

March 15, 2021

Daniel Engster, PhD  
Professor, Hobby School of Public Affairs  
Director, Elizabeth D. Rockwell Center on Ethics & Leadership

Dear Dr. Engster,

Set forth below is a brief project description.

**Project Description—*Mentored: The Ethical Obligations of Leaders***

When I confided to Deborah Rhode, the nation’s most-cited legal ethics scholar, that some of my best mentors are dead, I did not expect her to join them. She passed away suddenly in January 2021, departing the world much too soon but leaving behind an extraordinary legacy of scholarship on ethics, leadership, and gender inequality. Rhode served as a mentor from my early days as an academic more than a decade ago and, in recent years, became a treasured friend. Together we often discussed the ethics of mentorship and the need for better mentoring to remedy the enduring gender gap in leadership across all professions, especially our own—the law. I am an author of multiple books and articles addressing ethics, leadership, and gender inequality, including a casebook *Gender, Power, Law and Leadership* (West Academic 2019) and a monograph *Shortlisted: Women in the Shadows of the Supreme Court* (New York University Press 2020). In researching both books, I discovered previously untold stories of trailblazing women and, in combing through their archives or reading their oral histories, I found lessons to guide me personally and professionally. Though no longer living, they became powerful mentors as I studied and wrote about their stories. Indeed, one of the eight strategies in the conclusion of *Shortlisted* counsels the reader to “find mentors in ‘her’story.” As the book explains:

Women frequently are counseled to seek a mentor as they ascend to power. Doing so is not always easy, however, in part because it is difficult to find someone willing to reveal the complexities of navigating personal and professional challenges in a vulnerable and honest way. This is not surprising given that in order to advance in professional settings, women often suppress

the desire to speak out about disadvantages due to fear of retaliation and sometimes they fail to recognize injustice because “it’s just the way things are.” Remembering the stories of women who made themselves visible at a time when women were not seen can inspire a world led by individuals who reflect the public we serve.

The project I would pursue as an Elizabeth D. Faculty Fellow, tentatively titled *Mentored: The Ethical Obligations of Leaders*, expands upon the groundwork laid in my book *Shortlisted* on mentoring and uses the writings of Deborah Rhode as a catalyst, especially her books *Ambition* (forthcoming Oxford University Press), *Character: What It Means and Why It Matters* (OUP 2019), *Women and Leadership* (OUP 2017), *Lawyers as Leaders* (OUP 2013), and private letters exchanged over the years of our mentoring relationship. While the project focuses on the ethics of mentoring in the legal profession, the conclusions drawn will resonate in business, medicine, politics, and other fields. Topics will include ethical obligations of leaders to mentor, examples of good/bad mentoring, how to find mentors and cultivate mentoring relationships, and implications for women, especially female minorities, seeking mentorship in pursuit of leadership roles.