

ASA Early Career Researcher Mentoring Workshop – Session summary

Session Topic: Managing People

Discussion Leader: Tara Murphy & Warrick Couch

If you only remember three things from this talk, remember these...

1. Supervising students - Students are people not resources. You are there to help them learn.
2. Conflicts of interest - Sometimes recognising conflicts of interest is not easy. They are not always obvious.
3. It's very important that your student/employee/etc understands your expectations of them, and what they can expect from you, from the outset.

Session summary/notes

- Warrick Couch -

- Role models are very important for understanding management and leadership.
- Management seems to be enjoyed by some people who discover their love for management on the job. Management is not a power relationship; it is getting the very best out of people.
- Managers are leaders, visionaries, supervisors, role models, motivators, good communicators, mentors, etc.
- Should have a significant amount of freedom and independence as an ECR.
- Act professional and ethical at all times – see ASA website for code of conduct.
- As a manager, you must know how to deal with bullying, harassment, and other negative behaviors, including conflicts of interest
- Supervising students is usually the first go at managing people.

- Tara Murphy -

- Supervising students takes time, not makes it
- Students are people not resources
- It's about them, not you
- Make expectations clear (theirs and yours)
- Be friendly, but don't be their friend (conflicts of interest alert)
- Different people need different management styles
- Actively think about supervising students as a learning experience for you
- You are there to help the student, not the other way around

Example situations:

1) RA doesn't come in to work ever, however they do turn in work, and actively communicate by email. When asked, explains they are working from home at night as they are more productive then.

- They need to come in. By not doing so they are not networking, and they are damaging their career.
- The RA may not have known they were expected to turn up to work during business hours. Superior needs to make expectations clear.

- They very likely have a contract that states they are required to spend x amount of time at work during business hours, and that they should be present and participating.
- It's not obvious to many, but it's not necessarily clear that they need to come in. Just because something is obvious to you doesn't mean it will be to others.
- How to handle it? Point out to them that they might be damaging their career, and ask them to start coming in. Perhaps explicitly agree on hours present.

2) Student is 80% done on a paper, then they move on, and are not planning to finish it. A post-doc finishes the paper and then asks to be first author. Should they be, or should the student be?

- Answer is clear (says Rachel Webster): Student did 80% of work, they are the majority contributor, therefore they should be first author.
- Flip side is: 80% of a paper is not a paper finished. Without the postdoc the paper would not be finished.

3) Unhappy student tell you about problems with their supervisor while at the pub. The supervisor is also your boss. The student asks you not to tell anyone. What do you do?

- If it's just a whinge, it's ok, ignore it. If it's more serious, advise the student on steps they can take (talk to those higher up, report it etc).
- Don't tell anyone, and don't immediately tell the student anything, but seek mentoring and other advice as to how you might be able to help the student.

Interesting quotes from the discussion

“A mentor is someone who sees more talent and ability within someone, than they see in themselves, and helps bring it out in them...”

“If someone in power is having a relationship with one of their students or employees, then the student/employee needs to be reassigned to a different supervisor (whatever).”

“A very fine line between reasonable and unreasonable management action.”

“Supervising students is time well spent on learning how to manage people.”