

Nomination for Kentaro Fujita for Faculty Mentor Award

Kentaro Fujita (Ken) has been an exceptional mentor to me, first as a grad student in the department and now as his postdoc. He is the kind of mentor who encourages his mentees to develop their independence while challenging them to be better scholars and providing guidance along the way. He sees his mentees as whole people and cares for their well-being in addition to fostering their success as researchers. I feel exceptionally lucky to be mentored by him.

Clearly describe your nominee's mentoring characteristics and philosophies, and how the nominee demonstrates these qualities.

Ken approaches his mentees as if they are less experienced collaborators rather than treating them as his employees. As such, he is interested in learning about and incorporating the ideas that his mentees have for research projects, and giving them freedom to take new approaches and pursue independent projects. He also trusts his mentees to prioritize their work and take care of responsibilities. The few times that I have dropped that ball on something, Ken has approached me by gently reminding me of the responsibility, and assuming I was on top of it. This approach allows his mentees to essentially function as independent researchers, but with support from someone with more experience.

In addition, Ken is very thoughtful about developing a lab community. He celebrates accomplishments with lab happy hours and hosts gatherings at the beginning and end of the school year. He also conscientiously develops a culture of inclusion and seeks feedback about how to make the lab a place where everyone feels like they belong and can thrive. Postdocs can be a time of loneliness for many people, but Ken's prioritization of community helps combat that. It further shows his approach to caring for the whole person rather than treating his mentees as just his employees.

Describe how your nominee has encouraged and implemented practices such as enhancing networking and career planning skills.

Ken has gone out of his way to connect me to others in the field. Since beginning to work with Ken, I have collaborated with three scholars that I otherwise would not have and have been introduced to countless others. Ken makes a point to invite me to smaller events and conferences where I will have more opportunities to meet scholars. Of course, while there, he makes sure to introduce me. He has also encouraged me to chair symposia to create opportunities to network with other scholars doing similar work and showcase my own work. Furthermore, Ken is mindful of how to set me up for success in my next career steps. He has been guiding me in writing the first grant I will submit as a faculty member. He is constantly thinking through what we can do now to make me more successful later.

Finally, as I was on the job market this fall, Ken provided guidance in developing my materials so that they could be as strong as possible. Furthermore, once I had offers, he made himself available to think through what my next career move should be. He provided guidance about what next steps might be most aligned with my goals (but was respectful that the decision was mine).

How has your nominee discussed the importance of professional development?

At the beginning of my postdoc, Ken sat down with me to discuss what exactly I wanted to get out of it. I mentioned that I wanted more mentorship opportunities and guidance as well as more opportunities to develop my writing skills. Again, Ken has gone out of his way to provide me with opportunities for these things, including taking more of his own time to provide thorough comments on my manuscripts to help me understand how to improve my writing. As I mentioned above, he has also begun to help me craft a grant application for when I am a faculty member.

Furthermore, during my time working with Ken, he has helped me identify opportunities to mentor students and provided guidance about how to do so effectively. For example, he helped me co-mentor a student through the Summer Research Opportunities Program, and helped me think through how to handle some challenging situations with my undergraduate research assistants.

Explain in detail how the nominee has served as a mentor.

Ken has been mentoring postdoctoral scholars since 2014. In that time he has mentored four of us: Maureen Craig, David Lee, Asael Sklar, and me (Laura Wallace). It is worth noting that Asael and I are the only postdocs that he hired for one of his own grants. Maureen and David were hired by the social psychology area as the "area postdoc" and chose Ken as their mentor. This is not surprising, as it reflects a general pattern in the department – even grad students who are not recruited specifically to work with Ken often end up collaborating with him, as his spirit of inclusion and enthusiasm for research are infectious. Following their time in Ken's lab, Maureen and David each took jobs at R1 research institutions, and I was also offered a tenure track position at an R1 research institution. His collaborations with previous postdocs have resulted in publications in *Psychological Inquiry* and *Motivation Science*, in addition to several other papers that will be submitted to our field's top journals. My own work with him will shortly be submitted to our field's top journals as well. Ken's time supervising postdoctoral scholars has been relatively short, and therefore, the concrete products of those mentorship relationships may not be as apparent as others who have been mentoring over a longer period of time. However, the impact that he has had in the short term should be quite obvious.