

The following Q&A table content is taken from the original event’s Zoom chat thread. Drs. Jennifer Ma and Nika Shakiba didn’t have time to get to these attendee-asked questions before the end of the scheduled session, so they’ve graciously offered to answer them here!

Questions	Answers: Dr. Jennifer Ma & Dr. Nika Shakiba
<p>Reaching out to a mentor can be intimidating, do you have any strategies to feel more confident when looking to reach out to a potential mentor?</p> <p>Should we approach this casually or more cordially?</p>	<p>Do your homework before reaching out: figure out what you want, learn about their background and interest and highlight these when you contact them, prep some questions.</p> <p>Start with a few chats to see if it’s a good fit, then as to form a more formal mentoring relationship.</p> <p>Don’t forget to follow up after to let your mentor know how you are progressing — this helps to build the mentor relationship and gives you a chance to thank them for their time! They also become more invested in your growth.</p>
<p>How have you found the transition from being a mentee to being a mentor? Any lessons you wish you knew when starting along that path?</p>	<p>The transition happened when I realized I have something to share that others would find helpful. I wish it happened earlier cause the reality is that we are all always both mentor and mentee, we always are growing and evolving! The more we engage in mentoring relationships, both as a mentor and a mentee, the better we become.</p>
<p>Sometime I just realize that I am turning into the very same character of a mentor who I really like! Is it something normal or if not how could I avoid that?</p>	<p>It’s normal. I don’t think it’s necessarily bad but you want to be Better than your mentor! Diversifying your mentoring relationships can help you be more well-rounded and not just a copy of your mentor.</p> <p>Mentorship is a learned skill so it’s normal to take the best of others and learn from them.</p>
<p>I have found that mentors don't need to be from the exact same field/career path as mine, I have received good advice from people who had no relation to my career. Does that also fall under a mentor-mentee relationship?</p>	<p>Absolutely! No reason to limit yourself and there are lots we can learn from people outside of our fields.</p>
<p>I think some of the most important mentorship I’ve received is from my peers (fellow graduate students, co-workers who are not supervisors, etc). Can you speak to the benefits of peer</p>	<p>Our peers are probably going through a similar phase as us, overcoming challenges that we are also facing, well-positioned to understand our experience. They can provide great support as well as advice from more recent and relevant</p>

<p>networks (I see 'online peer communities' on your slide there)?</p>	<p>experiences. They may also point us to resources that they find helpful.</p>
<p>while I personally have had many positive mentors in my time in academia, I have also encountered/heard about numerous cases where the basic hierarchy in academia leads to people putting trust in people who should be mentors, but instead end up taking advantage of the student who came to them for help. Do you have any comment on how to best screen mentors or deal with a scenario where someone who is in power and should be a positive influence is acting as a negative one?</p> <p>Having mentors from diverse backgrounds can be an eye-opening experience. As the relationship develops the mentor's advice to the mentee may become less general as the pairing grows closer over time. In your opinion, what are some warning signs to look out for if a mentor-mentee pair with clashing personalities/ideologies attempt to develop a strong/productive mentorship relationship?</p>	<p>Don't assume and look for these behaviours that are signs of a productive, healthy mentoring relationship: aligning expectations, building rapport, maintaining open communication, facilitating mentee agency, addressing diversity factors (from <a href="#">"The Science of Effective Mentorship in STEMM"</a>)</p> <p>The opposite of these or if you have issues in these areas, it may be a sign that the mentoring relationship is not right for you.</p>
<p>Do you have advice for building/fostering mentor/mentee relationships given that many people have very busy schedules?</p>	<p>Set and agree on communication channels and a schedule. It could be meeting once every X months, follow up emails to keep the mentee/mentor accountable, etc.</p>
<p>One bad experience I had with one of my mentors was they were so busy they had no time for mentees. So the supervision was just based on a monthly meeting for 15 minutes. In the case that you are not able to change them (say as a supervisor), how would you address this issue?</p>	<p>Look for another mentor. Committee or other faculty members can be great mentors, but don't limit yourself to your department or institution either. Network at conferences and events, look online, join communities—diversify the types of mentoring relationships and don't rely on one person.</p> <p>It's also important to set reasonable expectations that both you and your mentor have agreed upon. Sometimes it's not realistic to rely on one mentor for all your advice-gathering!</p>
<p>In regards to the relationship we are building with the mentor do we have to limit our conversations to the project/academia or can the relationship become more personal? How do we build barriers without being disrespectful?</p>	<p>In general it should be beyond your project and include support for your career and personal development. How personal is up to you and your mentor.</p> <p>E.g. I kept my mentor in the loop about my health issues, which had an impact on my</p>

	productivity and it was really helpful to know that they were understanding and supportive. But I relied on other resources to deal with the issues themselves.
How can mentors minimize personal bias/skewing experiences when they share thoughts and advice to their mentees? Or at least make it clear that it comes from a very personal perspective that might not apply to mentees?	Be transparent about their thought process and experiences that informed their advice. This way the mentee can gauge whether it is biased, applicable to them or not. Also try to get multiple opinions if you can. Diversifying your mentoring relationships always helps.