Mentoring Guidelines

Graduate Council recognizes that the mentoring of graduate students by faculty is an integral part of the graduate experience for both. Faculty mentoring is broader than advising a student as to the program of study to fulfill coursework requirements and is distinct from formal instruction in a given discipline. Mentoring encompasses more than serving as a role model. Because of the uncertainty as to the nature of mentoring, the UC Davis Graduate Council has outlined the following mentoring roles to guide the relationship between faculty and graduate students. Faculty and graduate students must realize that, while the major professor will be the primary mentor during a student's career at UCD, many of the mentoring "functions" defined below may be performed by program faculty other than the major professor. An important corollary to this recognition is that faculty members must realize that much of their interaction with all students has an important mentoring component to it. Graduate students also have responsibilities to insure successful mentoring and these are also indicated below.

Faculty have a responsibility to mentor graduate students. Mentoring has been defined as…

I. Guiding students through degree requirements. This means:

    1. Providing a clear map of program requirements from the beginning, making clear the nature of the coursework requirements and qualifying examination, and defining a timeline for their completion.
    2. Providing clear guidelines for starting and finishing dissertation or thesis work, including encouraging the timely initiation of the dissertation or thesis research.

II. Guiding students through thesis or dissertation research. This means:

    1. Providing guidance in selecting a research topic and approaches to doing research.
    2. Evaluating clearly the strengths and weaknesses of the student's research.
    3. Encouraging an open exchange of ideas, including pursuit of the student's ideas.
    4. Checking regularly on progress.
    5. Critiquing written work.
    6. Providing and discussing clear criteria for authorship of collaborative research.
    7. Assisting in finding sources to support dissertation research, such as teaching assistantships, research assistantships, fellowships, etc.
    8. Being aware of student's research needs and providing assistance in obtaining required resources. For example, serve as the student's advocate for necessary desk and/or laboratory space.

III. Guiding students through professional development. This means:

    1. Providing guidance and serving as a role model for upholding the highest ethical standards.
    2. Treating students respectfully.
    3. Encouraging and critiquing oral and written presentations.

4. Encouraging participation in professional meetings of regional groups as well as of learned societies.
5. Facilitating interactions with other scholars, on campus and in the wider professional community.
6. Assistance with applications for research funding, fellowship applications, and other applications as appropriate for the respective discipline.
7. Being the student's advocate in academic and professional communities.
8. Providing career guidance, specifically assistance in preparation of CV and job interviews, and writing letters of recommendation in a timely manner.
9. 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. For example, guiding the student to teaching opportunities when appropriate for the student's goals.

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

I. Be aware of their own mentoring needs and how they change through their graduate tenure. Graduate students should discuss these changing needs with their mentors.

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

III. Recognize that their mentoring needs must respect their mentor's other responsibilities and time commitments.

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

While we have tried to provide examples of what mentoring means, we recognize that each discipline will provide its own special set of mentoring needs and challenges. We recommend that each graduate program meet to define what "good mentoring" means to and for its faculty and graduate students.

Approved by UC Davis Graduate Council
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