Graduate Council (GC)

MENTORING GUIDELINES

Approved by the Graduate Council on September 23, 2014

Graduate Programs are responsible for providing mentorship throughout the career of every graduate student. While a student's faculty advisor will be the primary mentor during a student's career, some of the mentoring "functions" defined below may be performed by faculty other than the faculty advisor or may be further supported through programs offered through Graduate Division or other campus units. Faculty mentoring is broader than advising a student on the program of study; it transcends formal classroom instruction. A mentor provides students with wisdom, technical knowledge, guidance, support, empathy and respect that help students understand how to succeed in their graduate program, to excel in their field of study, and to recognize and choose among career options. Graduate Council recognizes that the mentoring of graduate students by faculty is an integral part of the graduate experience for both. The qualities that distinguish excellent mentorship are highly variable across disciplines and Graduate Council recognizes that each discipline or program will provide its own special set of mentoring needs and challenges. We recommend that each graduate program meet to define what "good mentoring" means and develop its own set of mentoring guidelines for its faculty and graduate students.

At the most basic level, good mentoring involves treating students respectfully and objectively, providing reliable guidance, and serving as a role model for upholding the highest ethical standards. In turn, a good mentee understands that good mentoring is not the same thing as leniency, but that good mentoring should prepare the mentee for a productive and satisfying career. Both mentor and mentee should be aware of the following general common sense guiding principles:

- Mentors and students should discuss their expectations of the mentoring relationship upon entering it, to ensure clarity on expectations, roles and responsibilities.
- Either party has the right to withdraw from the mentoring "contract" if, despite genuine attempts to make it work, the relationship is not satisfactory.
- While often the mentor will have more experience in life or aspects of work, the relationship should be one of partners who jointly make decisions regarding the mentee's professional development.
- Meetings should be held in an appropriate meeting environment and placed where both parties feel they can speak freely without being overheard. If meetings are canceled or delayed, adequate warning of non-availability or delay should be given. A postponed meeting should be re-booked promptly.
- Information shared in mentoring meetings is subject to standard rules of professional confidence.
- Commitments made should be honored.

- Either party has the right to ask for a review of how the mentoring is progressing, or for agreements or plans made at an earlier stage to be reviewed.
- Since it is unlikely that the student's faculty advisor can satisfy all of a student's mentoring needs, students should be encouraged by their advisor to seek assistance from multiple individuals and avail themselves of diverse campus resources to fulfill all aspects of mentoring described below.

To help guide the relationship between faculty and graduate students, the Graduate Council has outlined the following mentoring roles below.

Role of Faculty

Faculty have a responsibility to mentor graduate students. Mentoring should be provided in three broad areas:

1. Guiding students through degree requirements. This means:
    - Providing a clear map of program requirements from the beginning, including coursework requirements and qualifying examination, and defining a timeline for their completion.
    - Providing clear guidelines for starting and finishing dissertation or thesis work, including encouraging the timely initiation of the dissertation or thesis research.

2. Guiding students through thesis or dissertation research. This means:
    - Advising students on the selection of a thesis or dissertation topic for successful completion within an appropriate time frame, and on the formation of the thesis or dissertation committee.
    - Evaluating clearly the strengths and weaknesses of the student's research while setting consistent high standards of professional scholarship.
    - Encouraging student's intellectual growth and independent, original and critical thinking through an open exchange of ideas.
    - Providing regular and timely feedback on the progress of students, including constructive criticism on progress and guidance on thesis or dissertation drafts.
    - Fostering the development of communication skills, written and oral, as appropriate for the students' discipline/program by critiquing written work and oral presentations.
    - Providing and discussing clear criteria for authorship of collaborative research.
    - Assisting in finding sources to support dissertation research such as, teaching assistantships, research assistantships, fellowships, etc.
    - Being aware of student's research needs and providing assistance in obtaining required resources.

3. Guiding students through professional development. This means:
    - Providing constructive advice and guiding the development of students as

teachers.

- Providing guidance and serving as a role model for upholding the highest ethical standards.
- Encouraging participation in professional meetings of national and regional groups as well as of learned societies.
- Facilitating interactions with other scholars, on campus and in the wider professional community.
- Assisting with applications for research funding, fellowship applications, and other applications as appropriate for the respective discipline.
- Being the student's advocate in academic and professional communities.
- Providing career guidance, specifically assistance in preparation of CV and job interviews, and writing letters of recommendation in a timely manner.
- Recognizing and giving value to the idea that there are a variety of career options available to the student in her/his/your field of interest and accepting that the student's choice of career options is worthy of your support.

Faculty should also demonstrate willingness to communicate with and understand each student as a unique individual. This means:

1. Recognizing and understanding the various cultures of their students.

2. Building trust and fostering a comfortable working environment.

3. Respecting family responsibilities of each student and be cognizant of students who need extra support when having a child, raising a child alone, returning to school after child-rearing, carrying for an elderly parent, etc.

Role of Graduate Students

As partners in the mentoring relationship, graduate students also have responsibilities. As mentees, students should:

1. Be aware of their mentoring needs and how these needs change through their graduate tenure. Students should discuss these changing needs with their mentors.

2. Be aware of advertised mentorship workshops and resources, and proactively seek out mentorship as appropriate.

3. Recognize that one faculty advisor may not be able to satisfy all of a student's mentoring needs. Seek assistance from multiple individuals/units to fulfill all aspects of the mentoring roles described above.

4. Recognize that their mentoring needs must respect their mentor's other responsibilities

and time commitments.

5. Be aware of and meet the deadlines associated with the degree program.

6. Maintain and seek regular communication with their mentors, especially their major professor.

Best Practices for Faculty

- All faculty share the responsibility and should be encouraged to maintain a culture of effective mentoring.
- Each graduate program should draft a policy that establishes mentoring as a core component of the graduate student experience.
- If an advisor is not assigned, temporary advisors to help students initiate relationships with faculty during the first year of graduate school should be assigned.
- Establish peer mentoring in order to help new students become familiar with the culture of the graduate program and resources available at the UC Merced.
- Create multiple mechanisms for faculty mentoring such as faculty-graduate student lunches, rotating faculty mentors within a graduate program and increasing opportunities for enhancing professional socialization.
- Encourage mentee to attend appropriate campus-wide professional development programs offered by the Graduate Division and relevant campus units.

Conduct initial meetings with student's interests in mind that encourage students to assess their needs. The following questions may be used to guide the initial meetings:

Goals

- 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, training and work experiences that would aid the student in reaching their goals.

Strengths and weaknesses

- Ask the student to describe broadly the skills he or she brings to graduate study.
- Share your impressions about their strengths and areas for improvement.
- 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.
- Discuss your own work style and how you interact with graduate students.

No matter how formal or informal mentoring agreements may be, faculty mentors should frequently discuss the expectations with their mentees and revise their roles and responsibilities together. Some responsibilities to address at the beginning include:

1. Goals and work plans
   - Ask mentees to develop and share a work plan, including short- and long-term goals and timelines. Mentors should make sure these plans are feasible and meet the academic program's requirements.
   - Ask for an update at least once a semester via a meeting, memo or e-mail on their progress and obstacles they have encountered.

2. Meetings:
   - Mentors should be explicit with their mentees about how often they will meet and discuss alternative means of communication such as e-mail and live chats.
   - Discuss what issues require a face-to-face meeting and those that can be dealt with in other ways.

3. Feedback:
   - Mentors should discuss how often and what type of feedback will be given to mentees.

4. Drafts:
   - Mentors should explain what first drafts should look like and if mentees submit successive drafts, explain how the drafts should be formatted.

5. Publishing and presenting:
   - Mentors should discuss their co-authorship philosophy and expectations, including order of authorship, as well as their willingness to help mentees prepare submissions to journals and conferences.

6. Intellectual property:
   - Mentors should discuss the ownership of any copyright and patent agreements that may result from a collaborative project.

7. Code of Conduct:
   - Mentors should discuss the research integrity expectations within their discipline and field, as research has become more collaborative.
   - Mentors should promote and discuss resources available on campus to educate mentees about research ethics to ensure compliance with legislation and regulations.

8. Confidentiality:
   - Mentors should clarify the level of confidentiality expected from mentees.

9. Recommendation letters:
    - Mentors should inform mentees of how much time they need to write letters on their behalf.

The guidelines are based on the following:

- Mentoring Guidelines, Graduate Council, University of California, Davis
- Best Practices for Faculty Mentoring of Graduate Students, Graduate Council, University of California, Berkeley
- Mentoring: A Guide for Faculty, The Graduate School, University of Washington