



Postdocs as Mentors

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Trainee-focused Advisor

Is trainee-focused advisor enough for Ph.D. program?

- A great scientist advisor
- An advisor that is also a skilled mentor

What do you think it might be missing?

Cascading Mentorship Model

It takes a village to raise a child.

Aim: allow junior members to learn from the lessons and experiences of senior students.

Creating the next generation of the leaders.

The Study

The paper: Postdocs' lab engagement predicts trajectories of PhD students' skill development

Long-term study of 336 Ph.D. students in the biological sciences from 53 U.S. institutions.

The findings:

- Quantitative: Students were 4.5 times as likely to have yearly skill development growth when advanced graduate students joined in lab discussions.
- Qualitative: Postdocs provide hands-on instruction in the lab, give professional and academic feedback, model how an academic career may look for the graduate student, and provide personal/emotional support.

Postdocs Fill the Gaps

Larger teams and increasing pace and volume of workload results in less direct contact of the advisors with students. Postdocs and others within the lab may step into the gap that is created.

BUT...

This doesn't mean postdocs have acquired “the full wisdom of the advisors”.

Thoughts of a Ph.D. (Ph.D. Diaries)

The twitter user: <https://twitter.com/thoughtsofaphd>

A student in Toronto.

“My peers were my absolute saviors when I was getting poor mentorship”.

“Even in a lab with a great supervisor **complementary** peer mentorship is crucial”.

"I am deeply indebted to the incredibly intelligent people around me. Real scientific learning and progress does not happen when you're by yourself reading papers until 2 a.m. It happens in small, serendipitous conversations benchside at 2:45 p.m., 15 minutes before your weekly meeting with your boss, at coffee hour, etc."



**If I have seen further, it is
by standing upon the
shoulders of giants.**

- Sir Isaac Newton

