Defining Mentorship in a Research Setting

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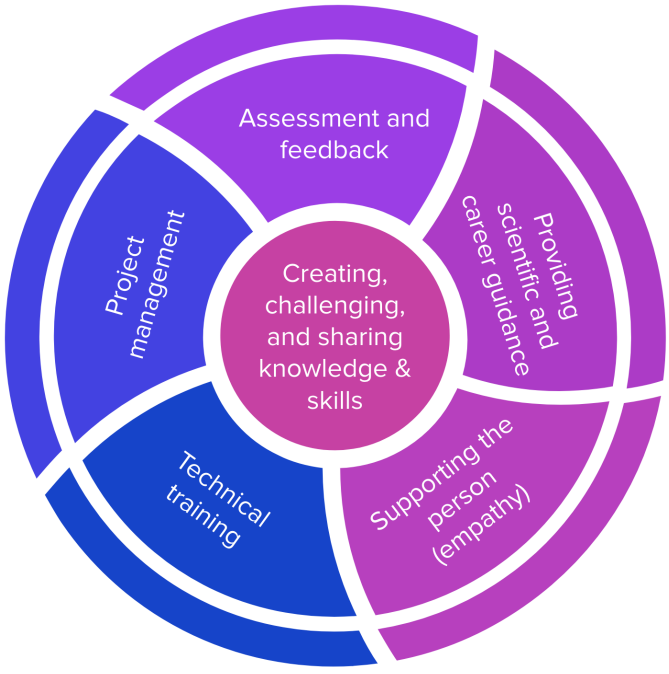
Part 1: An Overview of Mentorship

At its core, the scientific enterprise is hallmarked by the propagation of knowledge from skilled scientist to research apprentice. Currently, and for most of modern scientific history, the value and success of this knowledge propagation is measured almost exclusively on the specific outcomes of scientific discovery -- i.e. elucidation of mechanism, publications, funding, or other project-focused themes. Despite being embedded in a system completely dependent on people training other people, there has been little focus on how we can most effectively build and nurture the human relationships required to conduct science.

As our communities work toward creating a more inclusive scientific enterprise, we must do more to emphasize the sheer fact that science is a human endeavor. Through this set of materials, we hope to open up important discussions around mentorship among members of our scientific community. While there is no one best way to be an effective mentor, there are certain core expectations that can promote excellence in mentoring. By incorporating reflective mentoring practices into the academic framework, we can elevate the notion that science is indeed for everyone.

Establishing the Meaning of Mentorship

At its baseline, mentorship is a partnership between someone who is experienced in a given area, and someone who wishes to gain experience in said area. When we engage in mentorship, we are promoting the transfer of knowledge between individuals, and within organizations. The way in which we approach mentorship as a community sets the tone for institutional culture, and paves the way for sustaining and scaling the scientific enterprise. In deconstructing what it means



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