

Writing a Mentoring Philosophy

- Why write one?
 - Help provide a “punch line” for the entire seminar.
 - Capture major lessons from a summer mentoring experience/seminar while they're fresh.
 - Have a personal mentoring handbook ready for the next time you begin to mentor a new student. (If fully realized, this would be more than a philosophy statement.)
 - Be ready to write a mentoring section in a teaching philosophy.
 - Help with NSF proposal broader impact statements.
 - Be ready to develop mentoring plans as specifically called for in many funding proposals.
- What is your intended audience and scope?
 - A large, comprehensive, and not especially polished statement to capture as much as possible. This would be for personal use only, from which mentoring philosophies and working plans would be derived later.
 - A one or two paragraph contribution to a teaching philosophy or broader impacts discussion in a proposal. This should be compact, tight, and well-polished.
 - Something intermediate between the first two, a prototype for the mentoring philosophy/strategy of a big research/education proposal.
- If you were on a review committee, what would you want to read about?
- How to review or evaluate your own or someone else's mentoring philosophy?
 - Who is the intended audience? How successful is the statement at addressing this audience? Is the length and scope appropriate for the audience?
 - What image do I have of you as a mentor? What is it like to be your mentee based on your written statement?
 - Do you draw on your own experience as a mentor and/or mentee?
- If I were on a review/hiring committee, how would I respond to this statement? Would it stand out (positively or negatively) among the 20, or 200, I've already read?
- Follow the teaching philosophy practice: articulate core beliefs and then support them with evidence from personal experience and/or research. Follow a rubric similar to that for a teaching philosophy^{*}:
 - Definitions of mentor and learning.
 - View of the mentee.
 - View of the mentor.
 - Goals and expectations of the mentor/mentee relationship.
What are the goals you have for your student this summer? These may include project specific milestones and/or goals derived from the elements of a good research experience and project which you wrote down for week 1.
 - Mentoring methods and evaluation.
What is your strategy for achieving these goals? Consider whether you want a general strategy or would like something as specific as a week-by-week plan. Or, based on your own experiences as a mentee, what do you plan to discuss explicitly with your mentee, what will you make implicit, and what will you address only if it comes up?
 - Professional development as a mentor.
 - Personal context of mentoring.

^{*} The list was adapted from Christine Pribbenow's teaching philosophy rubric published in Sarah Miller, Christine Pfund, Christine Maidl Pribbenow, Jo Handelsman. *Science*, 322, 1329-1330.