

Mentoring: A Guide for Faculty

Strategies

From the University of Washington's Graduate School:

<https://www.grad.washington.edu/mentoring/faculty/>

Effective mentoring begins with the faculty. From the UW Graduate School's work with a range of departments, we have learned that mentoring is best when graduate students and faculty share responsibility for ensuring the quality of such support. A working relationship between you and your mentees is an essential part of academic success. A growing body of research shows that a good mentoring relationship also is conducive to the mentor's own success.

This guide will help faculty members enhance their knowledge of the mentoring process—the elements, roles and stages of development associated with it – along with strategies for nurturing rewarding relationships with graduate students. Because mentoring is a two-way street, we have also developed a companion guide for graduate students. Mentoring is the key to success for all those involved in graduate education, and we hope these resources will be useful for faculty, students and staff alike.

The themes and recommendations in this guide are derived from several respected sources. First, we consulted resources and materials from our peer institutions and adapted many aspects of mentoring handbooks developed by the Rackham School of Graduate Studies, University of Michigan. Their themes resonated well with our own campus experience. We also drew on findings from national studies and initiatives, such as the Woodrow Wilson Foundation's Responsive PhD Initiative and the National Science Foundation's Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship (IGERT) program. Closer to home, we incorporated many insights from students, faculty, and staff who have participated in the Graduate School's Preparing Future Faculty Initiative and the Re-envisioning the PhD project, both funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts.

This guide for faculty and the companion version for graduate students are part of a collection of resources the Graduate School has developed to enrich mentoring. Please explore them on our website, www.grad.washington.edu/mentoring. The Graduate School's Office of Student Affairs is also a resource to faculty for questions that may arise.

We wish you every success in the challenging and rewarding experience of mentoring graduate students.

—The Graduate School Team

Graduate students -- regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, nationality, socioeconomic background, discipline or department affiliation – want more effective mentoring. Good mentoring helps all students learn more successfully, and that is the University's core business.

But not all students' needs are the same. Just as the effective teacher tailors lessons to the learning needs of diverse students, the skilled mentor tailors guidance strategies to the goals and circumstances of individual mentees.

At the Graduate School, we hear from a wide range of students, including those who have been underrepresented or marginalized in U.S. higher education. As a result, we have learned about challenges students face in their graduate programs.

Mentoring, like all academic and professional activities, takes place in historical, social and political contexts that influence our institutional culture. The Graduate School acknowledges this fact in its commitment to identify, pursue, and encourage strategies that enhance success, diversity and multiculturalism in all facets of graduate education.

Opening lines of communication

Good mentoring includes talking regularly about research, coursework and teaching, examining the multiple roles of a professional in a particular field and jointly exploring funding avenues and job opportunities. Graduate students consistently describe these themes as high priorities.

No single formula for successful mentoring exists, but we do know that frank, mutual exploration of expectations and interests should be the focus of first meetings with mentees. This guide addresses factors that can influence graduate students' mentoring needs and suggests effective ways you and your students can promote learning and professional development.

Many people assume that good mentoring “just happens” naturally or is only for those who are “lucky enough” to stumble upon the right individuals to guide their intellectual and professional development. In fact, good mentoring is a matter of awareness, intention and a genuine desire to see protégés succeed. This guide walks you through the concepts, planning, strategies and tools that facilitate meaningful mentoring relationships.

What is mentoring?

In graduate school, mentoring relationships are close, individualized relationships that develop over time between a graduate student and one or more faculty members, or with other professionals who have a strong interest in the student's educational and career goals. It includes not only academic guidance, but also prolonged nurturing of the student's personal, scholarly and professional development.

Mentors are:

- advisers, who have career experience and share their knowledge
- supporters, who give emotional and moral encouragement
- tutors, who provide specific feedback on performance
- masters, who serve as employers to graduate student “apprentices”
- sponsors, who are sources of information and opportunities models of identity, who serve as academic role models—Zelditch, 1990, p 11

Although some mentoring and advising activities are similar, not all mentors are advisers and not all advisers are mentors. (By advisers, we mean thesis or dissertation supervisors.) Advising focuses on the activities, requirements, and attainment of satisfactory progress through the steps needed to achieve a graduate degree. Mentoring focuses on the human relationships, commitments and resources that help graduate students find success and fulfillment in their academic and professional pursuits.

Mentoring enables graduate students to

- acquire a body of knowledge and skills
- develop techniques for networking and collaborating
- gain perspective on how their discipline operates academically, socially and politically
- acquire a sense of scholarly citizenship by grasping their roles in a larger educational enterprise
- deal more confidently with challenging intellectual work

Mentoring enables faculty members to

- engage the curiosities and energies of fresh minds
- keep abreast of new research questions, knowledge, paradigms and techniques
- cultivate collaborators for current or future projects
- identify and train graduate assistants whose work is critical to a research project or course offering
- prepare the next generation of intellectual leaders in the disciplines and in society
- enjoy the personal and professional satisfaction inherent in mentoring relationships

What a mentor does

Disciplinary guide

Sometimes a faculty member can be a thesis/dissertation adviser and a mentor whereas, in other cases, the student benefits more by having different people carry out each role. Either way, the role of a disciplinary guide is to help students become contributing members of their disciplines. This guidance goes beyond helping students complete the requirements of their academic programs and involves helping students

- understand how their discipline has evolved as a knowledge enterprise
- recognize novel questions
- identify innovative ways of engaging undergraduate students through teaching and collaborative research projects
- see their discipline—its questions and methodologies—in relation to other fields
- grasp the impact their disciplines have on the world outside of academe
- assist them in pursuing the kind of impact they desire to have with a graduate degree

Skills development consultant

The pressures for specialization in graduate study can make students temporarily lose sight of the array of skills needed to succeed during and after graduate school. This can result, in part, because of the relative intensity and isolation of research. As a skills consultant, your role is to emphasize the variety of skills, including but going beyond the research skills that effective professionals possess.

Oral and written communication skills. These include clearly expressing the results of one's study; translating field-specific knowledge for use in varied contexts, such as teaching or interacting with the public; and persuading others, such as funders, policy makers, or conference audiences, of the value of one's work.

Team-oriented skills. Often, the most innovative learning occurs in teams that problem solve problems collaboratively. Your role is to foster collaborative problem-solving by helping students learn through group exercises and projects.

Leadership skills. Graduate students often become intellectual leaders in a variety of settings. Effective mentors help students build their potential by inviting them to assume leadership roles throughout graduate study, e.g., in seminars, graduate student government, community outreach, disciplinary societies, and department or university committees. These activities help build people skills—listening to others, shaping ideas and expressing priorities—which are indispensable for advancement in any career.

Career consultant

The mentor's role as career consultant has taken on increased importance, especially for doctoral students. Many doctoral students are choosing positions in a greater variety of educational settings and diverse sectors of the economy.

The mentor imparts a view of careers as an evolutionary process—one that requires planning, flexibility and adaptation to change. Informed of job market realities, an effective mentor finds ways to help students develop relationships with other potential mentors. You can find these individuals in other places in the University or among your graduate alumni. You can also find them in schools, community groups, nonprofits, corporations, government agencies, or industrial laboratories. Wider relationships help students gain a realistic and informed view of their career choices and learn how to translate their degree into professional opportunities.

Part of your responsibility as a mentor is to help students cultivate multiple mentoring relationships inside and outside the UW. Multiple sources of expertise improve students' abilities to marshal the resources they need to meet the challenges of graduate education and careers. Have thoughtful discussions with your mentees and ask them what they need from you to navigate their educational experience, adapt to disciplinary cultures and become productive, fulfilled professionals and colleagues.

Develop your own vision of good mentoring

To develop your own vision for effective mentoring, reflect on your days as a graduate student and answer with candor the following questions:

- What kind of mentoring did I receive?
- What did I find helpful and unhelpful about the mentoring I received?
- How well would the mentoring I received apply to the graduate student population today?
- How well did my mentors help me progress developmentally through my graduate program?
- How do the people and challenges in my field today differ from when I was in graduate school?
- How well did my mentors prepare me for my career?
- What kinds of mentoring would have been helpful to me?

The answers may help you to define the kind of mentor you want to be and identify the building blocks for developing productive relationships with graduate students.

Engage students in conversation

- A simple “hello” in the hallway makes a difference. Ask students how they are doing with coursework or projects.
- Let students know they are welcome to talk with you during your office hours.
- Talk to your mentees at least once a quarter. Reach out to those who seem remote to find out whether it is their cultural way of being respectful or if it is due to social and academic isolation.
- Share coffee or meals with students away from the office, if you are able, to engage them in informal discussions without office distractions.

“The message my mentor sent to me was that I had value enough for her to spend time with me.”

“The most important things my mentor did were spending time talking with me and taking an interest in things interesting to me.”

Demystify graduate school for students

- Obtain the most recent copies of your program’s guidelines and the Graduate School’s Policies & Procedures.
- Adjust your conversations to the level of students’ understanding. New students may not know certain terminology or what questions to ask. Many are hearing terms such as “qualifying exams” or “prelims” for the first time.
- Clarify unwritten or vague aspects of your program’s expectations for coursework, comprehensive exams, research, and teaching.
- Help students grasp the finer points of forming a committee and how to approach a thesis or dissertation. At each stage of the graduate experience, discuss the formal and informal criteria that determine what counts as quality work.
- Alert students to pitfalls well ahead of time, especially those that may affect funding or graduate standing.

“It has been extremely helpful to me to have a mentor who recognized that academic procedures and protocol—everything from how to select classes to how to assemble a panel for a conference—are not familiar territory for a lot of people.”

“My mentor has been willing to answer the most basic questions without making me feel foolish for asking them.”

Provide constructive and supportive feedback

- Provide students with forthright assessments of their work. Do not assume they know what you think about their work.
- Provide timely feedback on students’ work. A delay in responding can create insecurity and hinder their progress.
- Be just as specific when you give praise as you are when you give criticism because students learn from both. Remind students that, with your high standards, you intend to help them improve.
- Avoid assuming that students who fall behind in their work lack commitment. Talk with them to learn what is going on. They may be exhausted or unclear about what to do next, simply dislike a project or have difficulties with collaborators.
- In a timely manner, address any problems that pose questions about a student’s ability to complete his or her degree. Putting issues aside may cause more damage later.

“I wrote several drafts before he felt I had begun to make a cogent argument, and as painful as that was, I would not have written the dissertation that I did without receiving strong, if just, criticism, but in a compassionate way.”

“Honest advice given as gently as possible is something all of us graduate students need.”

Provide encouragement

- Encourage students to discuss their ideas.
- Encourage students to try new techniques and expand their skills.
- Let students know that mistakes lead to better learning. Share a less-than-successful experience of your own and what it taught you. For example, you might show students a heavily critiqued paper you submitted in graduate school or to a journal.
- Reassure students of their skills and abilities to succeed.
- Many experience anxiety about whether they belong in graduate school (e.g., the “imposter syndrome”).
- Teach students how to break large scholarly tasks into smaller, more manageable ones to avoid becoming overwhelmed.

“Mentorship is far more than a one-time conversation about your career plans or a visit to a professor’s home. It is the mentor’s continuous engagement in a student’s professional growth and the ongoing support and encouragement of student’s academic endeavors.”

“My professors encouraged me both to publish my work and to participate in conferences. Without their encouragement, I might not have made the effort to accomplish these things.”

Foster networks and multiple mentors

- Suggest others who can help students if there is a need you cannot meet. UW faculty, graduate students, alumni, department staff, retired faculty and faculty from other universities are rich resources.
- Introduce students to faculty and other graduate students with complementary interests on campus and at conferences.
- Help students connect their work with experts in the community (e.g., graduate alumni) who can provide helpful career perspectives.
- Build a community of scholars by coordinating informal discussion groups, projects or occasional potluck meals among students who share academic interests.

“My co-chair referred me to a faculty member doing related research at UNC at a time when my research was floundering and I really needed additional support. I could not have completed my dissertation were it not for this recommendation.”

“My advisers really made a team of their graduate students, having regular meetings and informal parties and get-togethers, working on projects together, and forming interest groups. That comradeship was essential to my academic growth and my sense of having a community.”

Look out for students' interests

- Let your students know up front, and in a variety of ways, that you want them to succeed.
- Create opportunities for students to demonstrate their competencies. For instance, take them to meetings and conferences, or encourage them to make presentations to gain visibility.
- Nominate your mentees for high-visibility fellowships, projects and teaching opportunities when you feel they are sufficiently prepared.
- Promote students' research and teaching accomplishments inside and outside your department.
- Be an advocate for all graduate students.

“My mentor allowed my tasks to grow along with me, offering appropriate opportunities and challenges at each stage of my education.”

“I knew that I was not just an ordinary student when she invited me to co-teach. We worked together as colleagues, not as teacher and student.”

Treat students with respect

- Minimize interruptions and distractions during meetings with students. A common concern among students is that professors do not provide them their full attention while talking. Be aware of your body language. Avoid looking at your watch or e-mail while a student is talking.
- Remember previous conversations with students. Some faculty keep notes on discussions (filing them separately from students' official records) and review the notes prior to meetings.
- Tell your students what you learn from them. Such disclosure helps students see themselves as potential colleagues.

- Acknowledge the prior skills and valuable personal, professional, and educational experiences students bring to graduate school.

“She treated me and her other students with respect—respect for our opinions, our independence, and our visions of what we wanted to get from graduate school.”

“It sounds silly but the best thing my mentor did for me was to actually sit down and listen to what I had to say. When graduate students are allowed to feel that what they have to say is actually worthwhile, it makes interactions more rewarding.”

Provide a personal touch

- Be open and approachable. Students may need to discuss certain academic and non-academic issues. Knowing they can come to you and that you will care is particularly helpful to shy students or those from backgrounds different from yours.
- Help students find creative solutions to their challenges or problems.
- Familiarize yourself with the Graduate School’s mentoring and professional development resources so you can refer students to multiple avenues of assistance.

“Having someone supportive when things go wrong is the difference, in my mind, between an adequate mentor and a great one.”

“A few of my professors were always willing and eager to talk with me about my career interests, professional pursuits, and issues such as juggling career and family. This may not sound like much, but it truly makes a difference.”

Need for role models

All graduate students benefit from role models they can admire. People usually identify role models based on shared outlook and connections to similar experiences. Because of the composition of faculty at the UW, students from historically underrepresented or marginalized groups and women in some disciplines can face greater challenges finding faculty role models. Some students convey that they hope to find “someone who looks like me,” “someone who immediately understands my experiences and perspectives” or “someone whose very presence lets me know I, too, can make it in the academy.”

- If the composition of faculty and graduate students in your department is homogenous, help identify and recruit new members who represent diverse backgrounds.
- Hold departmental discussions on how to provide educational and work climates that welcome contributions from all members.
- Become familiar with people across the University or at other universities who can help your mentees.

Strategies for addressing graduate students’ diverse needs

Fear of being categorized as a “single-issue” scholar

Some students, whether minority or majority, are concerned that if they select questions of gender, race, sexual orientation, or the content of marginalized cultures as thesis/dissertation topics, faculty will mistakenly assume they are interested in pursuing only these topics for their entire careers, or will question the relevance of their work. If your students are passionate about such questions in their research and teaching, help them bolster the scholarliness of their agendas.

- Ask students what their research interests are rather than assume that their interests are driven only by personal characteristics.
- Find out what motivates your students. Then, help them learn how to use sound disciplinary concepts and theories to frame the issues that drive their intellectual curiosity.
- Discuss with your students how race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and other characteristics expand the types of questions asked in your discipline and the tools used for answering them.
- Help students practice job talks and interview responses that illustrate the depth and breadth of their research interests.
- Encourage students to anticipate skeptics' responses to their topics and to plan ahead for addressing them.

Burden of being a spokesperson

It is unfair to assume that any single student can speak representatively for the experiences or beliefs of a whole group. When certain issues arise in seminars or theoretical discussions, especially those of race, class or gender, the pressures of being a spokesperson arise, which tend to burden underrepresented students more than others, although any student can feel this pressure. Consider the burden placed on a female student in an engineering seminar asked, "How would a woman approach this design problem?" or the burden on a male graduate student in a feminist theory class asked to provide "the male view" on an intellectual topic.

- Avoid assuming that the "white, male" experience is the norm. Understand how race, gender, and other characteristics influence, but do not predetermine, your students' perspectives on intellectual problems or issues.
- Avoid asking students to speak as spokespersons for the group to which you perceive they belong. Simply ask for their perspective.
- When you hear students voluntarily taking on spokesperson roles, acknowledge what you have gained from their contributions to the discussion.

Strategies: Gender

Assertiveness

The unspoken code in graduate education is that, aside from being intelligent, those who assert themselves in classroom discussions or conference presentations attain success. Many women, minorities and international students, express concern about difficulties they experience making their contributions heard. For example, in classroom discussions, women have noted that to contribute an idea, often they have to interrupt another student. They tend to see interjecting themselves in this manner as rude and disrespectful; yet they fear that professors and peers will wrongly attribute their lack of participation to having no ideas at all. Many women report that

when they do assert their ideas strongly, they feel subjected to criticism in a way that their male counterparts are not—even though the assertive behavior is the same.

Competitiveness

Research has shown that an overly competitive and critical atmosphere in graduate programs can alienate minority students and that women feel such alienation more intensely. Women have said that the system does not reward praising the contributions of other scholars. More opportunities for collaborative work would help balance the competitive culture of graduate school.

Importance of positive feedback

Many students want frequent constructive feedback on their work, and the lack of constructive feedback can lead students to doubt their capabilities. Women tend to attribute negative experiences they have in graduate school to personal deficiencies, while men tend to attribute them to insufficient guidance or problems within the department. Many men are more content than women with mentors who offer solid instrumental – yet seemingly impersonal -- advice. Women may interpret a professor's distance as an indication that he or she has a negative opinion of them. Studies suggest that these nuances hold true for minorities, as well.

Recommendations

- Set ground rules with your students for group discussions in your courses or labs, and explain how your expectations for participation will advance students' learning goals.
- Experiment with ways of preventing a few students from dominating your seminars. For example, encourage students who have participated in discussion to wait until others have had a chance to talk before contributing again.
- Avoid calling on male or female graduate students to be spokespersons for their gender. Invite students to offer their perspectives, and, if appropriate, ask them to share how they think gender may or may not influence them.
- Adjust the tenor of discussions that become overly critical. Remind students that it is easier to criticize a work than to produce one, and follow up with: "What contributions does this particular piece make?"
- Acknowledge multiple forms of participation, e.g., group work, e-mail discussions or discussion boards, journal comments, informal discussions and office hours. Some students contribute better in small groups.
- Be aware of how discussion groups form in your seminars and determine ways to intervene if students become excluded or marginalized.
- Make sure graduate students know how to contact a departmental and Graduate School representative if they feel they are being treated in ways that negatively impact their work.
- Use concrete language to convey feedback on students' work. Saying "this paragraph exposes the research problem succinctly, but leaves out one important point" is clearer than "this is not bad" or "I don't have any major problems with it." Ambiguous feedback hinders students' performance.

Strategies: Dealing with isolation

Graduate study can be an isolating endeavor. Isolation from other students or from one's community leads students to loneliness and self-doubt. In more severe cases, isolation can lead to depression or dropping out. Students from historically underrepresented groups can feel particularly isolated or alienated if their department's composition is highly homogenous.

- Encourage students to attend departmental functions and form study or writing groups.
- Be aware of students who seem to experience difficulty taking active roles in departmental settings and find ways to include them. Ask them about their research interests, hobbies, activities and avocations.
- Introduce your students to others with complementary interests, regardless of their backgrounds.
- Remind students of organizations on and off campus that provide a sense of community, e.g., cultural and religious groups, reading groups, professional associations and the Graduate School's varied resources.

Strategies: Sexual orientation and gender identity

Unlike other underrepresented students, many gay, bisexual, lesbian, transgender and queer (GBLTQ) students are "invisible" because sexual orientation has no defining physical characteristics and because many may have chosen not to be out. Some students talk about their sexual orientation openly. You should maximize learning and professional opportunities for all of your mentees.

Strategies: Homophobia

Even within a fairly accepting educational climate, GBLTQ students convey that they encounter homophobia around campus and in the classroom, whether as students or as teaching assistants. Behaviors can range from the blatantly offensive, such as verbal or physical threats or attacks, to the less obvious, such as the casual remark "that is so gay."

Strategies: Heterosexism

Many professors and students discuss topics with the unconscious assumption that everyone is heterosexual. Straight faculty and students who have developed some heightened awareness of gender issues on campus might still think about the world from a heterosexual perspective. As a result, GBLTQ students can find their experiences and perspectives missing in research or discussions, and that absence can lead them to feel isolated from intellectual engagement.

Strategies: Genderism

Genderism is the assumption that male and female assignments of gender are fixed at birth. This is not the case for every person. Gender biases in classrooms and departments (e.g., saying "it" to refer to individuals of ambiguous gender; gendered bathrooms) are oppressive to individuals who feel the need to alter their gender identity.

Strategies: Disclosing

Being out as a GBLTQ student is not a one-time event, but rather a decision he or she makes in each new situation. With each new interaction comes the burden of having to assess the personal, social and political ramifications of disclosing one's sexual orientation. Heterosexual students do not bear this weight when interacting with peers and professors.

Strategies: Recommendations

Assume that GBLTQ students are present in every classroom, lab, seminar or campus meeting in which you participate and that they might not feel safe being out.

- Establish standards for language use and communication when you interact with graduate students. Convey that your goal in doing so is to ensure an environment that is conducive to effective learning and achievement.
- Avoid using examples that are exclusive to heterosexual experiences. For example, when talking about families use words like "spouse and partner" instead of just "spouse" or "husband" or "wife."
- Ask students whom you know are "out" to discuss with you how best to address their learning and professional needs. Ask them if they are willing to foster discussions about how sexual orientation in academic settings can be handled productively.
- Realize that your mentoring is more effective if you develop sensitivity to sexual orientation as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. That is, homosexuality is only one of several expressions of sexual orientation.
- Discuss how discriminatory remarks impede the learning process, not only of GBLTQ students but of all students.
- Encourage your department to put GBLTQ concerns on the agenda of graduate student orientations and faculty and staff training programs.

Resources www.grad.washington.edu/mentoring

- ASUW Gay, Bisexual, Lesbian, Transgender Commission offers programs regarding issues of sexual orientation. 206.685.GBLC (4252) <http://gbltc.asuw.org/>
- Affirming Diversity: Moving from Tolerance to Acceptance and Beyond, a presidential task force report on GBLT issues, suggests ways to improve campus climate, student resources and policies. <http://www.washington.edu/reports/gblt/gblt.pdf>
- Q Center is a resource for classroom speakers, research, and information on Queer issues. 206.897.1430 <http://depts.washington.edu/qcenter/>
- QGrad is a support network for graduate sexual minorities. qgrad@uw.edu.

Strategies: International students

Language and culture in the classroom

Despite their many achievements, some international students can feel their competence diminished early in their graduate programs. Linguistic proficiency and lack of awareness of how the U.S. academic system works may be initial hurdles to overcome in getting a research or teaching assignment underway. Most international students have different collaborative or classroom communication patterns. For instance, in the educational systems of East and Southeast Asia, the student's role is a more passive one in interactions with professors, whose

authority goes unquestioned. Thus, some international students are surprised to encounter U.S. students speaking up without being called upon, or challenging their professors' remarks.

Behavior in graduate seminars can seem unnecessarily competitive to international students, who fear that if they do not exhibit these same behaviors, professors will judge them less capable or intelligent. Many international graduate students come from countries in which only a small percentage of high school graduates is admitted to university, so the different levels of preparation of first-year undergraduates in the United States can be a challenge for international teaching assistants.

The rules of the academic game

When international graduate students arrive on campus, they need to demystify three cultures: the U.S. culture, the culture of the research university and the academic culture in their departments.

They discover that policies in graduate departments can be quite different from those in their home institutions, or are opaque or difficult to interpret. For instance, some may find it initially hard to understand why they can accept teaching or research assistantship "work" but are not permitted to work off-campus. On a subtler note, international students rely on different assumptions about how faculty members and graduate students should relate to each other. Many East Asian graduate students, for example, have reported sensing a kind of interpersonal "coldness" from some U.S. faculty who, while informal and jovial with students during seminars, might remain distant regarding students' personal or family lives. In other countries, the faculty-graduate student relationship extends beyond academic discussions.

Social stresses

In moving far away from families and friends, international students can feel displaced. Those who are new to the United States, and who bring their partners and children with them, worry about how well their families will adjust to American life. After a while, some students may wonder how they will be accepted at home with different dress, talk and behavior. In essence, they worry about being foreigners in their own countries.

Recommendations

- Help international students acclimate by encouraging them to participate in discussions. Assure them that you are stimulating dialogue and not singling them out. Some students may have a hard time jumping into animated discussions.
- Spend time outside of seminars or labs interacting with international students. Ask about their research and outside interests, their families, how they are adjusting and what education is like in their home countries.
- Realize that not all international students have difficulties with English; many of them were trained in English-speaking institutions. For others, English is their first language.
- At the same time, if an international student speaks English well, don't assume that he or she does not experience cultural dissonance about how U.S. education works.
- Offer several ways for international students to meet with you: in person, e-mail, phone, scheduled office hours or group meetings.

- Introduce new international graduate students to more advanced international students and U.S. graduate students with international experience.
- The rules governing graduate studies and funding in the United States may be different from those in other countries. Most students have a single-country visa that prohibits them from traveling. They also cannot work for pay, except for TA and RA positions, and are excluded from many U.S.-based fellowships. If you have questions about your program's requirements, speak with your graduate program coordinator or department chair. If you have questions about your students' travel or work, contact the International Services Office.

Resources

- International Student Services Office addresses a range of issues for international students and provides one-on-one assistance. | 206.221.7857 | <http://iss.washington.edu/>
- International Teaching Assistant Program, in the Center for Teaching and Learning, provides workshops and individual consultations to help prepare international students for roles as graduate teaching assistants. | 206.543.6588 | <http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/consulting/ita.html>
- Foundation for International Understanding through Students (FIUTS) links UW international students, visitors, and scholars with the Puget Sound community and provides opportunities for cross-cultural friendship and events. | 206.543.0735 | <http://www.fiuts.washington.edu/>

Strategies: Age and experience

Older students can be more focused and aware of their goals for graduate school than their younger colleagues. Their maturity is an asset because they are usually not intimidated by the prospect of engaging in discussions with you, and they are familiar with complex problems and independent thinking.

Fear of having “rusty” skills

Older students, especially if they have been in the workforce for several years, might worry about how they compare to their younger counterparts. Younger students, or those who were recently undergraduates, may be more up-to-date in the discipline or have more experience with technology than those who have been away from the university environment.

Devaluation of life experiences

Many older students pursue graduate school after spending a considerable number of years running a business, leading developments in industry or the public sector or raising a family. One issue they face is learning that their hard-won, “real-life” knowledge is sometimes devalued during the graduate experience. This can be frustrating when older students' array of experiences contradicts the research or theory they are studying.

Invisibility in the classroom

Older students commonly describe how bad they feel when a professor refers to an event or popular film from many years ago and then says to the entire class, “And of course none of you

would remember that.” Although not intended to be harmful, this kind of remark makes older students feel overlooked.

Isolation from fellow students

Because of the age differences between them and their peers, older graduate students may feel socially isolated. Many older students prefer to socialize in environments different from those of younger students. Although friendships can and do develop with younger colleagues, older students are aware that some of them may be the same age as their children.

Awkwardness with faculty

Because of their maturity, some older students are closer in age or older than their professors. Some may worry that their professors are more accustomed to interacting with younger students.

Prior work experience and career aspirations

Regardless of their reasons for pursuing advanced studies, students enter graduate school today with more experience and more diverse career aspirations than ever before. Today, it is common for many graduate students to have had one or more career-track jobs before beginning advanced study.

Recommendations

- Understand that graduate students’ career aspirations vary and their interests may not be the same as those that motivated you to want to become a professor.
- Ask students about their aspirations and how graduate education will help them achieve their goals.
- Ask students how their work experiences relate to, or have influenced them to pursue, graduate study. Have students write about these understandings, and invite them to make observations about how they are developing professionally.
- Ask students how their current scholarship informs their perspective on work experiences.
- Provide opportunities for students to link theory and practice.
- Remind students of the “wisdom of practice” and its importance in scholarly and professional development.
- Realize that career aspirations may shift several times over the course of students’ degree programs, so be prepared to help your mentees seek out a variety of job opportunities.
- Tune in to new economic opportunities for “knowledge workers” by periodically checking on the condition of both the academic and nonacademic labor markets in your discipline. Consult your disciplinary association or the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Occupational Outlook Handbook for current market data and trends.
- Help students pursue a healthy balance of professional development opportunities such as research assistantships, teaching assistantships and special leadership opportunities, such as university or student committees.
- Value older students’ knowledge by asking how their life experiences inform their graduate scholarship.
- Welcome the contributions older students make by asking them to lead discussion groups.
- Develop ways to ensure that older students are integrated into work groups or teams so that they do not end up always working with other older students.

- Include older students in out-of-class study and writing groups.

Resources

- The Career Center supports students in exploring a variety of career options and employment services. | 206.543.0535 | <http://careers.washington.edu/>
- Center for Workforce Development provides graduate student mentoring programs geared towards women pursuing careers in science and engineering. | 206.543.4810 | <http://www.engr.washington.edu/cwd/>
- Women's Center, Re-entry Program, offers free referrals, assistance and financial information to women and men returning to university education. | 206.685.1090 | <http://depts.washington.edu/womenctr/>
- UW Computer Training offers a variety of free and low-cost computer training opportunities to all students, staff and faculty. | 206.685.2763 | <http://www.washington.edu/itconnect/index.html>
- The Center for Social Science Computation and Research offers all students computer training for academic and discipline-specific purposes. | 206.543.8110 | <http://julius.csscr.washington.edu/>

Strategies: Race and ethnicity

Although the racial and ethnic diversity of the UW graduate student population has been increasing slowly over the last 20 years, the campus remains relatively homogenous. One reason is that efforts to enhance the pipeline of students at primary and secondary levels preparing for higher education have been well-meaning, but sporadic and limited. Disciplinary programs are still learning how to expand their prospective graduate student outreach efforts. As a result, minority students can feel marginalized, not only in the student population but in how research problems and curricula reflect -- or fail to reflect -- their scholarly influence, experiences and educational goals.

We need more role models of faculty and students who engage in multicultural scholarship, research and teaching so as to make diversity awareness and support structures in graduate training more explicit.

Role models

When students enter the complex structure of a research university, they can experience feelings of isolation or become overwhelmed. One of the first things students do is seek out people with whom they can identify in order to temper those feelings. This search can be challenging for students of color. The lack of minority faculty members makes it difficult for graduate students to find an adviser or mentor in their fields. Ethnic minorities often seek role models – regardless of race -- who have “paved the way,” who work through the dissonances between their home communities and the academic community, and who can help students do the same. When one of the few faculty of color leaves the UW, minority students feel the impact.

Stereotyping

A stereotype that students of color worry about is whether other students and faculty will have low expectations of them. White faculty and peers may unwittingly avoid reaching out to, or worse, end up discouraging students of color in seminar or lab interactions. This stereotype can make minority students feel awkward when seeking advice and guidance. Another harmful stereotype is that “all ethnic minorities are alike” or have the same goals for graduate school and experience the same challenges. These assumptions compromise collegial interaction and undermine students’ individual needs and talents.

Lack of an explicit support system

At least two kinds of support are necessary for students, and in particular students of color, to succeed. The first is sufficient financial support and the second is environmental support, including mentoring and networking. Departments should not assume that students automatically “know” how to navigate the system or pursue support. Traditionally marginalized students in higher education may have fewer direct channels to such sources of assistance. If workshops on these issues are not offered regularly in departments, or not publicized well, then opportunities remain hidden and students miss out.

Exclusion from support networks

Underrepresented students on fellowships may be inadvertently overlooked for teaching and research assistantships, and, as a result, experience fewer opportunities for collegial, career-building interactions with faculty and peers. They also miss out on how teaching and research assignments can enhance graduate training and strengthen their curriculum vitae.

Recommendations

- Reflect on how you have been socialized to think about race and ethnicity and make efforts to increase your awareness, socially and academically. Attend a diversity forum on campus, and bring ideas for community building back to your department.
- Inform yourself about scholarly advances in your discipline resulting from the inclusion of multicultural research and perspectives. Think about the challenges these advances pose to your discipline and to scholars.
- Build more explicit connections to faculty of color in or outside your department and expose your students to their work and ideas.
- Understand students’ individual needs. Students from different race and ethnic groups face issues and experiences differently than white students. At the same time, avoid assuming that all students from a given racial or ethnic group have the same perspectives or needs.
- Be aware of negative classroom dynamics and the ways they may affect the experiences of all students.
- Explicitly recognize each minority student’s unique strengths and scholarly promise.
- Talk to students about their strengths and help them improve in other areas.
- Offer minority students a breadth of possibilities for scholarly interactions: leading discussions, collaborating on projects, designing workshops and presenting research at campus forums or disciplinary meetings.
- Make sure your department offers at least one workshop per quarter on financial support, mentoring, community building, success strategies and other issues of importance to all students, particularly those of color.

- Use e-mail, newsletters, or posters to publicize the Graduate School's and other units' resources.
- Help your department create a policy of providing assistantships to all graduate students, including students of color on fellowships. Broad exposure to different kinds of academic work is just as important as deep exposure to a research problem. Use informal assignments to broaden graduate students' experience.
- Familiarize yourself with minority colleagues and white faculty in and outside your department who may help extend all students' networks.
- Learn about national networks for underrepresented minorities in your discipline and participate in them.

Resources

- The UW Center for Teaching and Learning offers web and print resources on inclusive teaching and assistance with workshops. | 206.221.4116 | <http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/>
- Center for Multicultural Education focuses on research projects, activities, and services designed to improve practice related to equity issues, intergroup relations, and the achievement of students of color. | 206.543.3386 | <http://education.washington.edu/cme/>
- Center for Curriculum Transformation helps individual faculty and departments to address cultural pluralism in the academic curriculum. | 206.685.8276 | <http://depts.washington.edu/ctcenter/>
- Ethnic Cultural Center promotes diversity, cross-cultural exchange, lectures, and learning beyond the classroom for graduate and undergraduate students. It also provides meeting space and theatre events. | 206.543.4635 | <http://depts.washington.edu/ecc/>
- Graduate Opportunities & Minority Achievement Program (GO-MAP) provides graduate student outreach and recruitment programs, and supports diversity with numerous resources and opportunities. | 206.543.9016 | <http://www.grad.washington.edu/gomap/>
- Office of Minority Affairs provides outreach and academic support services to ensure a welcoming climate in which all students can realize their full potential. | 206.685.0518 | <http://depts.washington.edu/omad/>

Strategies: Balancing work and lifestyle

Students observe their professors devoting large parts of their lives to their work in order to find success in the academy and can feel overwhelmed if they feel expected to spend every waking minute on their studies. This perception causes concerns for students who seek to balance success in their graduate career with other responsibilities, such as family, personal interests or outside work.

- Demonstrate to students that you value each dimension of your life. Share your thoughts about the benefits of balancing work and life.
- Offer your students tips on managing time, and help them understand that large tasks can be divided into manageable components.
- Recognize that students work hard to balance school and home demands. Those with family responsibilities are not able to spend as many hours on campus as other students, but often can be better focused when they are there.

- Respect the personal lives of all students and encourage students to maintain friendships and a social life.
- Learn about the demands your students face beyond the department. If you sense that a student is encountering difficulties, listen first and offer ideas for solutions. Or, guide the student to appropriate campus resources.

Family responsibilities

As the graduate student population increases in age, so do family responsibilities, such as raising children or caring for elderly relatives. These students find that the structure of graduate education in a large research university presumes an ability to be on campus at any time, which can conflict with their other responsibilities.

Cultural beliefs influence the ways students deal with family responsibilities while in graduate school. For example, when mourning a family member, some students may be expected to spend considerable time consoling relatives at home.

Dual commitments

Students with family responsibilities are committed to being successful academically, and they are often organized and focused during the time they carve out for graduate work. Unfortunately, students may fear that their professors will misconstrue this attention to other responsibilities as a lack of commitment to scholarship. Emergencies, such as an ill child or parent, occasionally prevent students from attending seminars or meetings and can exacerbate that misperception. Childcare demands do not necessarily lessen, even after a child enters school. Other demands arise, such as illness or transporting children to school or sports.

Isolation

Students with family responsibilities might find it difficult to attend as many social, academic and professional functions. They may experience isolation from their cohorts and departments, missing out on “academic business.”

Time constraints

Students with family responsibilities often need to be home in the evenings. After-hours study group assignments or research projects can present difficulties, as can having to return campus for evening lectures or departmental meetings.

Recommendations

- Develop accommodations for students with family responsibilities who might need to miss some seminars.
- Distribute assignments in advance so students can fit them into demanding schedules.
- Encourage students to explore e-mail, live chats, listservs and discussion boards to facilitate group work.
- Discuss your own family responsibilities with your graduate students.
- Plan some departmental, family-friendly social events.

- Acknowledge the amount of organization, commitment and passion needed to “do it all and do it well.” Help students to communicate how a graduate degree can bring long-term benefits to them and their families.

Resources

- Center for Workforce Development provides graduate student mentorship and resources geared towards women pursuing careers in the sciences and engineering. | 206.543.4810 | <http://www.engr.washington.edu/cwd/>
- Center for Curriculum Transformation assists individual faculty and academic departments with curriculum change related to gender and cultural pluralism. | 206.685.8276 | <http://depts.washington.edu/ctcenter/>
- Childcare Assistance Program for Students offers a childcare subsidy program. To be eligible for funding, students need to demonstrate financial need and must use licensed childcare. Contact Childcare Assistance Program for Students, | 206.543.1041 | <http://www.washington.edu/students/osfa/currentug/child.care.html> , or the Office of Student Financial Aid | 206.543.6101 | <http://www.washington.edu/students/osfa/>
- Work/Life Office can help UW students find child care or elder care. | 206.543.6963 | <http://www.washington.edu/admin/hr/benefits/worklife/index.html>
- Housing and Food Services <http://www.hfs.washington.edu/> or the Family Housing | http://www.hfs.washington.edu/student_housing/family_housing.aspx pages can be of assistance. | 206.543.4059

Strategies: Disadvantaged socioeconomic background

Students come to graduate school from a variety of socioeconomic trajectories, determined by their parents’ educational and occupational circumstances or their own occupational histories. Many students delay higher education to save money, gain professional experience or support their families. Socioeconomic background is a largely “invisible,” but important factor that influences students’ mentoring needs.

Economic concerns

Students do not always have family members they can turn to for monetary support throughout graduate school. What’s more, some students support their parents, siblings or other relatives while obtaining the degree. These students often have jobs outside of their departments, even if they have graduate appointments or fellowships.

Access to professional networks

Graduate students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds can experience greater difficulties accessing or creating professional networks in academe. They might not have had as many opportunities to develop these relationships as their peers from more advantaged backgrounds, especially those peers who grew up in academic families. This disparity surfaces most pointedly when students struggle with the costs of traveling to research conferences and the need, each year, to finance travel to professional conferences or to secure summer employment.

Summer professional opportunities

Students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds often face disrupting their academic training during the summer. Because of financial constraints, many need to seek better-paying jobs off-campus instead of taking no- or low-pay (but academically relevant) internships. Outside employment temporarily distances students from their studies, and fears of falling behind can set in. Professors who are unaware of their students' financial situations can inadvertently misconstrue interest in outside employment as a lack of commitment to academic study.

Difference in background experiences

Some students can find it intimidating to hear about the spring break or summer travels of fellow students. Those in the arts, humanities and social sciences can feel especially vulnerable knowing that some of their peers have traveled to or lived in the foreign countries they are studying.

Disconnection from family and friends

Graduate students from disadvantaged backgrounds, like many graduate students, probably have had to move away from their families. Once students become socialized into their disciplines, talking with family members or old friends about academic work can sometimes be difficult. This communication gap can cause students to feel isolated or disconnected because they feel less comfortable in their old worlds, but not yet settled into their new worlds.

Recommendations

- Be aware that not all students have had the same opportunities to learn how to create networks to support their academic and career goals. Make an extra effort to introduce your students to people you know can help them expand their networks.
- Be alert to funding opportunities for your students, especially for the summer, and alert them to opportunities.
- Put books or course packets on reserve so that students do not always have to buy their own copies.
- Enrich the discussions students have with you and with each other by having them share perspectives from a variety of experiences—travel, study, work, international friends and family stories.

Resources

- Graduate Funding Information Service (GFIS), UW libraries, offers a user-friendly database, workshops, and individual consultations to help current and admitted graduate students, regardless of economic situation, identify external funding. | 206.616.3084 | <http://www.lib.washington.edu/gfis/>
- Office of Student Financial Aid can help students secure short-term loans for emergency assistance. Applications are available through My UW's Personal Services or in person at the Office of Student Financial Aid, 105 Schmitz Hall | 206.543.6101 | <http://www.washington.edu/students/osfa/>

- Graduate School Fund for Excellence and Innovation (GSFEI) provides financial support for departments to recruit top graduate students and make graduate study more feasible. | 206.543.5900 | <http://www.grad.washington.edu/students/fa/gsfei/index.shtml>

Strategies: Students with disabilities

Students can have physical disabilities, learning disabilities (such as Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and dyslexia), chronic disabilities (such as lupus and multiple sclerosis) and psychological disabilities (such as depression and bipolar disorder). Their needs may vary depending on whether they have had a disability since birth or if it developed – or the diagnosis was made - later in life.

Work collaboratively with students and the Disability Resources for Students (DRS) office to ensure that you are meeting students' needs. The DRS office establishes eligibility for disability-related services such as academic adjustments and auxiliary aids for qualified students and can assist you and your students determine ways to meet disability-related needs in your course or program.

Reluctance to ask for help

Some students with disabilities fear appearing or becoming too dependent if they ask for help. Those whose disabilities are a recent onset, as well as those with invisible disabilities, may be unaccustomed to asking for help. Students also fear being seen as less capable or less competent because of their disabilities or their needs for accommodations.

Efforts to keep up

For many students with disabilities, meeting basic course requirements demands more time and energy than it does for other students. A student with multiple sclerosis may have a certain number of hours each day for school and studying before fatigue, vision problems and cognitive deficits flare. A student who is hard of hearing and uses a real-time captioner (like a court stenographer) may have to review several pages of notes from the captioner in order to create study notes. Some students cannot participate in professional activities such as submitting papers for conferences because they need to devote time and energy to meet the demands of their programs.

Problems that arise from last minute changes

Changes in reading assignments can be difficult for students who are blind or visually impaired. At the beginning of the quarter, these students may need readings to be converted into an alternate format, such as Braille, audiotape or electronic text. Conversion often involves a computer screen reader, or enlargement, with specialized software. Readings added later in the quarter require students to have them converted in a short period of time, and they may not be able to meet reading deadlines. Room relocations may also cause hardships for visually impaired students and students with mobility limitations.

Recommendations

- Know whether your office, lab or seminar room is accessible. If not, work with the student and DRS to determine what accommodations will ensure equal access.
- Be explicit in your seminars and on your syllabus that you want students with disabilities to contact you as soon as possible about accommodations. Be sure they know how best to contact you.
- Put your syllabus together as early as possible so that students with disabilities who need a head start on readings, or need reading materials converted, can do so.
- Write an outline on the board for each class so that students with learning disabilities can follow the larger context of the learning goals that day.
- Plan creative group exercises so all students can participate.
- Be flexible with deadlines. Students with disabilities do not want requirements lowered for them, but they may need additional time to complete tasks.
- Develop accommodations for missed seminars and meetings in advance and communicate them clearly.
- Focus on your students' abilities, not their disabilities.
- Do not hesitate to ask a student with a disability if she or he needs assistance.
- If you suspect a student might have a disability, or you are not sure how to meet a student's needs, contact DRS.

Resources <http://www.grad.washington.edu/mentoring>

- Disability Resources for Students (DRS) establishes a student's eligibility for disability accommodations and works collaboratively with faculty and staff to coordinate and implement these accommodations. DRS is a resource for students, faculty, and staff regarding the provision of equal access for students with disabilities in all aspects of campus life. DRS provides knowledgeable guidance and consultation and is a resource for publications on disability-related subject matter. | 206.543.8924 (V/TTY) | <http://www.washington.edu/students/drs/>
- DO-IT Program (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internet-working and Technology) provides resources for disabled students in engineering and the sciences to help increase independence, productivity, and participation in education and employment. Though directed primarily to undergraduates, graduate students may find helpful information too, or they can volunteer to mentor younger students. | 206.685.DOIT (3648) (V/TTY) | <http://www.washington.edu/doi/>

Getting started as a mentor

Encourage your department

Departmental faculty members, chairs and graduate program coordinators share the responsibility of establishing and maintaining a culture of effective mentoring. While this culture will differ by department, some common elements make effective mentoring environments.

Develop a mentoring policy

Each department should establish a policy that establishes mentoring as a core component of the graduate student experience. Mentoring policies are most effective when the faculty create them based on a few interviews with mentoring focus groups. This way, all members of a department can identify principles of mentoring and agree on how they will establish and reward good practices.

Assign first-year, temporary advisers

Assign each new student a temporary faculty adviser to help him or her initiate relationships with faculty during the first year of graduate school. Assignments can be based on shared interests and should require each adviser to meet with advisees at least once a quarter to review departmental requirements and course selections, and make sure the students are adapting to department life. This will ensure that all students receive quality initial support in a systematic way. These temporary relationships allow students to learn the ropes without having to make premature commitments to a mentor. Later on, students' choices of long-term mentors or advisers will be based on students' research, teaching and career interests.

Establish peer mentoring

To facilitate students' transition to graduate school, pair first-year graduate students with more advanced graduate students. Peer mentors can help new students become familiar with departmental culture, strategies for success and resources at the University and in Seattle. Departments should outline the basic responsibilities of peers to each other and the mentoring process, and make funds available for mentoring activities.

Establish multiple mentoring mechanisms

Rotate research mentors

Some departments require first- or second-year graduate students to work with faculty members to receive specific training so they may gain exposure to different skills and intellectual problems, not to conduct independent research. Disciplines in the sciences and engineering often rotate graduate students among faculty members.

Offer teaching mentors

Departments can assign a faculty mentor or two to observe TA classes and offer suggestions for improvement. Some departments offer a special course for graduate students working as TAs. Faculty instructors lead group discussions on topics such as pedagogical issues, general or discipline-specific instructional techniques and curriculum development.

Connect with your graduate alumni

Your graduate alumni are prominent professionals in their fields with many resources, ideas and energies to "give back" to your department and graduate students. Many UW departments reconnect with their alumni through speaker panels and workshops in which alumni can discuss career prospects and help students learn how to make their skills marketable.

Start a faculty-graduate student "brown bag" lunch program

Periodic faculty-graduate student lunches help students develop relationships and discover mutual interests with professors. Lunches can be organized around topics, and departments can circulate professors' curriculum vitae (or post them on department websites) to help students assess faculty members' research and teaching programs.

Create community

Designate a lounge or a conference room as place where graduate students, faculty, staff and their families can gather. Use this space to honor the accomplishments of graduate students and faculty, such as publications, research or teaching and mentoring awards.

Enhance professional socialization

Invite students to participate on departmental committees, including hiring and admissions committees. Encourage graduate students to present their teaching or research at departmental seminars, and increase opportunities for practicing public speaking skills. Assign one or two faculty members to provide students with constructive feedback. Alumni speaker series help students network as well as construct ambitious plans for their careers.

Reward effective mentoring

During reviews for merit increases, departmental leaders can take into account the quality and quantity of the mentoring that individual faculty provide. Departments can ask graduate students to assess their mentors. Another way to reward good mentors is to factor in teaching credits for faculty who have heavy mentoring responsibilities.

How to mentor graduate students

Conduct initial meetings with students' interests in mind

Encourage students to assess their needs and consider the types of people who might best help them. Use the following questions as “talking points” to guide your first meetings with mentees.

Goals for graduate school and beyond

- Ask about the student's educational and professional experiences and how he or she connects these to graduate study. What does the student hope to accomplish with an advanced degree?
- Discuss your own research or creative projects and how they complement or diverge from the student's interests.
- Offer suggestions about courses, other training and work experiences that would aid the student in reaching his or her goals.
- Refer the student to colleagues inside and outside the University who could serve as additional mentors. If you know someone well, offer to send a letter of introduction on the student's behalf.
- Recognize that students may want to use their graduate study to contribute positively to the community, either during or after graduate training. Refer students to colleagues who have bridged academic and community goals.
- Realize that the student's career goals will likely change, especially as he or she learns about the labor market within a particular discipline. A student may seek to become a faculty member in a research institution, to have an academic career in other educational institutions or to pursue a career outside academia.

- Become aware of how students' identities shape the graduate experience and how the graduate experience shapes students' identities. Well-formed identities are springboards to greater self-confidence and connectedness to wider communities of experience.

Strengths and weaknesses

- Ask the student to describe broadly the skills he or she brings to graduate study (e.g., creative, analytical, statistical, and organizational).
- Share your impressions about strengths and areas for improvement if you know the student well.
- Suggest courses or experiences the student needs to improve skill sets or gain broader exposure.

Work style

- Discuss what type of guidance the student needs to learn most effectively (e.g., independent vs. one-on-one work).
- Discuss your own work style and how you interact with graduate students (e.g., do you prefer to meet only during office hours? Do you hold informal meetings? Do you invite students to collaborate on teaching and research projects, and papers and presentations?).
- Ask the student to describe previous mentors and what they did to help him or her achieve his or her goals.

Clarify expectations

One of the strongest themes that graduate students express, on this campus and in national studies, is the desire for greater clarity on expectations, roles and responsibilities. Not all mentors and mentees establish a formal contract. Some find it useful; while others prefer to work from informal agreements (see [Worksheet 5](#), Sample agreement). To prevent misunderstandings, discuss frequently the expectations you and your mentee have of each other and how they may change over time.

Have realistic expectations

Be realistic about what you can do for your mentees and help them understand what they can expect from you. Assist your students in their search for multiple mentors. Analyze what your mentees need and help them develop a balance between seeking your help and taking on more responsibility as they develop professionally. Your mentees will differ in their needs and willingness to seek your help, and some may not have a firm grasp of their goals or needs. While you should establish standards of excellence and professionalism for all your mentees, adjust your approach depending on the developmental stage of each mentee.

Clarify roles and responsibilities

No matter how formal or informal your mentoring agreements may be, you can revise your understandings together as your mentees progress. Some responsibilities to address early, especially if you are also the student's adviser or thesis/dissertation committee chair, include:

Goals and work plans

Ask your students to develop and share with you a work plan, including short- and long-term goals and timelines. Make sure these plans are feasible and meet the academic program's requirements. Ask students to update you at least once a quarter via a meeting, memo or e-mail on their progress and obstacles they have encountered. Discuss additional training and experiences students need. If adjusting timelines becomes necessary, create new plans together.

Meetings

Talk with your students about how often you can meet. Be explicit if you have a heavy travel schedule, are about to take a sabbatical or are assuming an administrative position. If you are unable to meet often enough to satisfy students' needs, discuss alternative means of communication such as e-mail and live chats and help students think of others to consult. Discuss what issues require a face-to-face meeting and those that can be dealt with in other ways. Let students know if they may contact you at home, and under what circumstances calls are appropriate. Also, ask them whether you can contact them at home.

Some professors prefer students to take responsibility for arranging and leading meetings while others prefer to share the responsibility. Communicate your preference to your mentees.

Feedback

Discuss how often you will give feedback and what type of feedback they can expect. Explain to mentees how you intend your feedback to help their intellectual and professional growth.

Drafts

Explain what first drafts should look like in order for you to review them. If you do not want to review rough drafts, suggest students share their work with a peer or writing group first. When your students submit successive drafts, ask them to highlight revised sections to save you from unnecessarily re-reading the full document.

Publishing and presenting

Discuss with mentees your co-authorship philosophy and expectations, as well as your willingness to help them prepare submissions to journals and conferences. Ask students about their writing/speaking goals.

Intellectual property

If you have invited a mentee to work closely with you on a research project, clarify who owns the data that is being collected and whether others will have access. Discuss the ownership of any copyright and patent agreements that may result from a collaborative project. For more information, contact the UW Office of Research www.washington.edu/research, or the UW Office of Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer at <http://depts.washington.edu/uwc4c/>.

Research and human subjects

The UW Human Subjects Division must review all research involving human subjects that is performed or supervised by UW faculty, staff or students. A faculty mentor must advise students

to seek Human Subjects review and approval before starting research activities. Research with human subjects cannot be retroactively reviewed and approved. Performing a human subjects study without prior review and approval is considered “serious” non-compliance according to federal regulations and must be brought to a full Human Subjects Committee for inquiry and action. More information: www.washington.edu/research/hsd/index.php.

Confidentiality

Mentors and students sometimes discuss confidential issues. Be clear about the level of confidentiality you expect from your mentee, and offer strict confidentiality to your mentee.

Recommendation letters

Let students know how much time you need to write letters on their behalf. Ask them to give you their curriculum vitae and information about the fellowship, grant or program to which they are applying, along with details about their experience they would like emphasized. In your letters, address multiple facets of students’ work. Some faculty visit classes or labs taught by their graduate students so they can address teaching abilities in recommendation letters.

Advice you may give students

Be visible

Help your students understand the importance of being visible in department life—that office and hallway conversations build and maintain relationships, as well as help people glean vital information. If students have a departmental office, encourage them to use it as much as possible. Help them find ways to be visible, such as getting involved in gatherings or coordinating events.

Taking yourself seriously

Graduate students need to see themselves as potential colleagues. Talk to your students about professional activities that build career potential, including participating in departmental activities, joining professional associations, networking at conferences or campus events and seeking opportunities to present projects.

Be responsible

Students should understand the value of “owning” their educations, which includes developing a vision of the future and attending to everyday details, such as being prompt for meetings, preparing agendas and updating mentors about their progress and plans.

Receive criticism in a professional manner

Students need to accept constructive criticism of their work in a professional manner. Accepting criticism does not mean agreeing with everything that is said, but rather reflects a willingness to consider other points of view. Students should defend their ideas in a professional manner.

Comment on advice

Sharing different opinions is a mark of collegiality and growth. For example, ask students for their reactions to books or articles you have suggested. You can also ask students whether your advice is useful. Sometimes not taking your advice can be a sign that your mentees are thinking on their own – and a sign of growth.

Questioning

Questioning is often what helps academic disciplines evolve. Sometimes students find that their perspectives or intellectual interests do not fit neatly into the current academic canons. For instance, interest in interdisciplinary questions and in the social applications of knowledge is growing, but many students find that the structure of their department makes it difficult for them to pursue research and teaching questions across disciplinary boundaries. Productive scholarly environments value new ways of thinking and encourage students to explore, and possibly challenge, different models of inquiry.

Listen to students' experiences and perspectives, and ask them to share scholarly articles or essays that illustrate the work they would like to do. Identify content that is traditionally excluded or marginalized in your field and expand the boundaries of your discipline by addressing it.

Foster ongoing departmental discussions on how disciplinary and interdisciplinary theory and methodology are changing because of the inclusion of more diverse content, approaches and perspectives.