



# Mentoring Fermilab Interns and Fellows

Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

# What is Mentoring?

"The most effective mentors take in what's happening, assess the path the mentee is on and then guide the person onto the right track. Mentoring is as much about counseling as it is transferring knowledge and leadership skills. That takes practice, and the mentor has to be willing to let the mentee make mistakes and try guiding them again."

- Business News Daily [1]

# Mentoring an Intern

Mentoring is a bilateral relationship which involves both teaching and learning between the mentor and the person being mentored. It is a method for developing individuals with the help of more experienced individuals for the purpose of addressing knowledge, behavioral, and professional opportunities. Mentoring provides interns the opportunity to learn from subject matter experts to develop and grow into who they want to become professionally.

## What Mentoring is:

- A dynamic partnership built on **mutual respect, trust and idea sharing**
- A relationship which **supports learning and performance** through interactions, facilitated problem solving, and clear guidance
- A process of **assessing individual strengths and growth opportunities**
- A relationship in which a **mentee takes ownership of the learning experience** and content
- Supporting someone in overall development, **working toward potential that they may not see**

## The Myths of Mentoring:

- Mentoring is **solely a job-training** or shadowing program
- Mentoring leads to a full-time position
- Mentors have the latest information available on the organization
- Mentors control the next career step
- Mentoring is a "fix"
- People should have the same mentor for their entire careers

# Why is Mentoring So Important?

## Mentoring...

Provides the intern with training and guidance

Makes the intern feel appreciated by the organization

Creates an open and trusting environment between the student and supervisor

Improves the student's self-confidence in their role at the organization

Brings new perspectives to the organization

Not only can supervisors train interns and help them overcome specific job-related challenges, they can also provide them with general career advice and assist with the development of the intern's short-term and long-term goals. [5]

This demonstrates the organization's investment in the professional growth of the intern. This can lead to an increase in their motivation and their quality of work. [4]

When trust is established between a supervisor and student, the student feels more comfortable asking questions and openly problem solving with the supervisor. [4]

Having a supervisor to provide feedback can help steer the intern in the right direction. The more positive feedback they receive, the more confident they will be in their ability to succeed.

Interns can contribute innovative ideas and bring a sense of enthusiasm to a project. While they may be new to a specific field or industry, they will be excited to brainstorm with the rest of the team.

# Best Practices for Internship Supervision



# Best Practices for Internship Supervision: Trust and Commitment

## Trust (Orientation)

- Lab mission, structure
- Build the relationship
  - Create a safe space
  - Get to know your intern
  - Learn about their background, share own experiences
- Discuss structure & focus
  - What are necessary resources for a successful experience?
  - Contact and meeting frequencies
  - Roles & responsibilities, policies

## Commitment

- Determine meetings. Frequency of interactions is vital - especially in online formats [2]
- Prepare agendas in advance
- Encourage intern to step outside comfort zone
- Listen, collaborate, challenge and uncover ways for intern to problem solve
- Use guiding questions
- Accountability & Goal Setting
  - Establish short- and long-term mutually agreed goals
  - Check in, hold intern accountable & give goal-setting reminders

# Best Practices for Internship Supervision: Feedback, Reflection and Evaluation

## Feedback

- Set the stage: what are expectations around giving and receiving feedback?
- Focus on the process instead of the person
  - “You don't communicate well” vs. “You can improve your communication skills by \_\_\_\_”
- Use active listening
- Provide constructive feedback on goal progression
- Timing of feedback is everything

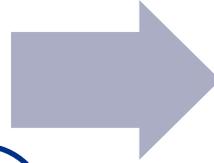
## Reflection & Evaluation

- Check in: “How is this going for you? What’s been helpful? What hasn’t? What could I do differently to make this a more rewarding experience?”
- Closeout
  - Each party should reflect and appreciate
  - Be specific about what you learned and gained from the experience

# Personal Reflection and Considerations

What are your strongest and most salient identities?

- Identities include race, gender, your status as a parent, level of education, religion, socioeconomic, city vs. suburban, etc.
- They shape who you are and how you view the world.
- Take a moment to write your top 3-5 identities. Revisit them in one year and monitor if they change and develop.



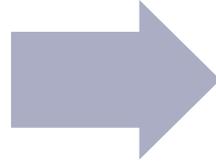
How do these identities exist within your work at Fermilab?

- Consider the following concepts:
  - How does your gender identity impact your existence and contributions as a Fermilab employee?
  - How does your position at Fermilab compliment or mute your identities?
  - What are the identities of your department or work group?
    - Don't assume the identities of others. Only use information you know.

# Personal Reflection and Considerations

What is the culture of your organization/dept/workspace?

- Take a moment and understand the culture that exists within your workgroup.
- Are you included in that culture or excluded?
- What role do you play in the cultural dynamics?
  - Ex: Are you a manager? Do you influence decisions?



How might an intern have the space to apply or influence a different perspective?

- First, consider how often decisions are made and who is involved in making decisions.
  - Are the differing voices heard or overlooked?
- Interns are diverse and represent different cultures and identities.
- It is important to understand the perspective of the intern, even if it stands out. Inclusion is when differing viewpoints are valued and welcomed.

# Engaging the Intern – Before, During, and After

Intern mentorship is multi-layered and has several touchpoints. Mentoring does not begin once the student starts working, but in the days leading to the start, and after. Here are some quick tips to maximize the mentor and intern relationship.

## Learn the intern's needs

- Discover how they learn best and implement processes that complement their learning style.
- Be open and available for communication outside of email.
- Use Zoom and other methods as needed.

For more information on workplace learning styles, consult the [\*The 4 different types of workplace learning styles\*](#) article by Cornerstone (2019).

## Identify allies to build a network

- Underrepresented students do not often see people who look like them in STEM roles. Make connections when possible.
- Faculty and industry connections are equally important.

## Illustrate the pathway toward the student's goals

- Help them identify concrete pathways to graduate school or full-time employment.
- Many students have never seen a pathway for reaching their professional goals.

# We All Have Layers

Each person has layers and aspects of identity that make them unique. To successfully mentor an intern, it is important to understand your own layers.

## Personal Reflection:

After reading and responding to the questions on the right, consider the following:

- How do your identities contribute to your answers?
  - *Revisit the identities from the earlier activity!*
- How might the responses change for someone with different identities?
  - Acknowledging different perspectives and opinions is essential to making a connection with your intern!

How much mentoring have you done in the past and what were the identities of your mentees?

Who is in your family/friend circle and what are their strongest identities?

Who do you communicate with most at work?

What are your motivations for working at Fermilab?

# Navigating Unconscious Bias as an Intern Supervisor

## What is unconscious bias?

- The underlying attitudes, stereotypes, assumptions we unconsciously attribute to another person or group of people that affect how we understand and engage with a person or group

## Where does it come from?

- The brain's tendency to take mental shortcuts, relying on observed patterns (including cultural stereotypes) to quickly and subconsciously process information

## Why do we have it?

- The human brain can process 11 million bits of information every second. Our conscious minds handle only 40-50 bits of information a second. So our brains sometimes take cognitive shortcuts [3]

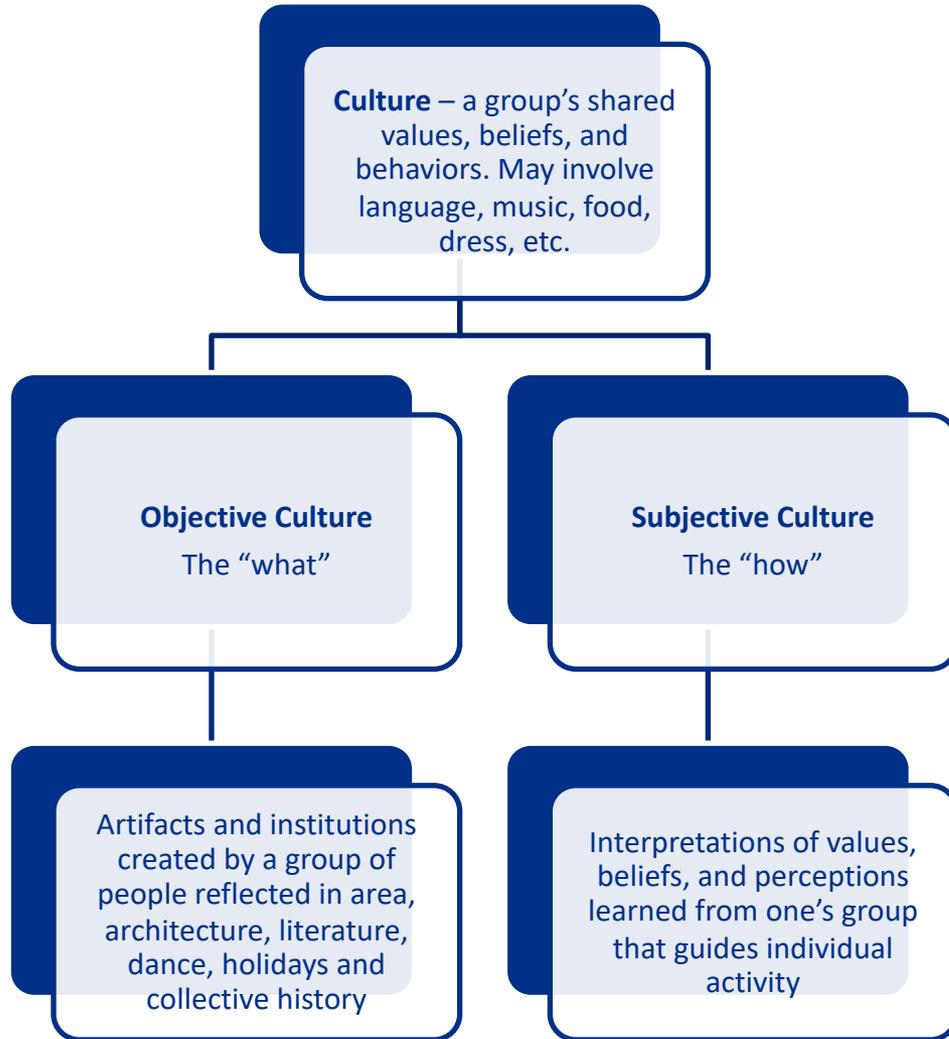
## Where it shows up in the intern-supervisor relationship

- Examples:
  - Affinity bias: "I see a young me in my intern"
  - Recency bias: "That's not what I would do now"

## Take-Aways / Ways to Mitigate

- Pause, reflect! Consider if the advice would work if you were in their shoes
- When your intern comes to you with a problem, don't jump straight into a story of your own
  - Consider the circumstances / experiences interns are facing before sharing perspective
- Recognize attitudes towards interns of different backgrounds and make a conscious effort to educate yourself on intersectionality
- Ask open, investigative questions, help the intern make sense of their situation, and adapt a solution to fit
  - *What I hear you saying is...*
  - *I get the impression that.....*
  - *When you say xxxx, do you mean...?*
  - *It sounds as if.....*

# Organizational Culture



- Every organization has a culture. At Fermilab, culture exists in many ways and can vary by section, department, and workgroup.
- It is important to understand your work culture as you introduce interns to the environment.
- Take a look at Objective Culture vs. Subjective Culture. Take a moment to understand how these apply to Fermilab.

## Objective Culture

US Independence Day is July 4

## Subjective Culture

Some celebrate by grilling as a family and others do service projects for veterans.

# Imposter syndrome

Imposter Syndrome occurs among high achievers who are unable to recognize, internalize, and accept their success. Many college students from underrepresented backgrounds will experience Imposter Syndrome.

- Imposter Syndrome is also the internal belief of "not having what it takes," despite possessing the experience, knowledge and credentials.
- People experiencing imposter syndrome possess a fear that others will find out they are a fraud.

## Supporting someone experiencing Imposter Syndrome?

- **Affirm and Encourage**
  - Motivate interns to unlock new skills and avoid missing developmental opportunities due to feelings of inadequacy or lack of belonging
  - Express belief in the intern, reminding them that they do belong and are competent
  - Affirm interns as valuable people and as positive contributors to the laboratory
- **Normalize Imposter Syndrome**
  - Feeling like a fraud at times is decidedly normal
  - Remind your intern that nobody knows everything and that those who don't struggle with imposter concerns are no more intelligent, competent, or capable than them
- **Validation**
  - Share your own imposter story, if you have one
  - Focus on their progression of professional competencies and strengths

# Value of Internships and Pipeline Programs

- What is a talent pipeline?
  - A proactive recruitment and retention approach to identifying, qualifying and nurturing passive candidates toward an eventual hire



- A leak in the pipeline leads to mining talent without ROI
  - Fermilab values hiring early career talent its divisions/sections/projects have nurtured
- How to create a culture of inclusion for your intern
  1. Build in time and freedom to attend at least one [Inclusion Matters](#) event
  2. Connect intern with [LRGs](#) and other relevant lab resources
  3. Encourage interactions with other interns

# Mentor Requirements and Expectations

Involve interns in research and expose them to decision-making opportunities

Guide and support the poster presentation process at the conclusion of the internship

Establish a regular cadence for meeting with the intern(s)

Learn their interests and passions to connect them with other professionals and Fermilab networks

Complete evaluations and surveys in accordance with due dates

# Summer Intern Requirements

Summer students/interns under the age of 18 require the completion of a medical form by parents.

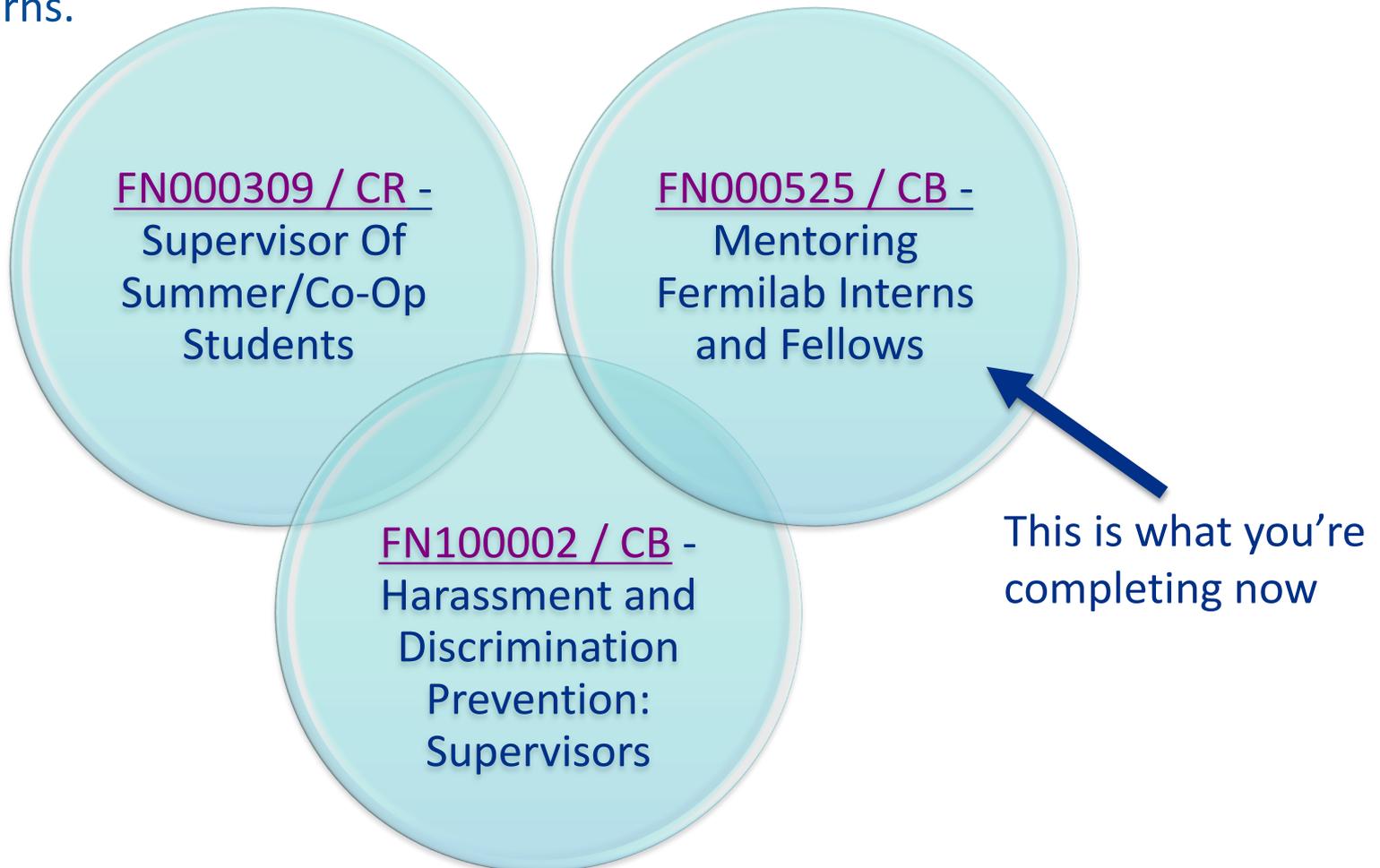
Summer students/interns under the age of 16 require Work Authorization paperwork.

Summer students/interns 18 years of age and older must have a background check done as a condition of employment.

Summer students/interns, regardless of their age, who work with children must have a background check done as a condition of employment.

# Mentor Training

The following training will be added to the supervisor/mentor ITNA. Supervisors/mentors who do not satisfy training requirements will not be approved to supervise summer interns.



# References

- [1] Business News Daily: <https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/3504-how-to-mentor.html>
- [2] Stoeger, H., Hopp, M., & Ziegler, A. (2017). Online mentoring as an extracurricular measure to encourage talented girls in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics): An empirical study of one-on-one versus group mentoring. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 61, 239–249. doi:10.1177/0016986217702215
- [3] NPR: <https://www.npr.org/2020/07/14/891140598/>
- [4] Nationwide: <https://www.nationwide.com/business/solutions-center/managing-employees/how-to-manage-an-intern/#:~:text=Mentoring%20can%20help%20interns%20improve,the%20short%20and%20long%20term.>
- [5] LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/mentoring-difference-between-internship-summer-job-shindell-ph-d/>