CONFLICT BETWEEN MENTORS & MENTEES…OR
‘FUN TIMES AND WHY DIDN’T I GET MY REAL ESTATE LICENSE.
MENTORSHIP: DO WE VALUE IT & IS IT EVEN WORTH THE CONFLICT THAT INEVITABLY OCCURS BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE?

- Value = time
- time = money
- if mentors are given neither paid time or monetary compensation, and if conflict, endemic to all human relationships, is thus a part of mentoring, should they still mentor?

In other words: if mentorship doesn’t matter to the institution or division, should it matter to the potential mentor?

Yes

- There is honor in mentorship.
- There is a duty to the science that requires mentorship
- There are future tangible benefits to mentorship (collaborators who can carry the load)
- Mentorship can be the most professionally satisfying aspect of one’s job, even if one’s administration does not truly value it beyond lip-service.
MENTORSHIP

• The historical process of academic parenthood (or big siblinghood)
 Or
• The historical process of indentured servitude

Many times, aspects of both perspectives are present
Both perspectives can lead to conflict, albeit of a different nature
MENTORSHIP CONFLICT: GENERAL CATEGORIES

- A mentor who is acting in his or her own self interest
  - Publications
  - Project responsibilities / credit
  - Outside opportunities or opportunities with other teams
- A mentor acting in the best interest of the mentee, but is perceived as acting in his or her own self interest
- A mentor acting in the best interest of the mentee, but is wrong in his or her advice or actions
- A mentor acting in the best interest of the mentee, but is perceived as wrong in his or her advice
- Two mentors who give conflicting advice in good faith
- Two mentors who use the mentee as a proxy for dispute ‘settling of scores’
- Mentor inexperience
- Mentors being punished for mentoring by admin / finance / powers that be
MENTORSHIP CONFLICT: SPECIFIC SCENARIOS

- How should a mentee respond if the mentor keeps canceling their meetings?
- How should a mentee respond in a situation where he/she does not agree with a mentor’s advice or direction?
- How should a mentor respond if the mentee routinely does not follow advice or direction?
- How should a mentor respond if the mentee frequently is late providing materials, such as grants, for review prior to deadlines?
- How should the mentor respond to complaints by the mentee about key collaborators or other senior faculty that are justified? That are unjustified complaints?
- What is the best way to address ‘credit sharing’ when a mentee feels others, mentor or senior collaborators, are taking credit for his or her work?
- What about when the mentee is no longer a junior person...baby’s all grown up...
- What is the best way to end a mentoring relationship that is not working out so as to maintain friendship and collegiality.