BEST PRACTICES FOR FACULTY MENTORING OF GRADUATE STUDENTS
Approved by the Graduate Council: March 6, 2006

Mentors, as defined by The Council of Graduate Schools, are:

Advisors, people with career experience willing to share their knowledge; supporters, people who give emotional and moral encouragement; tutors, people who give specific feedback on one's performance; masters, in the sense of employers to whom one is apprenticed; sponsors, sources of information about, and aid in obtaining opportunities; models of identity, of the kind of person one should be to be an academic[1].

More succinctly, effective mentoring must be built on a commitment to providing every student with individual access to professional, collegial and supportive guidance throughout their enrollment in a graduate program at UC Berkeley.

The university's rules and regulations govern many issues relating to the relationship between mentors and students. In addition, many of the functions that mentors often voluntarily provide are in fact the responsibility of the appropriate unit, such as the student's department or school. Our goal is to supplement these rules and responsibilities, and to provide campus units, faculty, and staff with guidelines for effective mentoring, and to offer a framework for discussing mentoring among themselves and with students. This document is based on our own faculty experiences at Berkeley, as well as and informed by related reports from other institutions. Its purpose is to help with the assessment and improvement of mentoring by identifying priorities and characterizing "best practices" that are appropriate to the diverse disciplinary and departmental cultures, student needs, and individual working styles found on our campus. It should be noted that the following guidelines are directed at the entire community of graduate students and that each individual discipline is encouraged to develop its own specialized set of related guidelines.

In general, good mentoring in all its forms involves treating students respectfully and fairly, providing reliable guidance, and serving as a role model for upholding the highest ethical standards.

More particularly, faculty mentoring of graduate students should be provided in **three broad areas**:

I.   Guiding students through degree requirements.

- Ensuring that graduate students receive information about requirements and policies of the graduate program.

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[1] Zelditch, M. (1990). *Mentor Roles*, Proceedings of the 32nd Annual Meeting of the Western Association of Graduate Schools. Cited in Powell, R.C.. & Pivo, G. (2001), *Mentoring: The Faculty-Graduate Student Relationship*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona.

- Advising graduate students on developing a program plan, including appropriate course work, research or creative activity, and defining a timeline for their completion.

- Providing regular feedback on the progress of graduate students toward degree requirements. This should include advising them on their preparedness to take the qualifying exam, as well as any departmental "comprehensive" ("prelims", "PhD entrance", etc.) exam(s).

- Providing feedback and advice about the student's performance in coursework, where appropriate.

- Providing for supervision and advising of graduate students when the faculty advisor is on leave or extended absence.

II. Guiding students through thesis or dissertation research.

- Advising graduate students on the selection of a thesis or dissertation topic that offers realistic prospects for successful completion within an appropriate time frame, and on the formation of the thesis or dissertation committee.

- Providing training and oversight in the design of research projects, in rigorous research methodologies, in theoretical and technical aspects of the thesis or dissertation research, and in professional integrity.

- Encouraging graduate students to stay abreast of the scholarly literature and of cutting-edge ideas in the field.

- Providing regular feedback on the progress of graduate students toward degree completion, including timely feedback on research, creative activities, and teaching, and constructive criticism if the student's progress does not meet expectations.

- Evaluating clearly and explicitly the strengths and weaknesses of the student's research.

- Encouraging an open exchange of ideas, including pursuit of the student's ideas.

- Providing and discussing clear criteria for authorship of collaborative research.

- Assisting in finding sources to support dissertation research; such as, teaching assistantships, research assistantships, internal and external fellowships, etc.

- Being aware of the student's research needs and providing assistance in obtaining required resources.

- Encouraging and constructively criticizing oral and written communication.

III. **Guiding students through professional development.**

- Guiding and/or supervising students' development as teachers, helping them find suitable employment as instructors on campus or elsewhere, visiting their classes, and providing constructive commentary and advice.

- Encouraging participation in professional meetings of regional groups as well as of learned societies.

- Facilitating interactions with other scholars, on campus and in the wider professional community.

- Helping graduate students develop into successful professionals and colleagues, including encouraging students to participate and disseminate results of research or creative activities in the appropriate scholarly or public forums.

- Facilitating career development, including advising graduate students on appropriate job and career options, as well as on the preparation of application materials for appropriate fellowships, scholarships, and other relevant opportunities.

- Assisting with applications for research funding, fellowship applications, field placements, and other applications as appropriate for the respective discipline.

- Being the student's advocate in academic and professional communities as appropriate in the professional judgment of the mentor.

- Providing career guidance and support, including assistance in preparation of a CV and job applications, writing letters of recommendation in a timely manner, and helping the student prepare for interviews and other recruitment procedures.

- Providing guidance, if asked, about the intersection of concerns around physical and mental health, dealing with stress, or disability with the development of the student as a professional. This requires being cognizant of campus resources that address these issues.

- Helping graduate students to develop professional skills in writing reports, papers, and grant proposals, making professional presentations, establishing professional networks, interviewing, and evaluating manuscripts and papers.

In addition, it is of great importance for the mentor to demonstrate willingness to communicate with and to understand each student as a unique individual. In particular:

- Mentors should recognize and seek to understand the various cultures of their students.

- Mentors should build trust and create a comfortable working environment, especially for members of underrepresented groups in the program.

- With respect to family responsibilities, mentors should be alert to students who need extra support when having a child, raising a child alone, returning to school after child-rearing, caring for an elderly parent, etc. If a student holds an appointment as a Graduate Student Researcher (GSR) and is unable to fulfill his or her duties, every effort should be made to modify the GSR's duties for the remainder of the semester. If family responsibilities prevent the GSR from performing any duties, it is strongly urged that the student continue to receive a stipend from the department, contract or grant (if allowed by the funding agency) for the leave period.

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

- Be aware of their own mentoring needs and how these change through their graduate student tenure. Graduate students should discuss these changing needs with their mentors. If concerns arise about physical or mental health, dealing with stress, or disability, these may be brought to the attention of the mentor for advice on campus resources. Students should not expect mentors to deal with long-standing health issues or major emotional events that are more properly the province of professional counselors, physicians, and psychotherapists.

- 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.

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

- Become aware of—and meet—the deadlines associated with the degree program.

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

- See to it, in cooperation with the Head Graduate Adviser in the program, that all parties are informed if a change of advisor is contemplated. If specific research

plans have been agreed with one advisor, see these through if possible before changing to another advisor.

Finally, both mentors and students should be aware of some general common-sense guidelines, as follows:

- Entering a mentoring relationship is voluntary. Mentors and students should discuss their expectations of the mentoring relationship upon entering it.

- 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 of life or an aspect of work, the relationship should be one of partners who jointly make decisions

- Meetings should be held in a quiet environment (or environments, for telephone meetings) where both parties feel they can speak freely without being overheard.

- Meetings should be long enough and paced so as to allow the two people to get to know and feel comfortable with each other.

- Information shared in mentoring meetings is subject to standard rules of professional confidence (see below).

- Commitments made should be honored. If meetings are cancelled or delayed, adequate warning of non-availability or delay should be given. A postponed meeting should be re-booked promptly.

- 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.

- If either party feels unclear about the current status of the mentoring, that party should seek to clarify the views and wishes of the other party.

- Mentors should recognize their limitations and avoid working with the student in ways that exceed those limitations.

- Should either party sense there is a conflict of interest between the mentoring and any other role, this should be made known to the other as soon as is practicable.

References

The guidelines are based on the following:

Mentoring Guidelines*, Graduate Council, University of California, Davis,*
http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/gradcouncil/mentoring.pdf

In addition, the following sources were consulted:

Advisor, Teacher, Role Model, Friend, *National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, Institute of Medicine,*
http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/mentor/

Guideline for Faculty Mentors*, University of California, San Francisco,*
http://statusofwomen.ucsf.edu/resources/studentresources.php_USCF

Faculty Mentoring Handbook, *The Rackham School of Graduate Studies, University of Michigan,*
http://www.rackham.umich.edu/StudentInfo/Publications/FacultyMentoring/contents.html