Guidelines for initial meeting with a potential mentor

Before the meeting:

Please keep in mind that faculty spend significant time meeting with potential mentees who eventually decide not to work with them. Be clear with faculty members that you are exploring multiple project options.

At the time of initial outreach, ask for reading material in the relevant scholarship area.

Send an email prior to the meeting with your CV attached.

Consider exploring their research profile and mentoring network at http://profiles.ucsf.edu/

During the meeting:

Questions you can ask potential mentors and key considerations:

Tell me about potential projects that would have a role appropriate for me.

Consider not only the content area of the project, but the scope and current stage. With smaller projects, you may be able to take a more active or central role. For larger projects, you may ask if there is a sub-project or distinct area that you could play a significant role in.

What is the project timeline?

A project that has already started will be more feasible to complete. If this is a project idea for which human subjects approval has not yet been obtained, it is important to clarify that the work will mesh with your schedule. In general, we strongly recommend finding projects that already have human subjects approval, because the timeline for getting approval is often longer than faculty (and trainees) think, and you run the risk of not being able to carry out your project as planned.

Have you worked with other students, residents, or fellows? Can you tell me about their projects briefly?

It can be very helpful to discuss potential mentors informally with your peers who have worked with them. It is also useful to learn whether prior mentees have been able to present at professional meetings or be an author on publications.

Can you describe the daily routine or work expectations for trainees in your group?

Important to know whether this mentor holds group/lab meetings or individual mentee meetings. This question also can provide insight into working style.

After the meeting:

Send a same-day, thank-you email to every potential mentor you meet with. Be specific about when you will let them know whether or not you would like to work with them. You
should copy whoever referred you to them (Dr. Sarkar or Dr. Lowenstein, or a Pathways director).

Depending on the interval between when you meet with a mentor and when you make your selection, confirm that they are still available and send an email listing your understanding of the project, timelines, and expectations.

When you choose a mentor, send an email to the other faculty members who spent time talking you to let them know that you will not be pursuing research/scholarship with them. This will help them with their planning and make them more likely to sit down for potential mentor meetings with students in the future.