

Summary of results from the CRU mentoring poll

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Background

The CRU DEI committee feels that a mentoring program within the CRU program will help us become a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all of our employees, post-docs, and students, and help with retention as well. Thus, the committee developed an online survey to gather information about the mentoring needs and services of unit scientists. The committee emailed a [link to the survey](#) via Shana Coulby in mid-October and asked people to respond within 3 weeks. Ultimately, we received responses from 60 individuals, which are summarized in this report.

Survey topics

The survey included 6 general topics:

- 1) Administration
- 2) Career building
- 3) Conducting research
- 4) Coordination with partners
- 5) Lab management
- 6) Service

Within each topic, respondents were asked which format of mentoring they would prefer. Their options were a one-on-one discussion, a small group discussion, or that it would depend on the specific topic.

Participant roles

Poll respondents were asked what primary role they felt they would play in a mentoring program. The responses were quite evenly mixed between “mentee”, “mentor”, and “both” (Figure 1).

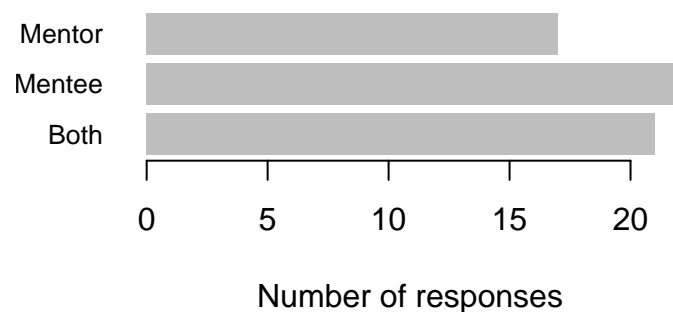


Figure 1: Number of respondents who would consider their primary role as mentee, mentor, or both.

Mentoring format

Poll respondents largely felt that the format or environment within which they would prefer to receive (or give) mentoring advice would depend on the specific topic. In general, though, relatively few people thought one-on-one meetings would be preferable relative to small group discussions (see figures on following pages).

Administration

Among the many administrative tasks where unit staff could use some mentoring advice, “Use of Reston resources to enhance [a] program” and “Dealing with government sites & systems” received the most potential interest (Figure 2). The categories “Use of Reston resources to enhance program” and “Compliance with the Hatch Act” had the greatest disparity between the number of possible mentees and potential mentors.

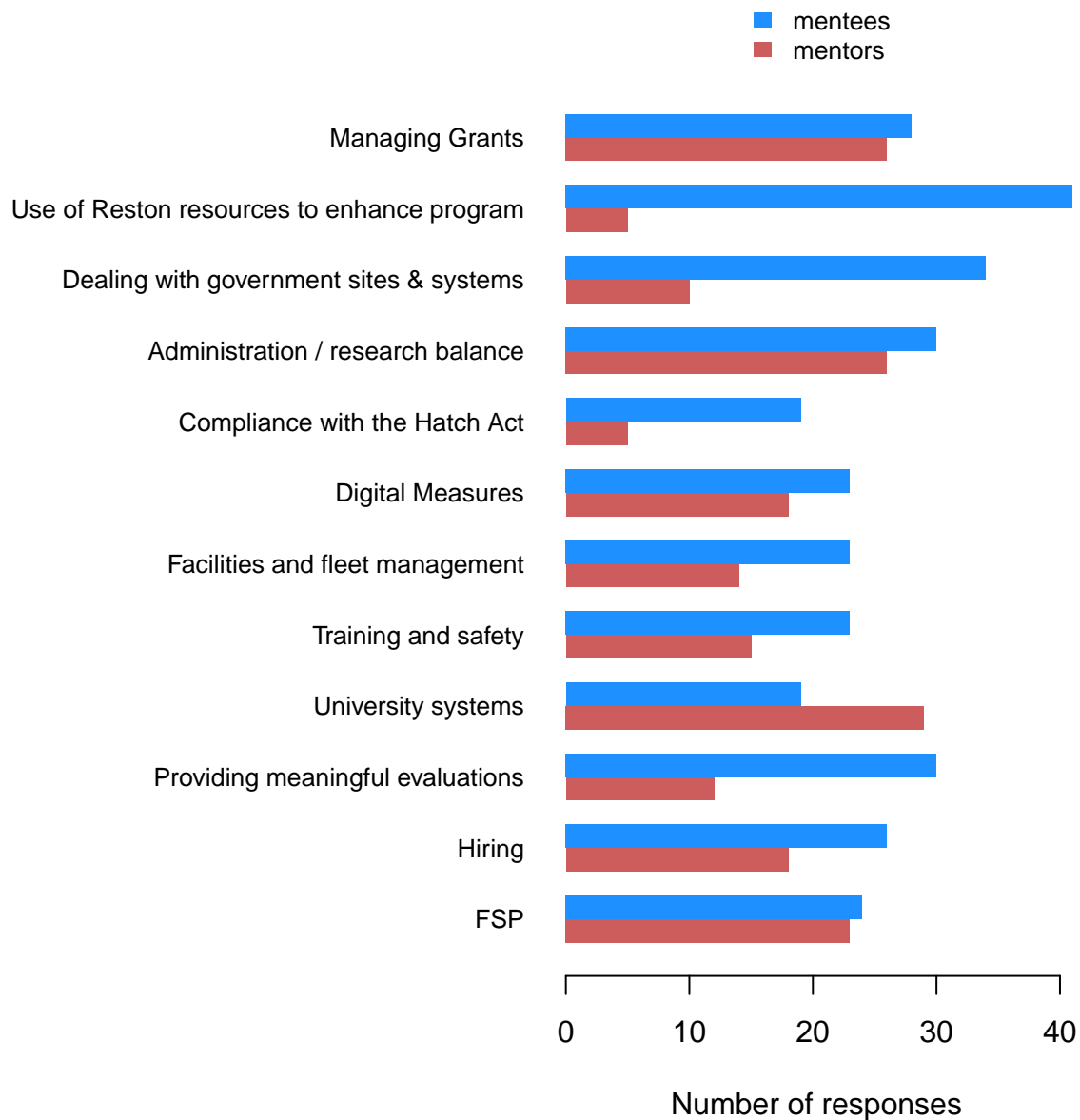


Figure 2: Number of responses by role (mentee or mentor) for each of the administrative categories.

Other administration topics

Poll respondents were offered an opportunity to add other topics for which they would like some mentoring advice. Here is a list of those responses.

- Promoting diversity within unit graduate students
- For all of these I feel like I can give a perspective from my own institution (and I am happy to do so) but we all know this varies across institutions.
- Somewhat covered above would be more specific discussions about the RWO process and proper roles of unit scientist vs unit admin should play
- Dealing with unexpected crises or changes within the Unit (e.g., death, resignations, etc.)
- recruiting students to meet cooperator needs
- maybe RGE?
- RGE= Mentee
- How to exceed expectations for administration in annual reviews.
- Selecting graduate students
- RWOs

Mentoring format

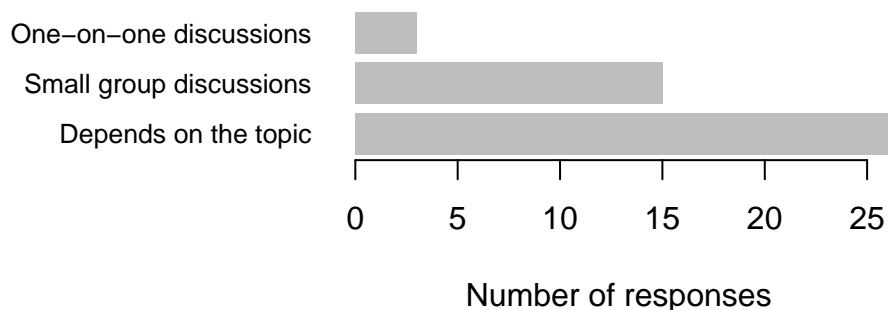


Figure 3: Number of responses for each of the proposed mentoring formats for the administration category.

Career building

Among the topics associated with career building, “Strategies for navigating the RGE process” was the most popular, but there is a clear need for those topics associated with personal well-being and achieving a proper work-life balance (Figure 4). In general, there was much better alignment between the number of possible mentees and potential mentors for this category.

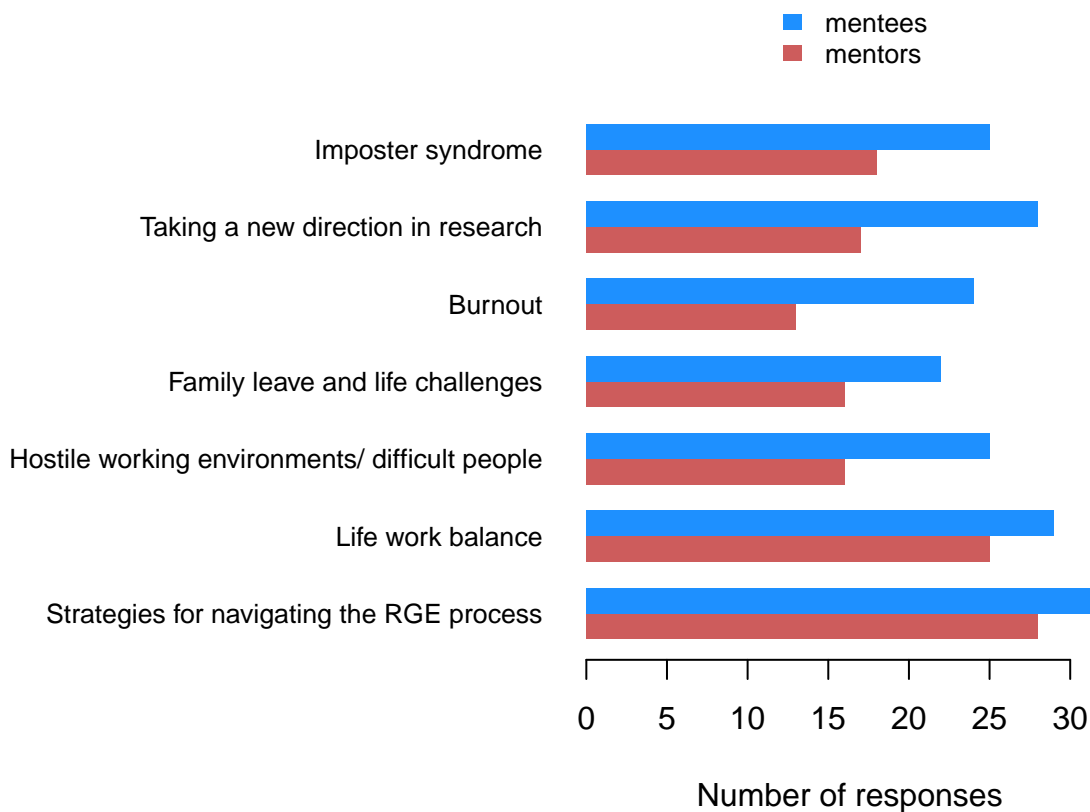


Figure 4: Number of responses by role (mentee or mentor) for each of the career categories.

Other career topics

Poll respondents were offered an opportunity to add other topics for which they would like some mentoring advice. Here is a list of those responses.

- I feel most of these would be better one on one but the RGE process in general is good from a collective perspective. No other topics that I can think of, other than maybe the teaching side
- Title IX / harassment issues - we have to deal with both university and DOI entities with these issues
- How to be creative/innovative in a government position in the RGE framework

- Topics around DEI; implicit bias training; navigating difficult people/conversations
- This is topic area I am most interested in.
- how to create space for own professional development and research interests

Mentoring format

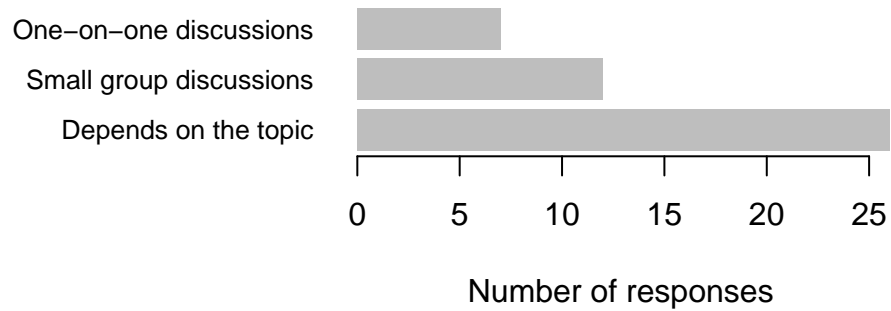


Figure 5: Number of responses for each of the proposed mentoring formats for the career category.

Conducting research

Among the topics associated with conducting research, unit staff are clearly interested in more information about “Data archiving and ScienceBase”, and there were very few people who felt they could serve as a mentor for this topic (Figure 6). Interestingly, there were more potential mentors than possible mentees for “Developing a research program”.

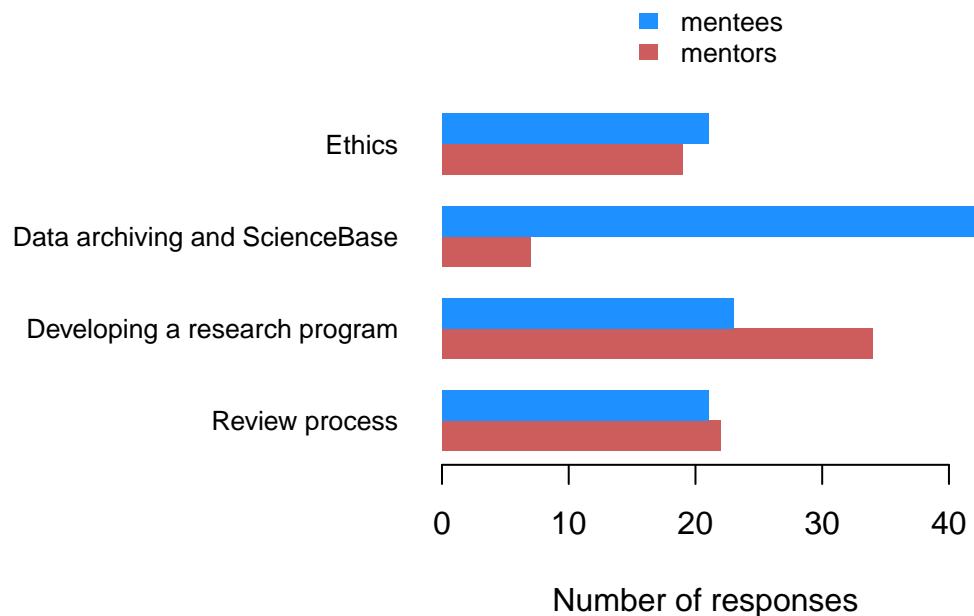


Figure 6: Number of responses by role (mentee or mentor) for each of the research categories.

Other research topics

Poll respondents were offered an opportunity to add other topics for which they would like some mentoring advice. Here is a list of those responses.

- Budget considerations
- Maybe “Developing a Research Program” covers this but the balance between novel research and Cooperator Needs is one worthy of explicit discussion
- Working with research partners, particularly when graduate students are involved (I feel like I’d be a decent mentor in this regard).
- Dealing with high profile disasters like oil spills, NRDA, and the legalities surrounding them
- Getting grants from stakeholders
- Interested in how different units approach getting projects with state agencies.

Mentoring format

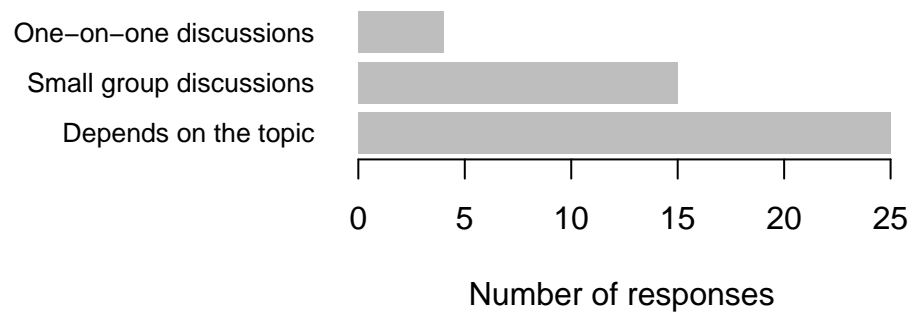


Figure 7: Number of responses for each of the proposed mentoring formats for the research category.

Coordination with partners

Perhaps not surprisingly, all of the topics within the category of coordination with partners received broad interest (Figure 8). Here, too, there were more potential mentors than possible mentees for “Working with cooperators” (and marginally so for “Funding”).

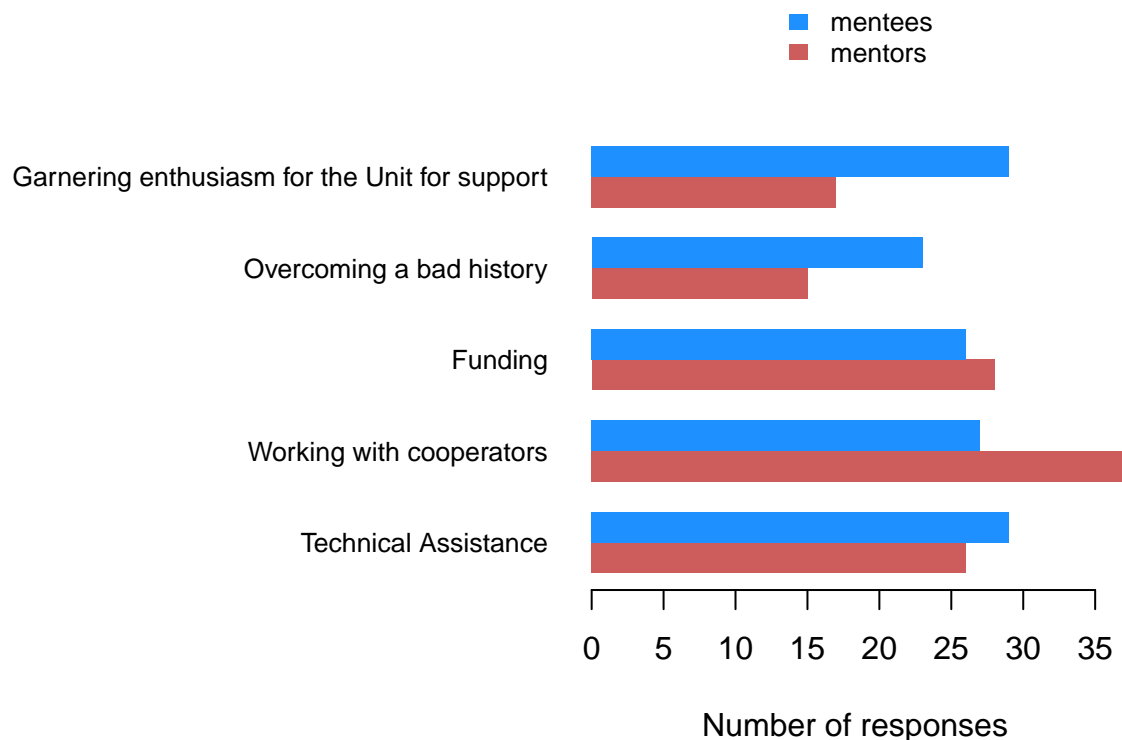


Figure 8: Number of responses by role (mentee or mentor) for each of the partners categories.

Other partners topics

Poll respondents were offered an opportunity to add other topics for which they would like some mentoring advice. Here is a list of those responses.

- Navigating working with territorial university faculty with overlapping interests
- What about Generating a Bad History? ha ha
- Facilitating interaction between cooperators and uninterested AUL
- How to connect with state agencies during COVID
- See previous response. I have what I think are generally good relationships but finding actual funding to support students is difficult and stressful.

- how to interact with administrators; how to say no gracefully; knowing when your workload is too much

Mentoring format

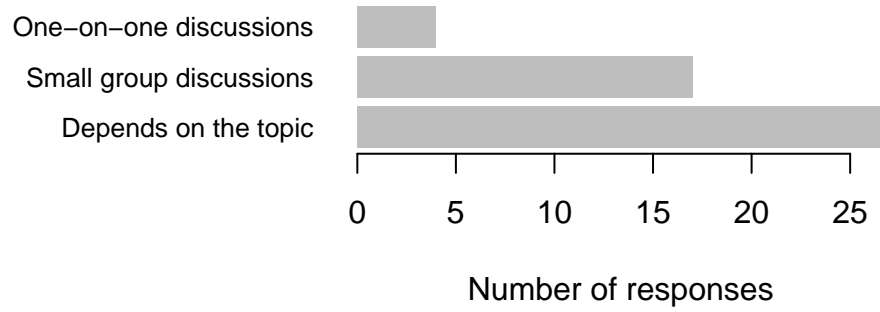


Figure 9: Number of responses for each of the proposed mentoring formats for the partners category.

Lab management

The topics within the lab management category all received considerable interest (Figure 10). Many of these topics focus on elements of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice, which is perhaps not too surprising. Of note, the topic of “DEIJ outreach & broader impacts” had very few potential mentors and wide interest among respondents. The topic of “Teaching/developing a course” had more potential mentors than possible mentees, as did “Mentoring students”.

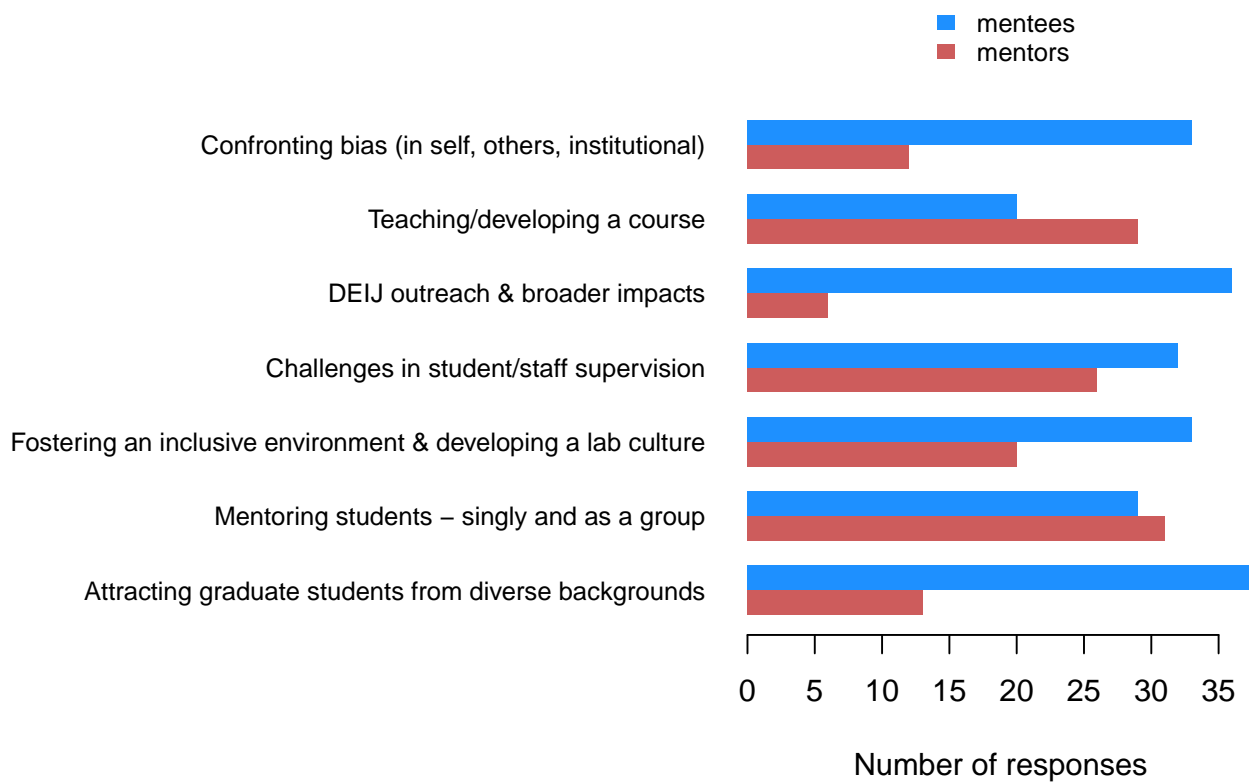


Figure 10: Number of responses by role (mentee or mentor) for each of the lab categories.

Other lab topics

Poll respondents were offered an opportunity to add other topics for which they would like some mentoring advice. Here is a list of those responses.

- Motivating or coaching students. E.g., I think students really suffered during COVID.

Mentoring format

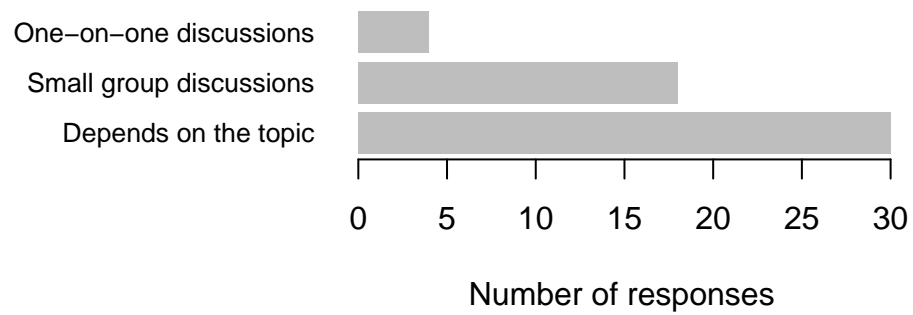


Figure 11: Number of responses for each of the proposed mentoring formats for the lab management category.

Service

All of the topics within the service category were generally quite popular, but especially “Communication & social media”, which also had the greatest discrepancy between possible mentees and mentors (Figure 12). Notably, the categories of “Providing constructive reviews” and “Involvement in professional organizations and meetings” had more potential mentors than interested mentees.

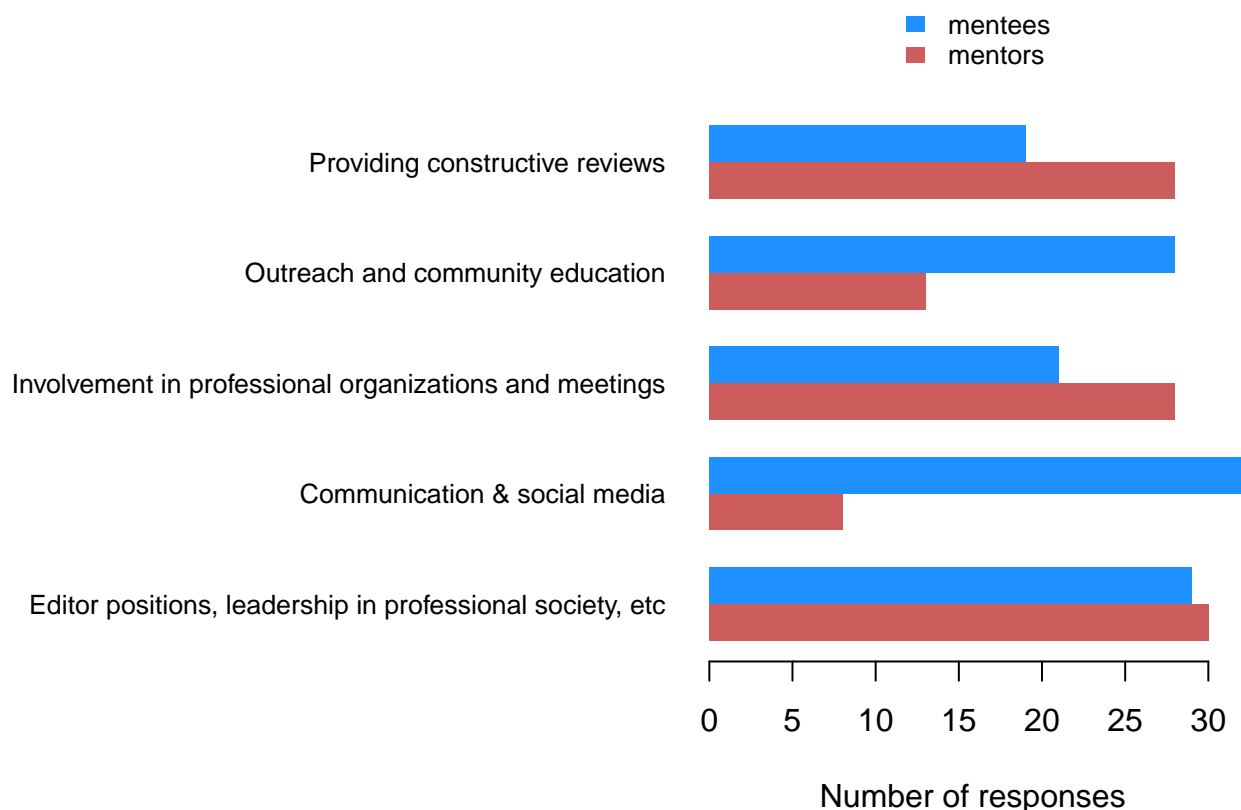


Figure 12: Number of responses by role (mentee or mentor) for each of the service categories.

Other service topics

Poll respondents were offered an opportunity to add other topics for which they would like some mentoring advice. Here is a list of those responses.

- Providing technical assistance? How to measure value/impact?

Mentoring format

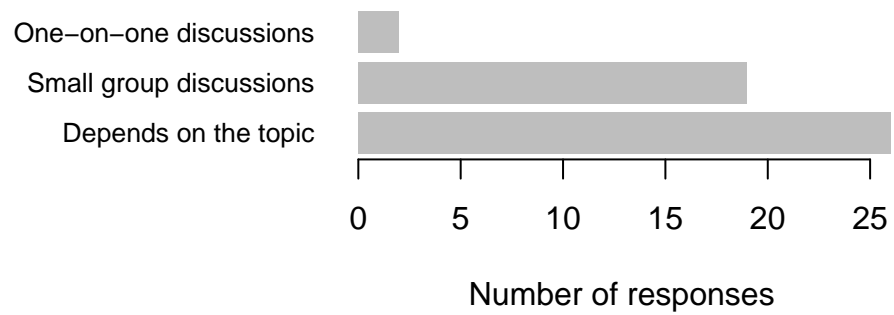


Figure 13: Number of responses for each of the proposed mentoring formats for the service category.

Summary

Across all 40 of the mentoring topics (Table 1), the top 3 most popular options were:

1. Data archiving and ScienceBase
2. Use of Reston resources to enhance program
3. Attracting graduate students from diverse backgrounds

Table 1: List of mentoring topics ranked by number of mentee responses.

Topic	Mentees	Mentors
Data archiving and ScienceBase	42	7
Use of Reston resources to enhance program	41	5
Attracting graduate students from diverse backgrounds	38	13
DEIJ outreach & broader impacts	36	6
Dealing with government sites & systems	34	10
Strategies for navigating the RGE process	33	28
Fostering an inclusive environment & developing a lab culture	33	20
Confronting bias (in self, others, institutional)	33	12
Challenges in student/staff supervision	32	26
Communication & social media	32	8
Providing meaningful evaluations	30	12
Administration / research balance	30	26
Life work balance	29	25
Technical Assistance	29	26
Garnering enthusiasm for the Unit for support	29	17
Mentoring students - singly and as a group	29	31
Editor positions, leadership in professional society, etc	29	30
Managing Grants	28	26
Taking a new direction in research	28	17
Outreach and community education	28	13
Working with cooperators	27	37
Hiring	26	18
Funding	26	28
Hostile working environments/ difficult people	25	16
Imposter syndrome	25	18
FSP	24	23
Burnout	24	13
Training and safety	23	15
Facilities and fleet management	23	14

Topic	Mentees	Mentors
Digital Measures	23	18
Developing a research program	23	34
Overcoming a bad history	23	15
Family leave and life challenges	22	16
Review process	21	22
Ethics	21	19
Involvement in professional organizations and meetings	21	28
Teaching/developing a course	20	29
University systems	19	29
Compliance with the Hatch Act	19	5
Providing constructive reviews	19	28