

INSTAAR JEDI Junior Scientist Mentoring Program Handbook

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Purpose of the Junior Scientist Mentoring Program (JSMP)

Good mentorship is one of the most important cornerstones for success in a scientific career, but too often, finding a mentor who is the right fit is left largely to chance and “good luck” in stumbling upon the right person at the right time. This task is even more daunting for underrepresented and under-served scientists, who, due to the largely white and/or male cultural dominance in the geosciences, rarely have the opportunity to find someone who truly understands them and reflects their values. The INSTAAR JEDI TaskForce is aware of this historic problem in our community, so we have created the Junior Scientist Mentoring Program (JSMP) to make it easier for our underrepresented and under-served junior scientists to access further mentoring.

The objectives of the INSTAAR JEDI JSMP are to help junior INSTAARs:

1. Feel welcome in our community,
2. Make connections, develop a sense of belonging, and gain community support,
3. Build confidence to be comfortable promoting themselves and their work,
4. Access advice, encouragement, and strategies for both professional and personal success, and
5. Learn from sharing the experiences of both senior scientists and peers.

The JSMP is modeled after [MPOWIR](#) (Mentoring Physical Oceanography Women to Increase Retention) and consists of monthly small group mentoring calls.

Group Calls

Groups consist of 3-4 junior INSTAAR scientists and 1-2 senior science facilitators. Each group meets monthly via an audio-only Zoom call (video is an option if all agree) for approximately 1 hour.

Meetings will consist of individual check-ins and group discussions about issues or topics that are of mutual interest (e.g., time management, work-life balance, career advice).

Meetings are meant to be a safe space for discussion. Meetings will never be recorded.

Guidelines for group calls

- Everything that is discussed is confidential* unless it is explicitly agreed otherwise.
- Every member should have the opportunity to have the floor at least once every two meetings.
- Members should help clarify the source of issues and concerns for one particular member and identify why a particular issue is a challenge for that person.
- Respect and positivity are essential.
- Try to ask questions rather than to give answers, at least in the first instance.
- Listen without interrupting.
- Start and end on time.
- Once you've committed, attend all meetings unless something unavoidable comes up.

**All employees who have the authority to hire, promote, discipline, evaluate, grade, formally advise, or direct faculty, staff, or students are considered "responsible employees" and are required to report alleged misconduct to the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) in cases of protected class discrimination or harassment, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, or any related retaliation.*

Group Membership

To join a mentor group as a junior scientist, you must be a scientist who identifies as underrepresented or under-served. Participation is open to all employment categories. Group membership and participation is confidential, and we will work to minimize conflict of interest for facilitators and mentees within groups.

Please [fill out this form](#) if you would like to join or lead an INSTAAR JEDI mentoring group. New mentoring groups are being established in Spring 2021, and new groups will be added as needed in Fall 2021 and beyond (on a semesterly basis).

Prior to the first group call, each group member will be asked to describe their professional and personal goals for the next year.

All group members must sign a confidentiality agreement* before the first meeting.

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The mentor group commitment is for one year. After one year, each group member may choose to remain in their current group if it continues, switch to another group, or leave mentor groups altogether. Continued peer-to-peer mentoring is highly encouraged, and we will provide scheduling support to any group that wishes to meet without their group leaders. Mentees may leave the group before one year at their own discretion.

Best Practices

Be responsive. Please respond to all mentor group communication, especially requests for availability, as soon as possible. A delayed response holds up everyone.

Be flexible. All groups include members with busy schedules and multiple commitments. Please do your best to be flexible with call times.

Everyone needs to miss a call occasionally. If you miss a call, send your group an email update.

Group Leader Information

A conference call with all leaders is held when new groups are beginning, to help provide an overview of what to expect, as well as feedback and perspectives from previous mentor group leaders. Periodic (approximately twice per year) mentor group leader calls are conducted to allow a venue for leaders to get feedback and share strategies with other groups.

Examples of mentor group discussion topics (not a comprehensive list)

- Individual check-ins
- Career choices, preparation, job applications, job interviews, negotiation
- How to overcome historical disadvantages in a discriminating academic system?
- Practical career skills: Organization tools, work prioritization, (proposal) writing strategies, presentation skills
- How to approach other scientists you don't know?
- How science structures are set up across different departments
- Increasing the impact of your publications
- How to improve communication skills
- Dealing with difficult colleagues
- How to bring up and discuss difficult topics
- Self-promotion
- Personal and professional development strategies
- Building and maintaining confidence
- Work-life balance

A Guide to Listening

Why is listening important?

Listening is the key skill that enables us to understand each other. Unlike speaking, in most educational systems we are never taught to listen. It is often assumed that if we are fortunate enough to have two ears that work well, we listen well. This is not necessarily so.

Listening is an essential part of many work activities: understanding and solving problems, dealing with inquiries, attending meetings, staff supervision and development, teamwork, conflict resolution, effective negotiation, delegation, building co-operative alliances and trust, and leading and implementing change.

The consequences of non-listening

On the Speaker	On the Non-listener	On the Organization
Undervalued	Lose respect	Low commitment
De-motivated	Look foolish	Poor performance
Irritated	Get avoided	Waste resources
Frustrated	Lost opportunities	More mistakes
Repetition	Wasted time	Lower productivity
Anger	Considered rude	Reduced quality

The consequences of poor listening are severe and dramatic. Not listening includes half-listening, i.e., reading, writing, computer use, or thinking about other things while someone is speaking to us.

Note: Active listening is only possible for short periods of time. In fact, we spend much of our time cutting out noises and distractions. However, it is critical to know when to listen, and to have the skill and motivation to do it.

How to listen

To really understand what someone is saying, we need to learn to listen to the whole person, not just the words that are being said, but also what lies between and behind the words. This is described as listening on three levels—to the content, the feelings, and the intentions.

1. **The content:** This is what we usually listen for; the facts, information, the details, the story line. However, as we think at about 500 words per minute, and speak at about 125 words per minute, there is a lot of time for our mind to wander.

Developing the capacity to listen accurately to content is helped by trying to be as objective as possible. This means holding back our own feelings about what we are hearing, resisting thinking about our own experiences, and instead trying to capture the speaker's words.

2. **The feelings:** By listening to the feelings being shared, we can discover the relationship between the speaker and the “story”. We listen between the lines of a perfectly rational story to hear feelings of resentment, frustration, excitement, hope, and so on. It is important to hear these feelings, because they can linger far longer than the events to which they are related and will have a tremendous impact on future interactions.

Developing the capacity to listen accurately to feelings is helped by holding back our own feelings, likes and dislikes, and trying to develop empathy. Empathy allows us to pick up the feelings of the speaker, rather than our own. This is done by listening to the words people choose, the tone of the voice used, and by looking at facial expressions and changes in body language.

3. **The intentions:** Listening to the “will” of the speaker will enable us to find their motivation, commitment, and direction. This information is vital in negotiations and agreements, in order to know what the prospects for implementation and support are.

Developing the capacity to listen accurately for the intentions of the speaker requires that we hold back our own wishes, suggestions and advice, and that we are interested in the outcome for the speaker. Despite the fact that intentions are often buried and unconscious, it is possible to hear them by listening to the emphasis given, the amount of detail, the first and the last thing said, and the energy used to describe different aspects.

Making listening apparent

In order for the speaker to feel valued, motivated, worthwhile, and encouraged, they need to know that they are being listened to. Therefore, it is important to avoid doing things like doodling and shuffling through papers.

Instead:

- Give the speaker your full attention – even if it is only for long enough to say that you are unable to listen at the moment and to arrange another time to talk. Turn away from your computer and deskwork to ensure that you do not become distracted by incoming mail or completing processes.
- Sit or stand reasonably still – fidgeting indicates impatience and doing other activities indicates disinterest.
- Summarize and reflect back what you have heard periodically – this helps both you and the speaker to keep track of what's being said. Do not change subjects!
- Allow silence – to help you communicate patience and to enable the speaker to draw more out of themselves.

Remember: The thing that will most indicate that you are listening is giving your full, relaxed attention and concentration to the speaker without interruption.

Creating the right environment

- Find a quiet space – wherever possible to ensure an atmosphere of privacy.
- Eliminate distractions – divert phone calls, put up “do not disturb” notices, put your work aside.
- Eliminate barriers – use understandable language.
- Create the right “inner” environment by clearing your mind, so as to make a space for what the speaker has to say.

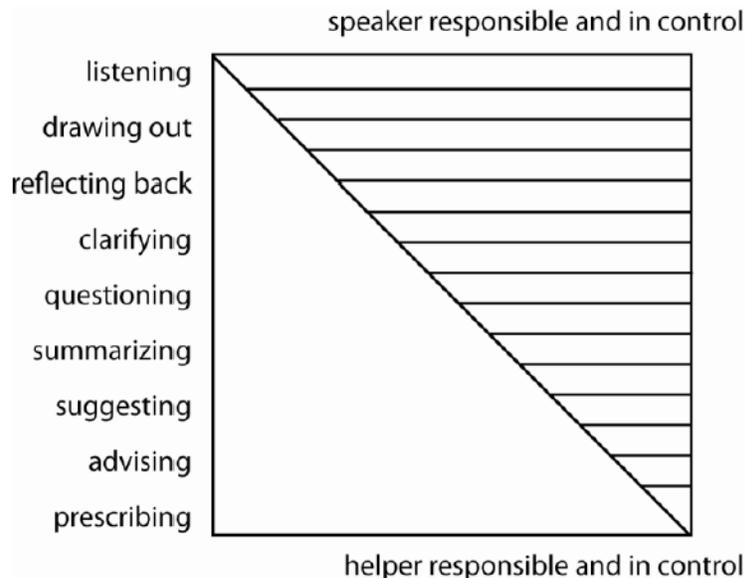
Remember: What you think you are hearing on three different levels may not be correct. Test your understanding by reflecting back what you have heard and asking if it is right.

Listening on three levels

Content	Past	Objective level: Most common, surface	Conveys ideas and information	Focus on what is said	Challenge for the listener: to be open minded
Feelings	Present	Subjective level: Between the lines	Conveys values and attitudes	Focus on how it is said	Challenge for the listener: to be empathetic and compassionate
Intentions	Future	Operational level: What is behind or underneath	Conveys motivation and commitment	Focus on what is intended	Challenge for the listener: to retain interest in the speaker

Coaching/Mentoring Behaviors

There are many ways to help someone when they come to you for support, supervision, or advice. The model below shows a range of responses along a continuum. The behaviors at the top keep the speaker clearly in control and responsible for the outcomes, while the behaviors at the bottom shift the control and responsibility to the helper.



If the predominant behaviors are those shown in the lower half of the model, the immediate symptom may be alleviated, though the speaker may be left feeling more helpless, dependent, indebted to the helper, more pressured to conform than before. This, in fact, is what some people choose! This choice however only has short-term benefits and often discounts the individual's long-term potential for problem-solving, decision making, and managing generally.

Our basic value system works towards each of us becoming responsible for ourselves. Circumstances in which an individual, following help, becomes more self-sufficient and creative, less dependent on others, more willing to make tough decisions and tackle tough problems tends to grow from helping behaviors shown in the upper half of the model.

Here the person's own resources are validated, they are allowed to develop their own answers, and discover more fully their own resources.

The behaviors on the top half of the model enable development and growth of proactivity and responsibility.

Behavior

Listening	Actively listening for content, feelings, and intentions. Allowing silences, nodding, etc., and being fully present for the speaker.
Drawing out	Helping the speaker to go deeper: “Can you tell me more about...?” “Give me an example...” “What happened next?”
Reflecting back	Mirroring back the words to the speaker: “So you’re angry with her.” “You told Joe to go home.”
Clarifying	Helping the speaker to clarify important words or concepts: “What do you mean by ‘success’?” “So whose responsibility was it?” “How will you know when you’ve achieved it?”
Questioning	Helping the speaker and/or listener to get a fuller picture: “You haven’t mentioned Jane, what part did she play in it?” “How does this relate to the rest of your team?”
Summarizing	Helping the speaker to take stock of sections of the conversation: “So there are three things that you say you’re concerned about: namely...” “You’ve said it will take 3 weeks, 2 more staff, and support from your manager.”
Suggesting	Putting forward possible actions for the speaker to take up: “Have you thought about trying...?” “As I see it, there are two options you can choose...”
Advising	Strongly suggesting that the speaker follow your advice: “My advice to you is...” “What I would do if I were you is...”
Prescribing	Telling the speaker what to do: “This is what you will do...” “Now that I have heard you, I want you to...”

Giving and Receiving Feedback

What is feedback?

Feedback is the process of giving people information about the results of their actions. It provides a unique opportunity for learning and development. This opportunity can only be realized with the help and goodwill of another person.

The purpose of feedback

The purpose of feedback is to help people see themselves as others see them and to highlight the nature of individual strengths, weaknesses, and contributions. This provides a basis for learning, so that individuals have the opportunity to do things differently in the future.

Why it is important

Feedback is important because it has the potential to improve levels of motivation, performance, and loyalty, and develops the capacities of the receiver. If avoided, an important opportunity is lost, and when badly handled, it can cause, at best, superficial conformity, but most likely, underlying rejection and resentment.

Why it is difficult

Feedback is difficult to give because no one likes to be criticized. Therefore, the receiver of feedback needs to feel that the give is motivated only by the wish to be helpful – not punishing or judgmental. Even giving and receiving praise can be difficult but is just as important as giving critical feedback. Praise reinforces positive action, raises confidence, and makes the receiver feel valued.

How to give effective feedback

Feedback is successful when the receiver **understands it, accepts it, and can act on it**. This will be achieved if:

1. The intention of feedback is to be helpful; looking ahead to what can be done better in the future. Therefore, before giving feedback, first check your motivation.
2. The feedback includes a positive reinforcement of strengths.
3. It is specific. Uses examples to describe actual behavior. Generalities do not help someone learn.
4. It concentrates on areas that the receiver can do something about, preferably fairly easily. You may be able to give some helpful advice.
5. It is presented as your opinion. Use “I” statements so that you own what you say, e.g., “I get the impression...” rather than “You are...”. Do not judge.
6. It gives only as much information as the receiver can absorb and act on. Overloading may get things off your chest, but it won't help the receiver.

When to give feedback

Ideally, feedback should be given immediately and not stored up. The nearer to the event, the better the recall of all the circumstances and the more concrete the information on which to build. The exceptions are:

1. When the atmosphere is not right because of pressure of work, feelings running high, lack of privacy, etc.
2. When a specific period has been agreed and set aside for feedback.

Receiving feedback

1. Listen openly and try not to defend or justify yourself.
2. Be sure you understand precisely what is being said so that you can take appropriate action.
3. If you are uncertain, check its validity with others.
4. Encourage feedback. Ask others directly for what you need.
5. Thank the giver. You have received a valuable opportunity to learn more about yourself, and if you consider the feedback to be valid, it can be a change for the future.
6. Decide what you want to do about what you have heard, and how you will go about it.