

# EFFECTIVENESS OF RESEARCH MENTORING IN A POST-CERTIFICATION GRADUATE ATHLETIC TRAINING EDUCATION PROGRAM AT A LARGE, URBAN RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

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**Objective:** We aimed to identify characteristics of effective research mentors within a research mentoring program at a large, urban, research extensive institution. **Design and Settings:** The Research Mentoring Program is a required activity within the scholarly practitioner component of a Post-Certification Graduate Athletic Training/Sports Medicine Masters of Science Program used in this investigation. Two scholarly writing projects are required; a clinical research project and empirical research project. Students work in research groups to refine and prepare these projects for submission at local, regional, and national symposia. **Participants:** Participants (n=12) were purposefully sampled as all participants were enrolled in the Research Mentoring Program at a research extensive institution. Eleven participants (91.7%; six female, five male; mean age= 24±2.13 yr) completed the Research Mentor Evaluation. Four research mentors (three female, one male; mean age= 28.0±4.97 yr) were identified. **Measurements:** A mixed methods design was employed with an electronic survey containing 34 5-point Likert-type questions, ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” with an option of N/A (Not applicable) and seven open-ended questions soliciting further responses. Data were analyzed using open-coding and closed-coding techniques by the primary investigator and a co-investigator. A colleague with expertise in qualitative methods conducted a peer review by examining the coding sheets and summary of the findings. **Results:** The Likert-type questions revealed that participants “somewhat agreed” with that mentoring was provided in each of the thematic areas: Intellectual Growth and Development (mean=3.89±0.16), Research Skill Development (mean=4.06±0.35), Professional Career Development (mean=3.81±0.59), Academic Guidance (mean=3.85±0.83), and Personal Communication (mean=4.34±0.66). Open responses revealed that mentors promoted creative, critical, and innovative thinking. Participants suggested that communication was vital, not only between the mentor and the mentee, but also in other professional relationships. Participants reported that their mentors were approachable, honest, knowledgeable and experienced, versatile, good listeners, exemplified strong research skills, and have a passion for discovering new ideas. Participants reported their mentors had the ability to provide constructive criticism, a willingness to help others, showed genuine interest in mentees, made themselves available to all students, provided excellent feedback, and explained concepts without making people feel inferior. **Conclusions:** We believe the application of research to clinical practice is imperative to the successful future of the profession. Because the profession of athletic training is very new and athletic training professionals often battle similar allied health professionals for respect and ownership over our skills, the mentorship of future researchers and professionals is vital.

**Word Count:** 398