

Timely and Efficient Goal Setting

Appropriate goal-setting is crucial to the success of the USCAP Mentoring Academy and its participants. Outcomes depend on setting achievable and realistic goals. Below are important factors in successful goal setting:

REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

It's important for mentors to set concrete goals with their mentees. Choose pragmatic, realistic goals that can be realized within the context of a new relationship and the time you can devote to it. This includes a decision about the number of goals you believe can be accomplished in twelve months. A succession of smaller, time-bound, incremental goals may lead to big results. Set expectations realistically based on skills and abilities. Define anticipated challenges such as availability of advancement opportunities, need to further formal education, time required to develop a new skill or competency. Celebrate small victories in the progression to desired outcomes.

SPECIFIC TARGETS

Measuring completion of a goal is difficult without pre-defined targets that are decided at the inception of the mentoring relationship. Avoid vague goals and concentrate on clearly defined goals. A vague goal is "I would like to become more involved in USCAP" compared to a clearly-defined goal "I would like to refine my writing skills to have an abstract *accepted* for the next Annual Meeting." Avoid global concept goals that may be beyond the reach of the relationship. If your mentee has difficulty defining or expressing goals, provide potential areas of focus such as competency or skills development, career advancement, securing a fellowship or first job, gaining knowledge in a specific subspecialty area, or developing leadership skills.

RELEVANT FOCUS

Be sure your goals are relevant to your relationship. Refer to your matched profiles for common points of interest/expertise that may be resources for goal setting, definition, refinement and clarification. For example, if your mentee sets an expectation beyond what you are able to assist with or provide, do not include it in the relationship. Focus, instead, on what your expertise and time availability can realistically offer. As you survey the panorama of possibilities to isolate relevant and pragmatic goals, you should include *accountability* as a pervasive infrastructural element.

STRETCH DIFFICULTY

It's advisable to set easily attainable goals to launch the relationship and encourage mentees' confidence, but as the relationship progresses these goals need to expand to coincide with and challenge mentees to expand their skills and abilities and expend additional effort to achieve desired outcomes.

CLEAR TIMELINES

Agree, up front, to respect mutually decided timelines, deadlines and milestone dates for each step of the process. After each meeting, you and your mentee should record a summary in an effort to measure progress against this timetable and set new action items. Your reward system may include a mechanism for celebrating meeting deadlines and achieving milestones.

FEEDBACK OPPORTUNITIES

A successful mentoring relationship should include opportunities for evaluation and feedback. This can be accomplished informally through discussions and email. If appropriate, develop metrics or an alternative measurement tool to assess progress and adjust efforts. Adopt a mechanism to determine if goals are reached (improved performance, promotion, new credential, awards, acceptance of an abstract, appointment to a committee, integration into faculty). Rely on your reward system to recognize these achievements. Openly encourage as you plan checkpoints.

ORGANIZATIONAL ALIGNMENT

USCAP supports formalized mentoring as an acknowledgement of organizational commitment to this core value and to the legacy of passing knowledge and perspective from one generation of pathologists to the next. It is not enough to create a better pathologist; the discipline must prevail over time, constantly reinventing and bettering itself to sustain the gold standard the Academy sets and represents. Mentors, whenever possible, assure that mentees' personal goals are met, but this should occur in the context of organizational expectations of improved competency and career development.

IMPORTANT DISCUSSIONS PRIOR TO SETTING GOALS

Setting the right goals begins with asking the right questions. Mentors should ask open-ended questions to discover how to align mentees' interests with organizational objectives and mentors' capacity for the relationship.

- Career Aspirations – Try to align mentees' short-term goals within the organization with their long-term personal career aspirations
- Strengths - Build on existing strengths to reinforce engagement, productivity and satisfaction as the relationship proceeds
- Gaps and Opportunities – Discuss challenges or impediments your mentee may be experiencing, and restructure goals around resolving these and building skill sets to overcome them
- Prioritization – Focus on a few key areas and avoid juggling too many goals at once; refer to your matched profiles and common objectives as you confirm goals that make sense for the mentor's skill-set and will benefit the mentee and USCAP in the short to mid-term
- Concluding the Relationship – Define in advance how to conclude a healthy relationship, or conversely, how to opt out of a relationship that isn't working

EXAMPLES

Below are some specific examples to which you can refer for your discussions:

GOAL: Enhance my ability to communicate

TASKS:

- Resident-specific training for *in person* (not online) communications to facilitate interaction with clinical colleagues and patients
- Assist in the preparation of an important lecture or manuscript
- Prepare trainees to advocate for the profession with training that includes cross-cultural awareness and mechanisms to dispel the myth that pathologists avoid interaction
- Understand information transfer and how to manage information overload
- Develop a mechanism to meet with and engage medical students to attract them to pathology
- Become fluent in communicating professionally on social media

GOAL: Develop my skill set in laboratory administration

TASKS:

- Learn coding, billing and how nomenclature changes by payer annually
- Shadow a laboratory director or laboratory manager for direct observations of administrative responsibilities and functions
- Provide a resource for learning quality assurance and patient safety

GOAL: Develop my skill set in informatics

TASKS:

- Provide early exposure to digital pathology for consultations and diagnostics
- Learn skills to drive computational pathology and informatics
- Learn how to be active participants in the advancement of disruptive innovations/technologies
- Provide a resource for residents and fellows to stay current on practice changes and emerging technology

GOAL: Develop my skill set in leadership

TASKS:

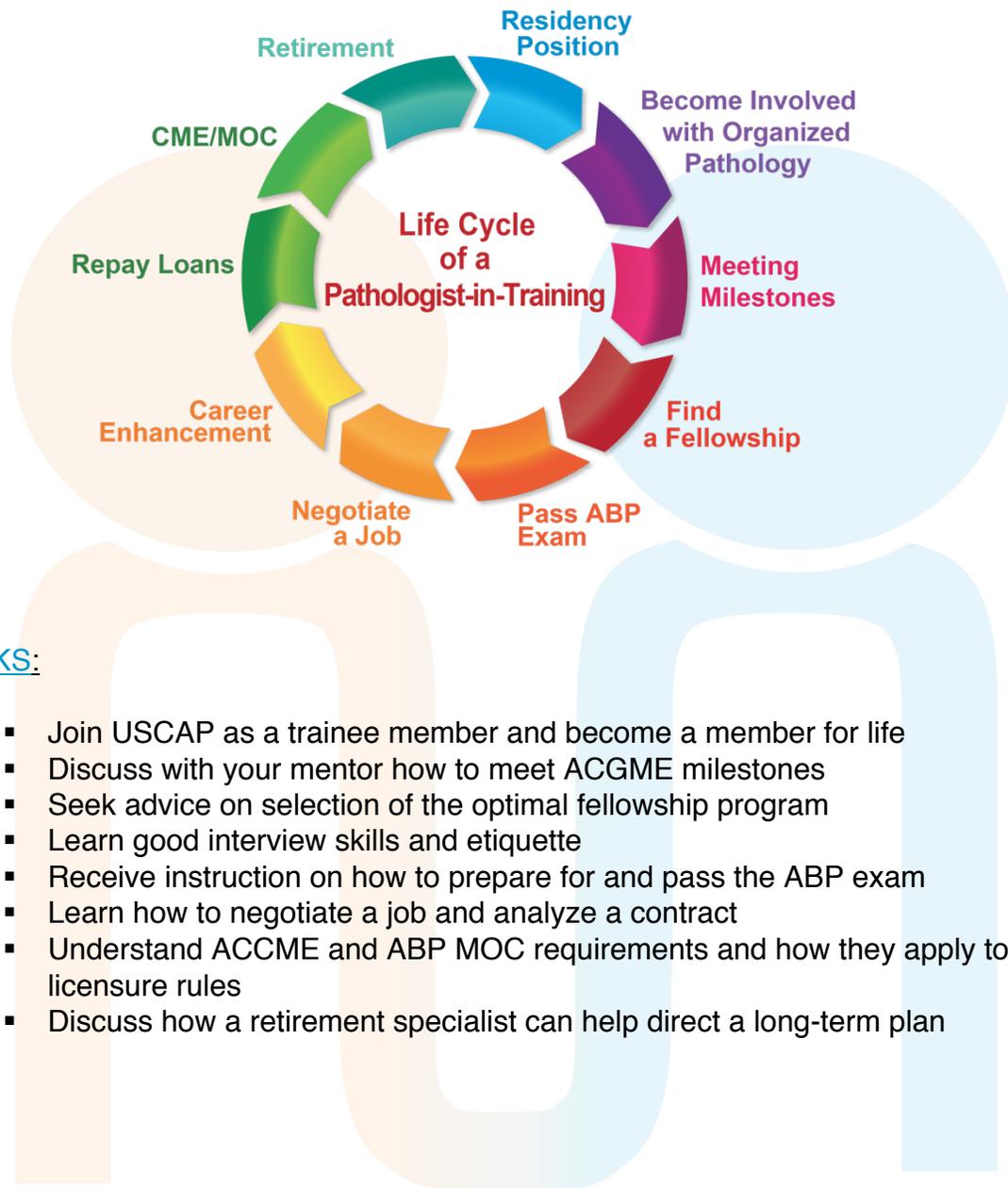
- Provide (non-diagnostic) leadership instructions from accomplished pathologists referencing “how I got there”
- Learn how leadership influences all spheres of professional and personal behaviors
- Enroll in one of the leadership courses offered by AAMC, USCAP, and other pathology organizations

GOAL: Understand the changes in *how we learn* and what USCAP provides in contemporary education

TASKS:

- Learn the difference between passive classroom learning and interactive learning
- Enroll in an interactive microscopy course to understand personalized learning and mentoring
- Select a digit educational course from the Academy’s e-learning library to acquire new information or refine skills
- Re-orient learning to on-demand digital products with current information, curated by experts, organized in modular packets, and delivered on demand through mobile devices

GOAL: Learn how to traverse the life cycle of the pathologist-in-training



TASKS:

- Join USCAP as a trainee member and become a member for life
- Discuss with your mentor how to meet ACGME milestones
- Seek advice on selection of the optimal fellowship program
- Learn good interview skills and etiquette
- Receive instruction on how to prepare for and pass the ABP exam
- Learn how to negotiate a job and analyze a contract
- Understand ACCME and ABP MOC requirements and how they apply to state licensure rules
- Discuss how a retirement specialist can help direct a long-term plan