confidence.
- Links the mentee with others who can enhance the mentee's learning.



What is a "mentee"?

There are two kinds of "mentees:"

- The person who is new to academic research and has a need for a more experienced person to pass on the "organizational savvy," culture, politics and personality of the institution. Not only does this knowledge help the mentee to succeed, but it also helps the established research person to "give back" to the institution.
- A second type of mentee is a more seasoned individual who is seeking professional guidance to reach one or more career goals.

How does someone get involved with the mentor program?

A member of RAFPF can become a research mentee simply by applying. An application form for the prospective mentee will ask for some information about their person and the goals in seeking a mentor.

An RAFPF member may volunteer to be a mentor by sending contact information to Ubaldo M. Córdova (ubaldom.cordova@upr.edu), who is the Coordinator for the Research Academy program, or the Professional Enrichment Center (cep@uprm.edu).

What do mentees want from their mentors?

Typical responses include the following: Encouragement, support, honesty, candid information and advice, a "big picture" view, guidance, suggestions, an honest appraisal of their abilities, help with their "vision," assistance in making good choices, information on opportunities available, help in defining and reaching goals, the benefit of the mentor's experiences, availability without interruptions, non-attribution, honest discussions about tough issues, assistance in formulating a cohesive plan, help developing a network, introduction to key players, idea stimulation, and insight to career paths.

What areas of research are covered under the mentor program?

All aspects of research—such as funding opportunities, proposal writing, pre-award process, post award process, reports, publication and presentations. Also it could cover other type of academic development aspects that lead to a more efficient career moves and advancement.

Are all mentees guaranteed a mentor?

Yes, even though given the number mentors to mentees, there is a possibility that some mentees have to share mentors.



How does a mentor benefit from a mentoring connection?

- Personal satisfaction—mentors typically report a sense of pride at helping a junior person succeed. They also often state they feel they are "giving back" some of what has been given to them.
- Sharpened leadership interpersonal skills—mentors sharpen their own skills as they challenge and coach their mentees.
- Source of recognition—good mentors are well respected at all levels in the organization.
- Expanded professional contacts—mentors develop professional contacts by interacting with other mentors and with contacts they make while seeking referrals for their mentee.
- Information gathering—mentors may be exposed to fresh ideas from their mentees. Because some senior people can be isolated or set in their ways, mentees can offer insight about how personnel at different levels perceive research.

What is the time commitment for a mentor?

The amount of time varies depending on the needs, expectations, and desires of the mentee and the mentor. RAFPF highly recommend that both parties discuss their expectations at the beginning, and one of the most important factors is time: How often and for how long will they be available? Does one have a commitment at certain times that would make them unavailable? When is it okay to call? The greatest time commitment will generally be at the beginning of the connection, as the focus is on getting to know each other and on building the relationship. The volunteer for RAFPF's research mentoring program is asked to provide a commitment of about **one to three years** to potentially experience working with several mentees.

How long does a mentoring connection last?

It depends on the mentee's needs, remembering that successful connections are mentee-driven. Mentoring relationships may end when the mentee has outgrown the need for his or her mentor's guidance. Sometimes, the relationship evolves into a strong friendship in which the two see each other as peers. RAFPF recommends an initial commitment of **one year between the mentee and mentor**. By that time, the mentor and mentee should discuss what they have accomplished, whether it would be beneficial to continue, and what to work on in the future.

How many people can one person mentor?

There is no rule as to how many one can mentor, as each mentor must decide how much time they can commit to mentoring. Because of the time and energy needed to mentor effectively, RAFPF suggests that the mentor develop one connection before deciding to take on another.



How should mentors and mentees interact?

Once a mentee is given the name of the mentor, it is recommended that the mentee call or email the mentor to discuss the best way to make this relationship work. It is important to know the “ground rules” that work for both.

Generally, phone calls or email may be the best way to communicate. However, if it works for the individuals, face-to-face meetings could work at times. RAFPF Research plans to hold mentoring gatherings at our research conferences and seminars to further facilitate the personal connections.

Overall goals of mentoring program

Help faculty and postdoctoral fellows to:

1. Learn about UPRM, the surrounding community and the resources available to faculty
2. Adjust to the new environment and quickly become an active researcher of the university
3. Address questions, concerns and needs confidentially
4. Get input on effective teaching and research techniques
5. Managing a research group efficiently
6. Writing successful proposals and scientific papers
7. Develop short and long term research goals

Motivate experienced faculty to:

1. Share their knowledge and experience and acquire professional satisfaction
2. Help new faculty and postdoctoral fellows to effectively adjust to the UPRM and address their needs, concerns and questions, if necessary.
3. Help shape careers of new colleagues
4. Provide an invaluable service to the university to foster fellowship through mentoring
5. Contribute to teaching, research and academic activities
6. Foster competitiveness research through all faculties by promoting a sustainable research culture
7. Develop plans or solutions to problems affecting the professional growth of faculty and postdoctoral fellows

Expected goals of the mentee during the first year

1. To participate in 12 contact hours of activities sponsored by the Research Academy. This includes workshops, forums, seminars, and symposiums.
2. To write and submit at least one (1) research proposal
3. To develop a network of support of researchers at UPRM and abroad
4. A commitment to help develop a strong and sustainable research culture at your department



**University of Puerto Rico - Mayagüez
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What if the mentee/mentor relationship is not working well?

Either the mentee or the mentor should immediately advise RAFFP and we will either find a new partner or help to resolve the reason for the difficulty.

Who is eligible to participate in research mentor program?

All members of RAFFP may participate. This program is not restricted to any specific area or discipline.

Who is coordinating the RAFFP Research Mentoring Program?

This research program is being coordinated by: Ubaldo M. Córdova (787-832-4040 ext. 3829 or ubaldom.cordova@upr.edu)

Reading List:

Tips for Mentees <http://www.mentoringgroup.com/mentees.html>

Tips for Mentors <http://www.mentoringgroup.com/mentors.html>

*** Adapted by International Council of Shopping Centers, Global Research Network