



## Case: Assumptions in Mentoring Faculty with Family Responsibilities

### Key Phrases:

- Unconscious Bias
- Commitment Abilities
- Challenges of Parenting in the Workplace
- Perspective Differences

### Sandra's Perspective:

Jeff, a division chief viewed as a mentor by Sandra, an assistant professor, was seeking a new director for one of the division's subspecialty clinics. He did not open a search but instead asked Justin, another junior faculty member, if he would take the position. Upon hearing about this, Sandra was disturbed by the lack of transparency and process, feeling that she was more qualified for the position than Justin, but she was reluctant to discuss this directly with Jeff. Instead, she thought about looking for a job elsewhere, since she did not feel that Jeff was committed her career. She envied the relationship that Jeff had with Justin.

Three years ago, Justin, an assistant professor, received a prestigious young investigator award at a national meeting in DC. Jeff took Justin out for a celebratory dinner after the award. Justin commented that Jeff was much more relaxed at dinner than he was at work and really opened up. Justin told Sandra that Jeff shared his own career history and gave Justin many pointers for career advancement. On looking back, Justin recognized that the time he spent with his chief over dinner had been as important to his career progress as the award. Sandra won the same award a month ago. She thought Jeff would be so proud that now two of his junior faculty had won this award and looked forward to having dinner with him, but the invitation was never made. Sandra began to feel that she would never receive the same career support as Justin.

### Jeff's Perspective:

Jeff, the division chief, needed to appoint a new director of a subspecialty clinic. He wanted to use this position to help advance the career of one of his junior faculty members, so he did not open a search. He considered two junior faculty members, Sandra and Justin, both of whom he thought would be excellent in this position, as each had strengths to bring to this position. However, Jeff knew that Sandra had two young children at home and often had to leave work by 5:30 PM to pick up her children from daycare. Since the clinic director position might involve issues that would keep the director at work until 6 PM or later, he decided that it would not be



fair to Sandra to offer her this position. In addition, he remembered a conversation he had had with Justin during a dinner they had shared in DC several years ago, when it became clear to him that Justin was really committed to the division. He offered the position to Justin.

### Case Questions:

1. How do Sandra and Jeff's perspectives differ?
2. How can Sandra explore why she was not chosen and her standing in the division?
3. In what ways can Jeff improve his skills as a mentor?
4. What is your opinion of Jeff's thought process? Would you understand the situation in the same way?