



GSS

The Graduate Student Senate of
CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY

A PUBLICATION OF THE GRADUATE STUDENT SENATE | CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY

A Mentee Guidebook for Students:

*how graduate students can become
respected professionals and
trusted colleagues*



2008-2009

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How Graduate Students Can Become Respected Professionals and Trusted Colleagues

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Subcommittee on Mentoring

This Guidebook is a companion to *A Mentoring Guidebook for Faculty*, a resource produced by the 2007-2008 GSS Committee on Mentoring (GSS-MC). It was created by the following members of the 2008-2009 GSS-MC and finalized by the 2009-2010 GSS-MC:

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** Denotes returning members, 2007-2008 GSS-MC

Faculty Reviewers

To get the faculty perspective, the GSS Subcommittee on Mentoring contacted the following group of exemplary Case Western Reserve University faculty mentors, who volunteered to review and offer suggestions on our draft document. The committee cannot possibly thank you enough for your outstanding service, suggestions, advice, and enthusiasm, all of which vastly improved this Guidebook. Each of you truly epitomizes the word 'mentor'.

Robert Brown, *Physics*

Heath Demaree, *Psychology*

Kimberly Emmons, *English*

Christopher Flint*, *English*

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*Final Faculty Reviewer

Faculty Senate Endorsement

The CWRU Faculty Senate unanimously endorsed the GSS Mentee Guidebook for Students on September 23, 2010 at its first General Meeting, chaired by Professor Alan D. Levine, Ph.D.

Acknowledgments

Throughout the course of drafting this Guidebook, we received suggestions, advice, and encouragement from many members of the Case Western Reserve community. We would like to genuinely thank everyone who took an interest in our project and helped us along the way; without your insight and support, the successful completion of this project would not have been possible. In particular, we would like to thank the following people:

Colleen Barker-Williamson – Director of Student Activities and Leadership, Student Affairs

Van Bray – Coordinator of E-Learning and Assistive Technology, Educational Services for Students (ESS)

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James Eller – Associate Director, Academic Resources, Educational Services for Students

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Members of the President's Advisory Council on Women (PACOW) and the President's Advisory Council on Minorities (PACM)

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Finally, we would like to extend special appreciation to the University of Michigan's Rackham School of Graduate Studies for their pioneering and inspirational work upon which this document is largely based. (*How to Mentor Graduate Students: A Guide for Faculty at a Diverse University*, 2006)

Remarks from President Barbara R. Snyder

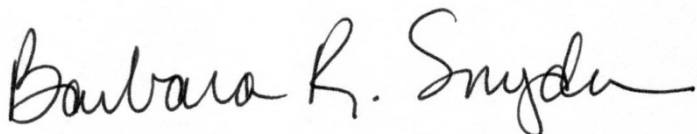
“If I have seen further than others, it is only by standing on the shoulders of giants.”

Sir Isaac Newton

Your Graduate Student Senate (GSS) has demonstrated remarkable wisdom in identifying mentoring as a key priority in recent years. In the best of these relationships, faculty are able to provide invaluable advice, insight, and support for students. Each has faced similar questions and uncertainty on their own academic journeys; more, they now have the added perspective allowed by time and experiences as professors themselves.

The GSS began this project by developing an outstanding handbook for mentors. Now they complete it with one for students. As the committee members who developed this document well know, effective mentoring rarely happens by chance. Just identifying appropriate mentors involves careful reflection, wide-ranging conversations, and research regarding faculty members’ academic interests. From there the task of establishing and maintaining high-functioning relationships becomes even more complex. Ultimately, though, the effort invested has the potential to reap enormous rewards. I commend the committee for once again producing a most thoughtful piece, and encourage every graduate student to review it with care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara R. Snyder". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Barbara R. Snyder

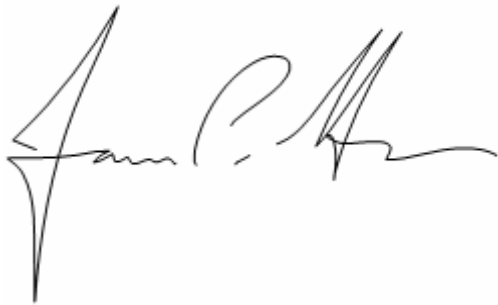
President

Insight from the 2008-2009 President of the GSS

Simply, this is a guide written by graduate students for graduate students. While a trite expression, it sums up the spirit of the guidebook: the best thing you can do for your graduate experience is be proactive and consult others about the lessons they have learned.

Graduate work can often be a solitary experience, but rest assured there are others that have gone before you and can help you. We call these people MENTORS. Your MENTORS, and yes there will be more than one, should be a source for information, not the sole, unquestionable source. Be prepared for meetings and discussions since other people are busy too. Think about questions and anticipate their answers, and soon you will be ready to be a mentor for the next person.

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James P. Harris". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "H".

James P. Harris

GSS President and Chair Mentoring Committee, 2008-2009

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A Quick Summary

- The process of mentoring includes a variety of ways of assisting and supporting students throughout their graduate education and beyond ([p. 1](#)).
 - Not all mentors are advisors and not all advisors are mentors.
- Students who have mentoring relationships have higher productivity levels, more involvement in their departments, and greater overall satisfaction with their program ([p. 2](#)).
- It is important for a student to have more than one mentor, and often to have mentors from a variety of fields ([p. 3](#)).
- Considerations when forming a mentoring team:
 - Conduct a self-appraisal. ([p. 7](#))
 - Identify potential mentors. ([p. 8](#))
 - Don't limit your options. ([p. 9](#))
 - Have realistic expectations. ([p. 10](#))
 - Clarify roles and responsibilities. ([p. 10](#))
- If problems arise, be sure to address the situation with the mentor immediately. Be proactive in seeking a solution ([p. 23](#)).
- Mentees of diverse populations
 - Female graduate students ([p. 37](#))
 - The competitive and critical atmosphere inherent to graduate programs is unsettling for many graduate students. Discuss possible remedies with senior graduate students or mentors.
 - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Graduate Students ([p. 40](#))
 - Conversations can be conducted with the unconscious assumption that everyone is heterosexual. Be inclusive with language and actions. Address potential remedies with senior graduate students or mentors.
 - Racial and Ethnic Minority Graduate Students ([p. 43](#))
 - The success of students depends on a good mentor-student relationship. Utilize the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Division of Student Affairs to support mentoring relationships. Discuss potential remedies with mentors or senior graduate students.
 - International Graduate Students ([p. 46](#))

- The Office of International Student Services (ISS) can help to address the cultural differences and language differences common for international students. Decide whether to discuss with other international mentors and national students about potential cultural or social challenges.
- Graduate Students with Family Responsibilities ([p. 49](#))
 - Be assertively proactive about dealing with conflicts with studies and research in family matters. Discuss your family responsibilities with your mentors in advance in order to better juggle both.
- Graduate Students Who Have a Disability ([p. 53](#))
 - Consult the Office of Disability Resources in Educational Services for Students (ESS) about current resources on campus. Decide whether to inform all mentors who provide you with a grade or a pass and fail about your disability in advance.
- Graduate Students Who Have Different Religious Beliefs ([p. 56](#))
 - Communicate with faculty regarding situations related to religious beliefs so that solutions can be created.

Developing Relationships with Mentors

I. What Is Mentoring?

“It seems to me that mentoring is a process that should be continually negotiated by the participants. Good mentors are the people who cross our paths at crucial moments, moments when we are ready to learn from their wisdom and experience. So at any given time, the best mentor may be the senior scholar who inspires you with her insight, the graduate student colleague who shares his classroom strategies, and/or the department assistant who takes the time to explain vital graduation paperwork. A good mentor - someone who possesses knowledge, experience, and the ability to explain both to novices in her field - is really only a small part of good mentoring. As a process, mentoring—perhaps counter-intuitively—implies a good measure of self-reliance: the "expert" can only tell you what has worked for her; you have to decide how that information and experience relates to your own hopes, dreams, and talents.”

- CWRU Faculty Member

Mentoring involves an ongoing intellectual engagement between two individuals. In addition to contributing to one’s academic and professional growth, the relationship can develop into one of mutual care and respect. Although there is overlap between the role of mentors and that of advisors in graduate education, not all mentors are advisors and not all advisors are mentors. Each department and school employs particular practices for academic and research advisors, and the focus of this guidebook is to address mentoring more generally.

The Council of Graduate Schools defines mentors in the following way:

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; [experienced supervisors], in the sense of [moral leadership] 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 (Zelditch, 1990).

As Zelditch (1990) suggests, mentors engage in a constellation of activities that transcend just advising or simply guiding you through a project. Mentors support you throughout all aspects of your graduate careers and beyond. This is not to say that a single mentor can fulfill all of these roles (Rayborn, Denmark, Reuder, & Austria, 2010; Crisp and Cruz, 2009; Rose, 2003). Rather than trying to find one mentor who can support you in every way, it is better to seek out a number of faculty members, each of whom can provide you with one or more of these kinds of support (Jacobi, 1991; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2010). Indeed, it is to your benefit to have multiple mentors, each influencing you in his or her unique way.

II. Why is Mentoring Important?

“In addition to helping me negotiate the many hoops to be jumped on the way to the degree, my advisor has also given me sound professional advice, assisted me with conference and job preparation, and suggested strategies for balancing work and life issues. Without her guidance and support, I believe my progress would have been much slower and more difficult.”

- CWRU Graduate Student

Being a mentee is one of the most important roles you will have as a graduate student at Case Western Reserve University. We encourage you to dedicate yourself to fostering a strong mentoring relationship with faculty members. Doing so will not only enhance your academic experience, but also your professional career. Research shows that students who have good mentoring relationships have higher productivity levels, a higher level of involvement within their departments, and greater satisfaction with their programs (Green & Bauer, 1995). This only underscores the importance of developing strong mentoring relationships early in your graduate career. If you build a strong foundation through these relationships, it will contribute to your growth from student to colleague.

Mentoring can help facilitate your transition from undergraduate to graduate school. Unlike your undergraduate experience, where classes encouraged you to obtain knowledge, in graduate school your goal should also be to contribute knowledge to your field of study. Your coursework and the professional relationships you foster in graduate school with faculty and fellow students facilitate your entry into the scholarly community.

Mentoring goes beyond issues of professional competence. Many aspects of professional socialization and personal support are central to mentoring as well as to your professional life after graduation. In this latter stage, the mentoring cycle comes full-circle, and you may find yourself in the role of mentor—an opportunity to repay the benefits you received in your own former mentoring relationships.

The Importance of Finding Multiple Mentors

Although graduate work often emphasizes the mentoring role of an advisor, you should not limit yourself to one person as your sole mentor. It is very important to your graduate education that you have access to information from and the methodologies of a wide range of academic professionals, not just your departmental advisor. Having mentors outside of your immediate field of study can be extremely valuable in providing you with a broader perspective on your discipline than you might otherwise have. It can also be a source of fresh ideas, strategies, and methodologies.

Faculty members whom you consider to be part of your mentoring team should complement your academic interests. Such professors could share your methodological philosophy or study topics related to your research pursuits. Additionally, it is to your benefit to have a close relationship with at least three or four faculty members whose work you admire, and who are in turn knowledgeable about your work and can attest to its quality when needed for recommendations. Having multiple mentors can also be helpful in the unfortunate instance that your advisor leaves the University or if irreconcilable issues develop between you and a faculty member.

Be creative about the people you include on your mentoring team. Although this Guide focuses on faculty mentors, we also encourage you to seek advice from your peers; advanced graduate students; departmental staff; retired faculty; faculty from other departments, colleges or universities; and professionals outside academia. All of these people can serve as part of your professional network. These individuals may not view themselves as a “team” in the traditional sense of the word; if you have selected them from varied fields or professional sectors, your mentors may not know each other closely, but they are still part of a larger professional network.

III. What are the Challenges and Rewards of Being a Mentor?

“The tangible benefits of mentoring, I suppose, involve having students of yours go on to have successful careers in the field, thus spreading the influence of your research and teaching. However, the intangible benefits seem much more compelling to me. It simply feels rewarding—in a deep human sense—to help others in the way you have been helped (or, I suppose in some cases, to try to improve upon the kind of help you yourself received). Many of the intangible rewards of mentoring are the same rewards of good teaching—having exciting intellectual contact with younger minds who bring fresh perspectives to the field. I get a real sense of accomplishment when a graduate student I’ve worked with writes a wonderful paper, gets it published, gives a great conference talk, or gets a good job at the end of their degree program. While the credit belongs entirely to the student, there is still great pleasure in feeling you were a small part of their success.”

- CWRU Faculty Member

Mentors will often be experienced faculty members who have worked through the challenges you currently face and who have achieved what you hope to achieve. However, as a result of their qualifications, they are often very busy individuals who need to balance many demands on their time. Here are just some of their responsibilities: teaching undergraduate and graduate courses; advising undergraduate and graduate students; serving as the advisor for student organizations; serving on dissertation committees; researching or working on creative projects; writing grants,

books and articles; reviewing the work of students and colleagues; serving on departmental and university committees; attending professional meetings; and fulfilling duties for professional organizations in which they are involved.

The pace of these demands does not let up over time. Junior faculty members face the pressure of preparing for their tenure review, which means that they have to be engaged in an especially active research agenda. As faculty members become more senior, and as their national and international prominence increases, there is a concomitant rise in the requests for their time and energy (Tierney & Rhoads, 1994).

Despite all of their other commitments, the vast majority of faculty members find that mentoring graduate students is, in spite of the time it involves, one of the most rewarding of all their professional responsibilities. Faculty members benefit from mentoring graduate students in many ways, including the following.

- Acquiring research assistants whose work is critical to the completion of a research grant.
- Gaining collaborators for current or future projects and creating new support networks with other professionals in the field.
- Providing the personal satisfaction of knowing that the mentor has helped an emerging professional develop his/her potential.
- Creating opportunities for experienced mentors to strengthen their knowledge base and keep abreast of new techniques.
- Enhancing the leadership, teaching, coaching, and communication skills of mentors.
- Demonstrating professionalism and a commitment to their own personal and professional development as well as to that of their colleagues.
- Gaining increased professional stature by shaping future scholars.

- Promoting the professional recognition of mentors for their commitment to developing the talents of new professionals.

Mentoring is not a single task but rather a renewable source of intellectual, professional, and personal fulfillment and a gratifying means by which mentors can pass on the rich lessons they have learned throughout their careers. For these reasons, graduate students and mentors need to ensure that time is reserved for mentoring and that the time is well spent for both parties. Because one individual is rarely able to meet all of your mentoring needs, having just one person as a mentor may put too much pressure on a single relationship. As we have suggested, a mentoring network, in which a series of relationships meets different needs, may be a more realistic way of looking at mentoring.

IV. What Should You Consider When Forming a Mentoring Team?

“I’ve really benefited from being able to work on multiple projects with different professors. It’s allowed me to learn a unique set of diverse skills which gives me a broader perspective and will make me more attractive to future employers.”

- CWRU Graduate Student

Consider it *your* responsibility to seek out interactions with faculty members. It is unrealistic to expect a professor to approach you and offer to serve as your mentor. As you get started in your search for faculty mentors, try to look for a balance of both junior and senior faculty members. Each can be of assistance to you, although possibly in different ways. For example, while senior faculty might have more resources to assist you with networking, junior faculty might be more recently familiar with the stresses and strains associated with being a graduate student. Also, as we have suggested, it is probably advantageous for you to find faculty members outside of your department with interests related to yours to act as additional mentors. This can serve a dual purpose, as your

department will most likely require you to have someone outside your department to be on your dissertation committee.

It is not unusual for graduate students to feel hesitant about initiating contact with a faculty member to form a mentoring relationship. Especially in the early stages of graduate school, students often feel that they need guidance about how to choose possible faculty mentors. The following considerations should be helpful to you whether you are just starting to form a mentoring team or whether you already have one.

Conduct a Self-Appraisal

Start the mentor selection process by first conducting a critical self-appraisal. Reflect on what will help you to thrive as a graduate student. Use this information later on to match yourself with faculty or others who can provide you with what you need. The following are types of questions you should ask yourself.

- What are my objectives in doing graduate level studies?
- What type of training do I want and/or need?
- What are my strengths?
- What are my weaknesses?
- What skills do I need to develop?
- What kinds of research or creative projects do I want to explore?
- How much independent versus guided work do I want to do?
- What type of career do I want to pursue?

Identify Potential Mentors

You can identify potential faculty mentors within or outside your department using a variety of formal and informal strategies. Here are some suggestions.

Do your Homework

- Familiarize yourself with professors' work to gain a sense of their past and current interests and methodologies.
- Immerse yourself in departmental academic and social activities. Observe how faculty members interact with colleagues and graduate students.
- Enroll in or audit classes taught by the faculty members who most interest you. Attend their public presentations.
- Ask advanced graduate students about their advisors and mentors. Share your interests with other students and ask them for suggestions about whom you should meet.

Explore Mentors' Reputations with Graduate Students and Departmental Staff

When searching for a potential mentor or advisor, talk to other graduate students and departmental staff. These contacts may be able to provide you with information about a potential mentor from a perspective that the mentor cannot offer.

- Does the professor have a history of giving proper attention to his or her protégés?
- Can the professor provide such things as teaching and research opportunities, access to financial resources, guidance for completing your dissertation, access to professional networks, and assistance in career development?
- Have former graduate students of this professor completed their programs in a timely fashion?

- What other scholars have been mentored by the professor, and where do they stand within the field? Ask yourself if that is where you would like to be in a few years.
- Is the professor comfortable talking about issues that are of a personal nature?
- If you are interested in nonacademic careers, what is the professor's attitude toward such decisions? Is he or she interested in training and funding someone who is not necessarily going to stay in academia?
- Has the professor recently reduced or ended a student's (or multiple students') funding, and if so, was it for a fair reason?
- How active is the professor in managing his or her students' research by setting objectives, milestones and metrics?

Explore Mentors' Reputation Within the Field:

- Talk with others in your field both inside and outside the University. Is the professor productive and regularly contributing to his or her field?
- Look at reviews of the professor's work. Is the work timely and novel? Does the work add significantly to the field's body of knowledge?

Don't Limit Your Options

Research clearly shows that the most important keys to good mentoring are sharing mutual research interests and having good rapport (Atkinson, Neville, & Casas, 1991; Faison, 1996; Ragins and Scandura, 1991; Struthers, 1995). Although factors such as race, gender, nationality and sexual orientation are significant aspects of a person's identity, they are only some of the qualities you should consider when selecting a mentor. Faculty members who are *different* from you in these ways can often have valuable insights into you as an individual and into your work. You do not necessarily

need to limit yourself to finding mentors who are senior faculty members. Junior faculty may not have had as much national exposure and recognition as their senior faculty colleagues, but they can still be very effective mentors.

Have Realistic Expectations

In order for you to develop good mentoring relationships, you must be proactive. It is your responsibility to find and recruit the mentors who can help you achieve your goals. You also need to have a realistic idea about what any single mentor can do for you. Faculty members are more likely to respond to requests for specific types of assistance they know they can provide. Analyze what you need from a specific faculty member and explicitly ask for those things. Finally, remember that part of your task as a graduate student is to develop and demonstrate your abilities to be an independent scholar. If you ask for an *excessive* amount of help, your faculty mentors may feel that they are doing your work. What is felt to be excessive will vary by professor and by discipline. Discuss this with your advisors and your mentors if you have any concerns.

Clarify Roles and Responsibilities

Problems in mentorship most often develop because of misunderstandings about the expectations each side has of the other. Although you do not need to set up a formal contract, some people find it helpful to specify mutual agreements about their respective roles and responsibilities. Some of the expectations you will need to discuss and clarify, especially if your mentor is also your advisor and/or dissertation chair, include the following: availability (in person or in other ways), goals, meetings, feedback, reminders, and publishing. These are discussed in more detail in Section V: How Do You Develop a Relationship with Potential Mentors?

Before your first meeting with your mentor you should take time to clarify your goals. Develop a work plan that includes both short-term and long-term goals, as well as a timeframe for reaching those goals. At least once each semester (but preferably more often), contact your mentors to discuss

your progress, as well as any additional training and experiences you need in order to achieve your goals.

What Are Mentors Looking For in a Mentee?

By considering the preceding items, you will have prepared yourself to identify an appropriate mentor. Before you arrange a meeting, take time to think about things from the faculty member's point of view so you can develop a healthy, two-way mentoring relationship.

Mutual Interests

Faculty members will want to know if you have interests similar to theirs. Share how your prior academic, professional, or personal experiences relate to their interests. Ask about their recent work and discuss with them ways in which these intersect with your own interests.

Compatible Working Styles

Your working style should complement that of your mentor in order to promote a good mentoring relationship. This does not mean you need to befriend your mentors—just that you should be aware of your potential mentor's methodology.

Motivation and Direction

Faculty members want motivated students who are eager to move on to the next level of their professional growth. State your goals as you currently see them. Ask about ways you can further explore these goals, what courses you should take, and whether you can assist with existing projects of the professor's or in the department. Remember that your work will be a reflection on your mentor's efforts.

Initiative

Be proactive. For example, seek further conversations with faculty members about issues discussed in class. Ask professors for suggestions about other people and experiences that will help you develop your skills and knowledge.

Professionalism and Collaboration

Work effectively with other graduate students in your department. This not only includes coursework; you should also plan group trips to professional conferences, as time permits. Professional conferences are effective venues for you to network with other students, professionals, and faculty members in your field of study.

Skills and Strengths

Demonstrate to professors why they should invest in you. Let them know what qualities you bring to this relationship—research abilities, language skills, creativity, analytical techniques, computer skills, willingness to learn, enthusiasm and commitment.

V. How Do You Develop a Relationship with Potential Mentors?

“My advisor and I have developed a great relationship over the years. I feel like I can bring any problem—from personal to academic to research—to either my research or academic advisors and get meaningful, helpful advice.”

- CWRU Graduate Student

Finding a clear, open, and honest way of communicating with your mentor is key for a successful mentor-mentee relationship. This section addresses often underestimated details that form the foundation of a successful mentoring relationship.

How to Initiate Contact with a Potential Mentor

The first meeting with a potential mentor can be daunting, and some graduate students are reluctant to take this step. Remember, your insights will guide you if you have a good understanding of your own academic and professional goals and if you have familiarized yourself with the professor's past and current work. The goals of your initial meeting are to make a positive impression and to establish a working rapport. You also want to assess whether a particular faculty member is a good fit for you. When considering a potential mentor, however, it is important to remember that this relationship is a two-way street, so your potential mentor will also be assessing you. Both you and your mentor have responsibilities that, if met, will ensure a healthy and productive professional relationship.

Faculty members interviewed for this handbook shared numerous insights about what they look for in graduate students. Students interviewed for this handbook gave many suggestions or important characteristics to look for when choosing a mentor or an advisor. The lists in the following section will give you a better understanding of how to present yourself and what topics to discuss with faculty. That said, don't limit yourself to just what is in these lists. Instead, use them to trigger ideas about what topics are most important to you.

Keep in mind that a mentoring relationship is often one that evolves over time and one that often begins because of a particular need. Your initial meeting with potential mentors is to gauge mutual interests and possible interactions. View this initial conversation as simply the first step in a process, an exploration that will help you decide if you really want the person to be your mentor.

What Students Should Clarify with a Mentor

General Availability

Ask your potential mentors how often they will be available to you. Consider the following questions.

- How often does the potential mentor meet with students in general?
- What are the mentor's current projects, and how much time can that person commit to assisting you? Will that amount of time be sufficient for you?
- Is the mentor planning to go on sabbatical or be away for extended periods of time during your time at the university? If so, what arrangements can be made to keep you in communication with this mentor?
- Does the mentor offer additional ways of helping students? Does s/he delegate some of her/his mentoring tasks to other students or staff?

Communication

Meetings and feedback are crucial to establishing good lines of communication between you and your mentor. Take time to clarify and address the following.

General Communication

- Are you able to easily understand the professor?
- Do you feel you are able to effectively communicate your thoughts and ideas when speaking with him/her?
- Do you think you will be able to work closely with this person?
- Do you think you will be able to accommodate to his or her professional and personal style?

Meetings

- How often will you meet face-to-face, making certain to request the amount of time you need in order to accomplish the goals of a given meeting?
- How often does the mentor like to meet one-on-one?

- Will e-mail contact be suitable for certain issues or questions that might arise between meetings? Does the mentor regularly answer his/her e-mails?
- What are the circumstances, if any, in which the mentor feels that it would be appropriate to be called at home? Be sure to let the mentor know if you have any restrictions about phone calls at home as well. If you both have cell phones, establish rules for calling each other on them.

Feedback

- How often will the mentor give you feedback about your general work and your progress? For feedback on specific work, find out how long it typically takes him or her to return papers or other assignments.
- Promise that, in advance of actually handing the mentor a paper or project to review, you will inquire about his or her current workload and whether timely feedback is still possible.
- Ask if the mentor tends to provide a lot of comments or very few, so you will not be taken aback later either by the amount of comments or the lack of them.

Reminders

Explore with the professor the best ways of reminding him or her about getting your work back within an agreed upon timeframe. Ask if it would be helpful to send your mentor a reminder. If yes, please consider the options addressed as follows.

- “When you are very busy, how should I remind you about a paper you have of mine? Should I e-mail you, call you, or come by your office?”
- “How much in advance should I remind you? Is one week enough time or would you prefer two?”

Setting Expectations with a Thesis Advisor

Often one of your mentors will be your thesis advisor. For a thesis advisor it will be important to clarify the following expectations.

Workload and Funding

- What does the thesis advisor consider to be a normal workload?
- How many hours does he or she think you should be spending on your research or creative project per week?
- Does the thesis advisor have funds to support you? Will these remain available until you complete your program? It is very important that the timeline for available funding for a specific project be well understood by both you and your advisor.
- Does the thesis advisor prefer or require her/his students to apply to scholarships/fellowships and will those scholarships/fellowships suit your academic interests?
- Especially for those in the sciences and engineering: Is there potential for developing a dissertation topic that you would find interesting from the thesis advisor's research project? Does the thesis advisor have appropriate space and laboratory equipment for your needs? What is the size of the thesis advisor's research group and is this optimal for you?

Publishing

- Do thesis advisors in your field offer co-authorship? If yes, does your thesis advisor of interest offer co-authorship with graduate students? If so, what are the guidelines for authorship?
- Does your thesis advisor have a specific requirement for number of publications or other scholarly work that exceeds your department requirements for graduation?
- Is your thesis advisor willing to advise you on your own articles for publication?

- What publishing contacts does your thesis advisor have who might be of assistance to you?

Presentations for Performing and Visual Arts

- Does the thesis advisor collaborate with students in public performances or exhibitions?
- Does the thesis advisor have time available to work with you to help you prepare your projects for public presentation?
- Does the thesis advisor use his or her professional contacts to assist students in presenting their own work to the public?

VI. How to Be a Good Mentee

“I expect a successful student mentee to be a person that can communicate openly and listens earnestly. The successful mentee knows when to take criticism and knows when to hold firm. The successful mentee is able to recognize that all people have strengths and weaknesses, including their mentors, and is able to put the mentoring relationship into its proper context”

- CWRU Faculty Member

“A mentee should be absolutely passionate about his/her research interests. This leads to several positive behaviors—devouring related reading, actively partaking in relevant research, etc. A mentee should be considerate. Mentors and mentees don’t always have to be friends, but mentors-mentees should always treat one another with mutual respect. A lack of respect in either direction produces a somewhat toxic interaction, which can make the mentoring process very difficult.”

- CWRU Faculty Member

Here are some suggestions that will help your interactions with mentors and other faculty members go smoothly while also helping you to become the strongest mentee that you can be.

Things to Remember When Meeting With Mentors

Respect their time. Be sure you know how much time they have available to give you and be aware of how quickly time is passing. If you need additional time, schedule another meeting to discuss the remaining topics. If you want to develop a professional relationship with faculty, contact the professor(s) again once you have something substantive to discuss. For instance, you can send an e-mail to thank them for their time and let them know the progress you are making in pursuing suggestions they gave you.

In order to be treated as a junior colleague, your actions and attitude must demonstrate to your mentor(s) that you are self-motivated, responsible, and driven in the pursuit of your career goals.

Be Serious about your Academic Work

There are many ways to demonstrate your commitment to your studies and to your field. Here are just a few.

- Make the transition from thinking of yourself as a student to seeing yourself as a future colleague.
- Attend departmental lectures, seminars, and other departmental activities. Ask intelligent questions and contribute to thoughtful discussion.
- Network at professional meetings in your field and join the sections related to your dissertation.
- Seek out opportunities to present your work (in your department or through outside conferences and publications).
- Attend teaching workshops and courses offered at the University. Suggest speakers for guest lectures.

Be Responsible

Professors often talk about commitment with the term “owning a subject.” Take ownership of your work by becoming the best expert possible in the field of your interest. Keep up to date with the latest literature relevant to your work. In fact, try to keep ahead of your mentors in terms of acquiring and reading the most-recently published work in your field.

Be aware that other faculty and graduate students may be relying on your work. Often your work will be needed for publications, performances, funding applications, etc. Meet deadlines and take time to communicate when goals will not be met in a timely fashion.

It is your responsibility to update your mentors about your progress and also about your struggles. Communicating with your mentor and other faculty can be intimidating when adequate progress on your work has not been made for various reasons. Address the issue and be proactive in seeking advice from your mentors.

Papers and Proposals

Before sharing the draft of a paper or proposal with your advisor or mentor, be sure that it matches the standards on which you and your mentor have agreed. Consider utilizing the CWRU Writing Resource Center (<http://www.case.edu/writing/writingcenter.html>) or friends with strong editing skills to revise your document. The same stands for the content: if you know somebody who is somewhat familiar with the basis of your thesis idea, ask them to proofread your document. Professors may request an early rough draft of your work or ideas, although this is less common. In these cases, you can decide what is more important: timely submission or a perfectly polished version of your idea.

Here are some additional suggestions to help the paper/proposal draft process proceed as efficiently as possible.

- Mark the sections that you have revised. Your mentor should know which sections you have been working on, so that s/he does not re-read the entire document (unless you have completely edited every section).
- Hold regular meetings with other graduate students to review each other's work, share ideas, and give each other feedback.

Respect Your Mentor's Suggestions

Read the books or articles your mentors recommend, and ask questions about the content. Mentors want to see you become a scholar who has learned from their recommendations, guidance, and insight. If you do not follow a mentor's suggestion, be able to discuss your reasoning.

Meetings

- Be punctual for meetings with your mentors.
- Be proactive in the meeting, have an agenda and a set of goals prepared. The best way to be time efficient is to make a list of prioritized questions so that the most important questions are ensured time for discussion.
- Following a meeting, summarize in writing any achievements and agreements that you have made with your mentor. This is particularly important for two reasons. First, it shows your mentor that you are consciously managing your work. Second, it documents what you have agreed upon by creating a list of decisions, project goals, and actions that can be used if there is a misunderstanding or in case of unusual circumstances.
- Accommodate your mentor's schedule without sacrificing your goals and concerns.

- Try to avoid canceling a meeting. If you must, make sure that the message reaches your professor in a timely manner. Notification by email can be satisfactory, but for last minute cancellations, you may want to call the department assistant or your mentor directly.

Letters of Recommendation

- Set up a specific appointment to discuss a letter of recommendation.
- Provide updated copies of your *curriculum vitae* to everyone from whom you are requesting a letter of recommendation.
- Leave clear written instructions as to when the letters are due and to whom to send them. Attach a stamped and addressed envelope for each letter.
- If you request several letters from each recommender, create a calendar for your mentor that lists application deadlines.
- If the letters are to be completed on-line, provide each recommender with a list of schools and organizations that they should expect emails from so that they are not lost or overlooked. Offer to assist recommenders with the on-line recommendation process, when appropriate.
- Provide a short description of your grant applications.
- Provide details about how you are structuring your application and what points you would like your mentor to emphasize.
- Submit these materials with enough advance time for your mentor to write a letter.
- In case the professor misplaces the application materials, keep extra copies of all forms, emails, and other relevant materials.

- The University and departments have policies to protect student privacy, and you may have to give written permission to allow mentors to discuss academic performance. Ask your departmental assistant about the details of these policies.

Respect Boundaries

Resist the temptation to drop in on professors for casual conversation; allow professors to initiate this type of interaction. Friendships between students and faculty can develop over time but should never be forced. Friendships with faculty and mentors can be beneficial to your professional socialization and in giving you more access to information when needed, but they also present the danger of losing track of the hierarchical order of your relationship. Always keep in mind that, while you are primarily judged for the quality of your work, you are also judged on your level of professionalism in and outside of the workplace.

Receive Criticism in a Professional Way

Accept critiques of your work in a professional manner. If you disagree with a specific criticism, show your appreciation in a respectful manner but assert your reasoning for why you think differently. Rather than responding on the spot, it is often best to take some time to think about the critique in order to provide the best response.

Take Ownership of Your Degree

While your mentors will be helpful and will aid your success, you must remember that you are ultimately responsible for the progress of your degree. Therefore, remember to:

- Investigate and understand your academic and research requirements for graduation.
- Consistently work hard and responsibly throughout your project.

- Demonstrate independent thinking.
- Show your initiative and motivation to succeed.

VII. What to Do if Problems Arise

“I was very stressed out about finishing my research and other requirements on time for May graduation and finding a job, all at the same time. However, I didn’t tell my advisor this. At the end of one of our meetings, he told me that he noticed I had been very stressed and wanted to reassure me that I was on track for graduation. This was a very positive experience in my mind, because he was attentive to my behavior and was able to provide the reassurance that I needed to help me get through the stressful time.”

- CWRU Graduate Student

Unexpected Circumstances

It is likely that something unexpected will occur in the course of your graduate career that will hamper your efforts to complete your work, such as the birth of a child, a family illness, a medical condition, etc. While it may be difficult to manage the situation, taking proactive steps to contact your mentors will pay dividends. Discuss your situation with your mentor, giving them as much information as you feel comfortable sharing. If you feel uncomfortable discussing the situation with them or feel that they are unhelpful, there are resources on campus to help you. As soon as possible, discuss a new timeline for completing your degree with your mentors. Take care to construct a new plan that is realistic. Additionally, the Graduate Student Handbook describes a temporary leave of absence policy on page 17. You can consult it at:

<http://case.edu/gradstudies/downloads/2010-11%20Graduate%20Student%20Handbook.pdf>

Availability Issues

Like students, mentors can have unexpected circumstances which may impede their availability. Grant your mentors the same courtesy that you would expect from them in a similar situation.

As previously noted, faculty members have many constraints on their time. There may be a time when their unavailability may impede your work and progress. For example, other demands may hinder your mentor's ability to meet with you or provide prompt feedback about your work. Often a mentor's other commitments directly benefit their students, e.g., grant writing, so be understanding. If inaccessibility becomes a problem, address the issue with the mentor.

Minor Issues with a Mentor or Faculty Member

It is important to address and resolve minor issues quickly. It is a good idea to discuss them with the following people in the order listed here.

Mentor/Faculty Member

Your first step is to politely inform the mentor of your concerns. If you are not getting satisfactory results from casual discussions, schedule a meeting with the mentor at the earliest possible time. Face-to-face meetings can lead to more satisfactory results than e-mail, as the situation can be more fully discussed in a collaborative manner. In contrast, one's tone and message can be easily misconstrued in electronic communication.

Peers

Other students who have contact with a particular faculty member can tell you if this behavior is typical, and may be able to suggest some possible resolutions. Your peers can also explain the norms in your department regarding the frequency of meetings, turn-around time for feedback, and the general availability of faculty. Your peers might be able to help you create solutions in which you

take more initiative to solve your issue independently of your mentor. Consider the possibility to become a GSS Peer Mentor or Mentee.

Graduate Student Senate

The Graduate Student Senate is composed of graduate students with whom you can discuss many issues. Explore <http://gss.case.edu> for more information.

Departmental Staff

Staff (e.g., the administrative assistants) can sometimes clarify departmental expectations and standards and possibly offer suggestions about how to resolve problems. Administrative staff are knowledgeable about other people or offices on campus that can assist you. Also, it is possible that the department administration can provide the function you are seeking from your mentor (Planned Program of Study approval, career counseling, writing resources, etc.).

Other Mentors

Other mentors can often give you advice on how to deal with problematic issues that arise with one of your mentors. If you have been able to form a mentor team, you should be able to consult another mentor about the issue you are having. If you want someone to intercede on your behalf, senior faculty may be in a much better position to do so than junior faculty. If you have formed a dissertation committee, the Chair of your committee (provided that s/he is not your mentor) can act as an advocate and mediator between you and your mentor. This person is generally quite familiar with your mentor as well as with your thesis work, and can be an excellent resource when attempting to resolve issues

Graduate Chair, Director, or Department Chair

If you are not able to resolve issues with your mentor on your own, you may find it advisable to talk to the Graduate Chair in your department or your Department Chair. Be aware that discussing issues with these people means that you are going above your mentor's head, which may put more

strain on the problems you are already having in your relationship. Generally, this should be done only if you are unable to resolve the issue through other means.

School of Graduate Studies

At some point, you may find it helpful to talk things over with staff at the School of Graduate Studies. Please contact Denise Douglas, Senior Associate Dean of Graduate Studies (368-4390) denise.douglas@case.edu for ideas and strategies.

Major Issues with a Mentor or Faculty Member

Major issues, such as a breach of ethical behavior, should be addressed immediately. Even a minor issue that is not addressed can become a major issue, so it is important to address problems that arise as soon as possible. The formal Graduate Student Grievance process can be found at:

<http://www.case.edu/gradstudies/downloads/SolvingAcademicandOtherConcerns-GraduateStudents.pdf> and <http://case.edu/gradstudies/downloads/2010-11%20Graduate%20Student%20Handbook.pdf> (p. 19), but here is an overview of the steps suggested to resolve an issue.

First, discuss the grievance with the person against whom the complaint is directed. The goal is for the parties to be sure they understand each other before further steps are taken.

When the student does not feel that the issue has been adequately resolved or feels at risk by addressing the issue with the person against whom the complaint is directed, he or she should then discuss the issue with the department Graduate Director or Department Chair. If the complaint involves the Department Chair, the student may bring the matter to the Faculty Dean (e.g., Engineering, Medicine, etc.) to whom the Chair reports.

In the event that a decision still appears unfair to a student or if the student feels that the department's Graduate Director or Department Chair are not independent mediators, the student

may bring the matter to the attention of the Dean of Graduate Studies. The Dean may ask the student to put the complaint in writing for clarity and fairness to others involved.

VIII. Changing Advisors

“Changing advisors shouldn't always be associated with a negative stigma. In fact, it was a critical step in my educational career that—in addition to broadening my scientific knowledge, enhancing my technical experience, and complementing my skill set—has made me a more complete scholar in my fields of interest, ultimately making me more marketable (and less dispensable) to prospective employers. Different mentors have different priorities and expectations, and exposing oneself to a more diverse spectrum of such goals can be a real virtue.”

- CWRU Graduate Student

In the course of your graduate study, it may become appropriate to change advisors. This process may be more common in some fields of graduate work and less common in others. It can be a difficult process in either case, especially where financial support is involved. Some departments encourage students to work with multiple faculty members, thus making it easier for the students to change advisors. In these instances, changing advisors is often a fluid process and can be viewed positively. For example, some students may begin their graduate work with one advisor who specializes in one field and then complement this work by changing to another advisor who specializes in a different area. In other cases, students may be brought to CWRU to work with one specific faculty member, possibly making it more difficult to change advisors. In order to maintain a smooth transition between advisors, you should remain professional with your previous advisor. Your department may have formal policies and procedures for changing advisors, so it is important to follow the appropriate course of action they suggest. That said, here are some general guidelines.

General Guidelines for Changing Advisors

- Reflect on the pros and cons of changing advisors before you start the process.
- Seek advice from your other faculty mentors to assess your needs and determine if changing advisors is the best course of action. This advice may be especially important if you are attempting to change advisors toward the final phase of your graduate work (see Section VII. What to Do if Problems Arise).
- Try to resolve any differences with your advisor before you make a final decision.
- Approach another faculty member who you feel is the best fit to be your new advisor. Your attitude in this conversation should be positive, outlining new interests, goals and possibilities.
- Be professional. Do not make negative comments about your previous advisor, place blame, or discuss specific difficulties or incidents. It is important to avoid saying anything that could have a detrimental impact on your future.
- Express your decision to change advisors by outlining your reasons for wanting the change in the most diplomatic and sensitive manner possible, especially concerning anything you need to say about your previous advisor and others involved in your graduate work. Try to be general; don't bring up small details or petty incidents.
- Discuss a reasonable timeframe for completing any work you owe your previous advisor.
- Complete your department's requirements for changing advisors. Also, be sure to revise your Planned Program of Study (via SIS) and update your Dissertation Committee with the Dean of Graduate Studies and your department.

IX. How to Transition to Being a Mentor

“Before attending graduate school, I had expected to learn from mentors in my field of study. I had not, however, considered how I would be a mentor to undergraduate students and other graduate students. Being a mentor to others has been a rewarding experience, and has enhanced my leadership abilities.”

- CWRU Graduate Student

Thus far, this guidebook has defined what mentoring is and has focused on your role as a mentee in the mentoring relationship. However, in the course of your graduate education and eventually in your professional career, it is likely that you will also serve as a mentor. You will then have opportunities to apply what you learned as a mentee in your role as a mentor to others. The following segments include scenarios in which you might be a mentor while in graduate school.

Mentoring Fellow Classmates

An initial step towards mentoring is fostering relationships with your classmates—both undergraduate and graduate students. This might involve sharing information, explaining ideas, or working collaboratively on group projects. Although some students may view graduate school as a competition, it is also important to consider its cooperative aspects in the increasing interdisciplinary nature of research. Professors may weigh your performance against other undergraduate and graduate students in your courses, but will also evaluate your ability to collaboratively work with others. Being open about information will benefit you—when your classmates in turn share their ideas with you about course material or alert you about resources related to your research interests.

Mentoring as a Teaching Assistant or an Instructor

Your graduate education will likely involve mentoring undergraduate students—whether as fellow students, as mentioned previously, or as their Teaching Assistant or Instructor. Mentoring them on a

basic level involves ensuring their comprehension of the material. This may occur by providing them with insightful feedback or meeting with them either after class or during your office hours.

Undergraduate students may, however, ask for direction beyond the classroom. Students might ask for advice about classes or additional information regarding your field of study. Others might become curious about your experience as a graduate student, and how to embark on the graduate school application process. Professors or personnel at offices on campus could also be resources for undergraduate students, but students will likely also appreciate your personal first-hand advice.

Mentoring Other Graduate Students

Incoming graduate students may approach you for guidance. They might ask for your opinion about specific classes or professors. They might also have questions about graduate school in general, university life, your shared field of study, or your experience as a Research Assistant or Teaching Assistant. Because you probably also have been given advice by senior graduate students, it is time to “pay it forward.” You should be honest about your experience; while you may have encountered frustrations in the course of your graduate education, consider that incoming graduate students do not need a preconceived negative opinion of your department or the University. For instance, a professor in your department might teach challenging classes. Instead of simply expressing the difficulty of the classes, offer students strategies on how to succeed in such courses. As a senior graduate student, you have a great deal of first-hand knowledge that does not come in any handbook, so communicate what you have learned to junior graduate students: from lab techniques to classes to where to get the best free food to forming a thesis committee to establishing professional relationships with faculty. Senior graduate students can really be the source of a lot of knowledge. You can help familiarize other students with the culture of your department and avoid many common pitfalls of graduate school.

Mentor by Example

Although you might often mentor by offering advice to undergraduate students or other graduate students, it is just as important for your actions to be worthy of emulation, both inside and outside the classroom. Become a leader in the classroom by actively participating in class discussions, contributing to group projects, or giving great presentations. Outside the classroom, participate in departmental activities, attend guest lectures, become involved in campus events, and present at conferences. When you mentor by example, you not only set excellent standards for other students to achieve, but you also develop expertise and leadership experience in your field of study.

Resources in Diverse Communities

I. Common Themes for All Graduate Students

Regardless of their field of study, some or all graduate students often experience the problems and stresses discussed in this section.

Need for Role Models

Mentoring is an important relationship that can help bridge the gap between undergraduate and graduate education; it enables graduate students to grow into professional scholars by fostering an understanding of the practices, knowledge, and expectations of their chosen fields.

Students from groups that are historically underrepresented in academia may have a harder time finding faculty role models who have had experiences similar to their own. As a student you may want to find someone who looks like you, someone who immediately understands your experiences and perspectives. The Office of Multicultural Affairs can provide underrepresented students with additional mentoring that supplements that offered by their thesis advisor.

Questioning the Canons

Students from underrepresented or marginalized groups sometimes find that their perspectives or experiences do not fit into current academic canons; they find that their experiences are missing from current theory and research. Exploring and challenging a discipline's traditional content and boundaries should be an integral part of the study of that discipline. Healthy departments are mindful of the need to create safe environments in which such ideas can be shared freely.

Being Categorized as a “Single-Issue” Scholar

The structure of graduate programs and the need to focus on one topic for the thesis or dissertation can have the effect of producing scholars whose vision and knowledge is quite narrow. This can be advantageous depending on the field. Many graduate students are concerned with being associated with a narrow topic. Initiate an open discussion with your mentors if you have these concerns to explore opportunities to broaden your scope.

Feelings of Isolation

All graduate students probably experience a sense of isolation at times, one that springs from the intense focus of the graduate experience. Students from historically underrepresented groups can feel particularly isolated or alienated from other students in their departments, especially if the composition of a program is highly homogenous. At Case Western Reserve University, students can look for potential mentors outside of their thesis advisors through the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Among other things, this office is dedicated to providing students with positive and professional mentoring. These mentors include University faculty, staff, alumni, and professionals from around the Cleveland area. In addition, they can seek the advice from the Division of Student Affairs.

Seeking Balance

Students observe that professors need to devote large parts of their lives to work to be successful in the academy. Students from all disciplines may feel that faculty members expect them to spend every waking minute of their days on their work. This perception of faculty expectations, accurate or not, is of grave concern to students who wish to have family lives, as well as for those who want to balance their lives with their interests and hobbies. See Part I, Section IV, Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities to address these issues with potential mentors in advance. If your life circumstances

change during your career as a graduate student, take time to discuss these changes with your mentors as soon as possible.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a serious issue and can happen to any graduate student. The University's Policy on sexual harassment states that "sexual harassment is unacceptable conduct, which will not be tolerated. All members of the University community share responsibility for avoiding, discouraging, and reporting any form of sexual harassment."

Consult the following website for current policies:

<http://studentaffairs.case.edu/handbook/policy/sexual/harassment.html>

Suggestions

1. Work with faculty mentors to get names of potential mentors in departments, across the university, or at other universities who may have had similar experiences.
2. Remember that very good mentoring can come from faculty members who are of a different gender, race or culture. After all, past generations of minority scholars did just that. As one professor of color pointed out: "It is important to develop ties and networks irrespective of race and gender but based on what people can offer."
3. If the faculty and students in a department or program are largely homogenous, help identify and recruit new faculty and graduate students who represent diverse backgrounds. When such openings arise, give suggestions for qualified job candidates who may also represent diverse backgrounds. Attend the job talks and meet these potential faculty mentors.

4. The Office of Multicultural Affairs operates a list of organizations at CWRU, and the relevant graduate student organizations recognized by the Graduate Student Senate is listed as well (see the Resources section below).
5. Be open to hearing other people's experiences, particularly those people from backgrounds different than yours. For example, the introduction of women's and minorities' perspectives has brought about the development of whole new disciplines, all of which have greatly enriched the University environment and academia in general.
6. Investigate and join organizations within or outside the University that might provide you with a sense of belonging. Some examples are cultural and religious groups, as well as reading groups and professional associations. Some students may find it particularly difficult to take active roles in academic and/or social settings. Do not be afraid to ask mentors or peers to introduce you to other students and faculty with complementary interests.
7. Seek out mentors you view as role models for advice on how mentors attain balance among life aspects such as career, family, and personal aspirations.
8. It is difficult to balance school work with the demands of personal life, and these demands vary depending on the individual students' experiences. Be honest with yourself in deciding which of these arrangements are suitable for you while still demonstrating that you can be focused and productive in your work.
9. Recognize that your undergraduate time management and study strategies may need revising to better meet the demands of graduate level work. Educational Services for Students (ESS) meets individually with students to develop effective time management and study strategies.
10. Participate in Presentation Workshops. Educational Services for Students (ESS) offers a presentation workshop series to enhance your skills as a presenter. Learn ways to organize your work, understand your audience, use appropriate visual aids, and speak with confidence.

Resources

- The Office of Multicultural Affairs

<http://studentaffairs.case.edu/multicultural/>

- A list of student organizations at CWRU in which students from historically underrepresented groups can find a sense of community

<http://studentaffairs.case.edu/multicultural/resources/organizations.html>

- A list of student organizations recognized by the Graduate Student Senate

<http://gss.case.edu/people.php?name=organizations>

- Educational Services for Students (ESS)

<http://studentaffairs.case.edu/education>

- Case Western Reserve University Career Center

<http://careercenter.case.edu>

- How to Complete and Survive a Doctoral Dissertation by David Sternberg, St. Martin's Griffin, 1981

- A Handbook for Women Mentors: Transcending Stereotype, Race, and Ethnicity, Greenwood by Carol Rayborn et al., 2010

- Good Mentoring: Fostering Excellent Practice in Higher Education by Jeanne Nakamura and David Shernhoff, Jossey-Bass, 2009

II. Female Graduate Students

This section discusses issues that are often experienced by some female students, but other students may experience them as well.

Assertiveness

Success in graduate school can, at times, require you to assert yourself in classroom discussions or in conversations while at meetings with your mentor and other collaborators. This means that you may need to interrupt other students, lab members, or collaborators in order to ensure that your voice is heard. Since some women have been socialized to be polite, such assertive actions may be unnatural. Some women may also see interjecting themselves in this manner as being rude and disrespectful. You may wish to observe how female faculty and senior female graduate students in your department handle this issue or consult resources listed. Try to always state your arguments and do not take everything personally.

Competitiveness

Some graduate students may feel alienated by the competitive and critical atmosphere that is pervasive in many graduate programs (Sandler, Silverberg & Hall, 1996). As a graduate student, you are expected to be critical of others' work when you think it is appropriate, and you may often find that the system does not reward one for praising the contributions of other scholars. One way to minimize this overly competitive atmosphere is to work in small collaborative groups. Collaborative work could help you feel more confident when your work is being constructively criticized or when you are giving constructive criticism to someone else. Such small group settings may also foster positive feedback.

Positive Feedback and Confidence

Academia is wrought with negative feedback regarding all types of scholarly work. While the culture of academia may be shifting to include more constructive criticism, graduate students should be aware that typical comments may sway towards negative feedback instead of constructive criticism depending on the mentor. Both male and female students frequently find that they do not receive positive feedback on their work from their mentors, and the absence of positive feedback can lead graduate students to doubt their capabilities (Nerad, 1992). In a 1991 study by Nerad and Stewart, it was found that women graduate students tend to think that any negative experiences they have in graduate school are due to their own personal deficiencies, while men tend to attribute the reasons for negative experiences to others, i.e. to insufficient guidance or problems within the department. In 2007, the NIH reported that the burden of family responsibility and lower confidence in themselves (relative to men) are factors that impede women from pursuing advanced scientific careers. The study revealed that, although men and women rate themselves equally when asked about professional skill, men were significantly more confident that they could obtain full professor status and become tenured.

Suggestions

1. If you find that you are having a difficult time participating in class discussions or speaking up in meetings with your mentor, consider meeting with your professor or mentor to discuss the issue. Suggest specific ways in which he or she could make it easier for you to participate in class or meetings. For instance, you may find it helpful if the professor or mentor directs a question to you about what you think about a particular topic.
2. Take advantage of professors' office hours. You might find it easier to talk with them one-on-one. Let them know that, even if you are quiet in class or in meetings, you are still engaged in the subject matter.

3. Try to not take constructive criticism personally. The majority of mentors want to see their graduate students excel. Pointing out ways that students' writing, laboratory experiments, etc. could be better is one way of helping students succeed in the future.
4. If you find that a mentor only engages in brief conversations with you, do not jump to the conclusion that this person does not value you as a mentee. Remember that professors are also very busy and may only have limited time to interact with you at a particular meeting.
5. Make sure to apply for competitive positions to advance your career once you graduate. There are a variety of resources available for women in academia (see resources below).

Resources

- Flora Stone Mather Center for Women
<http://www.case.edu/provost/centerforwomen/index.html>
- WISER (Women in Science and Engineering Roundtable)
<http://www.case.edu/provost/centerforwomen/wiser/index.html>
- CWRU Career Center (many women specific resources)
<http://careercenter.case.edu>
- Beyond Bias and Barriers: Fulfilling the Potential of Women in Academic Science and Engineering; http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=11741
- Center for Innovation and Research in Graduate Education (CIRGE)
<http://depts.washington.edu/cirgeweb/c/about/researchers-and-staff/>
- Association for Women in Science

<http://www.awis.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=209>

- Mentoring Gap for Women in Science, Inside Higher Ed News

<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2008/02/28/mentor>

- Minority & Women Doctoral Directory

<http://www.mwdd.com>

- Academic Careers in Engineering and Science (ACES)

<http://www.case.edu/admin/aces/>

From here, there is a link to the National Science Foundation's ADVANCE program. The website for the ADVANCE program is: <http://www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/advance/>

III. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Graduate Students

Some students do not talk about their sexual orientation or gender identity openly, and it is generally unacceptable to disclose the sexual orientation of another student (known as "outing" them). Mentors have the responsibility, regardless of their own sexual orientation, to ensure that LGBT students feel comfortable in their classrooms and office, so as to maximize students' learning.

Homophobia / Transphobia

Graduate students who are also LGBT sometimes encounter homophobia or transphobia in the classroom, in the lab, during meetings, or at other university events. Remarks can range from the blatantly offensive to the less obvious (e.g., "that is so gay"). Such remarks should not be tolerated; it is perfectly acceptable to politely challenge the person's statement. You can seek to discuss the matter with senior students or faculty. In your environment, everyone should feel comfortable to speak

freely, but not to offend others. If a situation involving homophobia or transphobia is more severe or is persistent, students should seek out the Office of Student Affairs—an important resource on which all students can rely. Student Affairs will listen, intervene if appropriate, refer a student to additional resources, or help resolve the student's concerns in a confidential manner. Students can also file a Complaint of Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression with the CWRU Office of Inclusion, Diversity, & Equal Opportunity.

Heterosexism

Students who are also LGBT often hear classroom discussions conducted with the unconscious assumption that everyone is heterosexual. Even faculty and students who have a heightened awareness of sexual orientation issues may have an unconscious tendency to think about the world from an exclusively heterosexual perspective. As a result, students who are also LGBT may feel isolated or find that their experiences are not represented in research or in classroom discussions.

Disclosing

Being “out” as a student (or faculty member) who is LGBT is not a one-time event; rather, it is a decision that the person experiences each time s/he encounters a new social situation. Students who are also LGBT face the burden associated with having to assess the personal, social, and political ramifications of disclosing their sexual orientation each time they do so. Since heterosexual students do not have to disclose their sexuality, only students who are LGBT may face these physically and emotionally draining experiences. Although faculty members and students should disregard the sexual orientation of all students in any academic environment, students who are LGBT should only reveal their orientation if they feel safe and comfortable enough to do so.

Suggestions

1. Students who are LGBT should assess their department's environment and their own level of comfort with being "out." Decide which of your peers and mentors you trust and enlist their help in creating suggestions for a department environment that is conducive to everyone's learning and professional needs. For example, you may want to encourage the department to review policies on LGBT concerns periodically or may put LGBT concerns on the agenda for graduate student orientations and training programs for faculty and staff.
2. Be aware of anti-gay comments that may be made. If it is appropriate and if you feel comfortable, speak out or discuss how such comments are inappropriate and potentially offensive to other students. If you feel uncomfortable or unsafe in speaking up, you should speak to a trusted faculty member in private about such incidents.
3. For all students, be aware that the examples being discussed may be based on heterosexual experiences. For example, when talking about families, many professors and students will unconsciously adopt a heterosexual point of view, but not every family is composed of a husband, wife, and children. Simply using phrases like "spouse and partner" instead of just "spouse" can go a long way toward making students of many statuses (e.g., unmarried) feel included.
4. Students should treat sexual orientation as a multidimensional phenomenon in their relationships with their peers and mentors. Homosexuality is only one of several expressions of sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression may be different for everyone.

Resources

- CWRU's LGBT Center (located in Thwing Center)

<http://www.case.edu/lgbt/>

- CWRU's LGBTA Committee

<http://case.edu/lgbt/committee/>

- Spectrum (CWRU's LGBTQQIA student group)

<http://spectrum.case.edu/>

IV. Racial and Ethnic Minority Graduate Students

This section discusses issues that are often experienced by some students from racial and ethnic minorities, but students with other backgrounds may experience them as well.

Lack of Role Models

As a minority graduate student, you may be concerned that the low number of faculty of color suggest that academia is an unwelcoming environment for those who are not white. Regardless of race, assertively seek to acquire mentors who will help you succeed in graduate school and make sure that you do your part to maintain a good relationship with your mentors (see Part I).

Stereotyping and the Impostor Syndrome

When you start graduate school, you may feel isolated. Feelings of isolation may translate to feelings that you do not belong. These feelings are part of what is known as the "Impostor Syndrome." While many students experience these feelings, minority students can be subject to them more because of the dissimilar community around them. As a minority student, others may express opinions that you were accepted because of affirmative action quotas. The biases of others toward students of minority are baseless opinions, and you should remain focused on progress toward the degree. On the other hand, Asian-American students are burdened by the "model minority" myth,

which assumes that they are exemplary students, particularly in math and the sciences. Stereotyping in either direction has negative consequences for all parties involved. If these external biases or isolation are troubling you, seek out resources below to help you understand why you are a worthy member of the graduate student community.

Racism

Racism may be expressed in language, action, and association. Overt instances, such as when a student is denied access to a particular activity because of his/her ethnicity, are perhaps the easiest to recognize. But there are more subtle forms of racism, so called color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2006), such as when a student is asked to participate in a discussion or serve on a committee simply because of his/her minority status and give, for example, the “Hispanic” or “Native American” perspective. Such requests are based on the generalization that being a member of a given culture makes a person an expert on his/her culture. Although they are not what society thinks of as pre-Civil Rights Jim Crow racism, we understand that situations like these can make you feel quite uncomfortable.

Suggestions

1. Seek out other mentors on campus (besides your thesis advisors) if you feel that you would like a mentor who is also a racial or ethnic minority. CWRU offers mentors from around the Cleveland area through the Office of Multicultural Affairs (see Resources below).
2. If you are having feelings of insecurity, it might help to talk to other graduate students. You will likely find that all students, regardless of their ethnicity or race, feel insecure at one time or another in graduate school. It also might help to talk to your mentor or other professionals at the university.

3. CWRU does not tolerate racism. Make sure that you are aware of the policies in the student handbook in case you ever encounter racism and need to file a formal complaint with the Office of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity or the Division of Student Affairs (see Resources below).
4. If you are ever asked to give a perspective on behalf of your minority group or otherwise speak for it, it is OK to decline. A respectful reply, such as “I think there is an array of opinions on this subject,” could deflect an inappropriate question.
5. It is always helpful to remember that people of different races and ethnicities face different issues and experiences, and it is important to be respectful of these different experiences. However, don’t let race or ethnicity differences become a barrier to communication.
6. Developing peer networks and peer mentors is an effective strategy that many graduate students of color may find helpful. Students should attend graduate student conferences, workshops, and seminars both to network among themselves and to meet potential mentors in their respective fields.

Resources

- American Psychological Association, Survival Guide for Ethnic Minority Graduate Students
<http://evs.astate.edu/Library/minoritystusurvival.pdf>
- University Office of Student Affairs
<http://studentaffairs.case.edu/>
- American Indian Graduate Center
<http://www.aigc.com/09otheropps/articles.htm>

- Office of Multicultural Affairs
<http://studentaffairs.case.edu/multicultural/>
- Office of Multicultural Programs through the Medical School
<http://casemed.case.edu/omp/>
- Minority & Women Doctoral Directory
<http://www.mwdd.com>

V. International Graduate Students

International graduate students from many countries enrich the culture of Case Western Reserve University. Here are some topics that may be of concern to them.

Issues of Culture and Language in the Classroom

For most international students, choosing to study in the United States means that they will need to function in a second language and adjust to an entirely new set of cultural and educational norms (Trice, 1999). An important example is the issue of competition. As an international student, you find that American classes are sometimes excessively competitive. In particular, students from Eastern and Southeastern Asia—often trained in educational systems where the student’s role is to be passive—are shocked to see American students speaking up without being called upon or challenging the remarks of professors and peers. You may fear that, if you do not exhibit these same behaviors, the faculty will judge you to be less capable and/or less intelligent. Try to use the strategies suggested in Section II, Part Two, of this Handbook.

In addition, as international students, you may be uncertain about academic rules at CWRU. One thing that is clearly unacceptable is plagiarism. Even if you are having difficulty working with the English language, it is not acceptable to copy someone else's words without giving them credit.

Finally, you may find that your classes incorporate few international perspectives and that American faculty and students undervalue or simply do not understand the global experiences you bring to the classroom. Try not to be disappointed by these aspects of your academic experience, and do your best to ameliorate them in appropriate ways.

Social Stresses

While many graduate students experience the stress of having moved away from family and friends, international students may have an even greater sense of displacement. If you have brought your partner and/or children with you, you may also be worried about how well your family is adjusting to American life overall—and to Cleveland, in particular. In addition, a significant number of international graduate students are plagued by loneliness (because sometimes they are unfamiliar with the ways in which Americans socialize) and find that they are unable to find people patient enough to speak with them (Trice, 1999). For example, in many cultures asking someone “How are you?” signals the start of a conversation, while in American culture, this can be a simple greeting as someone passes you in the hallway. A further complication is that, upon returning home, international graduate students find that because of their different dress, talk, and behavior, they have become “foreigners” in their own countries.

Suggestions

1. If you are having trouble adjusting to American life and culture, consult with a more advanced international student for advice. The Office of International Student Services may be able to help you find other students from your home country. And remember: the first semester is probably the hardest!

2. Talk with your professors about your past educational experiences and point out the new demands you face from the American educational system. Most faculty will be accommodating as you adjust to a new country and culture.
3. If it is hard for you to jump into classroom discussions, ask if professors will help you acclimate by temporarily calling on you for specific responses, or suggest some other strategy.
4. Having someone proofread your assignments can help if you are having difficulty working in the English language. Ask your advisor, other faculty or members of your department, or other graduate students if they wouldn't mind reading over assignments from you. You can also consult CWRU's Writing Resource Center, where consultants will work with you to become a better writer in English.
5. If you are unfamiliar with CWRU's stance on plagiarism, talk to a professor or another graduate student about what plagiarism is and what its consequences are.
6. If you find it difficult to converse over e-mail, let your advisor or other professors know that seeing facial and body expressions helps your understanding. Take advantage of professors' office hours too. Remember that most mentors will be willing to accommodate your needs, but they first must know what those needs are.
7. Although you might feel tempted to spend all of your social time with peers from your home country, seek out as many opportunities as possible to interact with other students as well, for example, at informal lunches. These interactions will help you practice and improve your language skills if you are still learning English.
8. Educational Services for Students hosts a series of lunch time conversation groups to help students practice the English language. Each week a diverse group of students and staff bring their lunch to ESS (Sears 470) to discuss current events and other topics. All students are welcome to participate and should contact the ESS office at 216-368-5230 to find out what day and time the group is being held each semester.

Resources

- International Student Services

<http://studentaffairs.case.edu/international/>

- Writing Resource Center

<http://www.case.edu/artsci/engl/writing/writingcenter.html>

- School of Graduate Studies' Academic Integrity Procedures and Rules

<http://www.case.edu/gradstudies/downloads/AcadInteg.pdf>

- Students' Guide to Writing

<http://studentaffairs.case.edu/education/resources/sagesguide>

VI. Graduate Students with Family Responsibilities

While this section was primarily written about students who have parenting responsibilities, many of the same issues pertain to those who are responsible for the care of their parents or of other family members. Remember that faculty members may themselves face family issues which take time away from their own university commitments. You may find it helpful to talk to your mentor about your specific circumstances—without going into unnecessary detail—so that s/he is aware of your situation. Occasionally family responsibilities may escalate into a situation that requires an extended period of absence; though these instances are rare, extreme accommodations may be necessary. Circumstances such as these are addressed in greater detail in Part I, Section IX.

Dual Commitments

As a student with parenting responsibilities, you are nevertheless as committed to being a successful graduate student as students without these responsibilities. Even though you have other demands on your time, you can be highly successful by being organized and focused during the blocks of time that you carve out for studies, lab work, etc. That said, you may feel that some professors perceive you as having a lack of commitment because of other priorities in your life. This situation is exacerbated when an emergency arises (e.g., an ill child), making it impossible to attend classes or meetings. The intensity of childcare demands does not stop once a child enters school. Like most parents, graduate students who are also parents want the best opportunities for their children. This may involve enrolling your children in a variety of activities inside and outside the classroom that may require parental involvement.

Isolation

Because of family demands, you may not be able to attend some social, academic, and professional functions. This could lead to you feeling isolated from fellow students, colleagues, faculty members, and the department/program as a whole.

Time Constraints

Students with family responsibilities typically need to be home in the evenings to tend to those in their care. If you are participating in group projects, difficulties can emerge since students without such responsibilities often find that evenings are a great time for group meetings. In addition, it is often difficult for students with parenting responsibilities to come back to campus for evening lectures or departmental meetings.

Suggestions

1. Meet other graduate students who can share the strategies they employ for balancing academic and family demands. They can connect you to a network of other students and point you to helpful resources. Perhaps your mentor might suggest other graduate or professional students who have the same commitments or constraints of family demands. This would be a wonderful way to broaden your social network, find “like-minded” graduate or professional students to socialize with and increase your connection to the university. The feelings of isolation might lessen, overall.
2. Try to find faculty who have children and are highly involved in their children’s lives or faculty who can understand your situation. These faculty members can provide you with advice and support. Often departmental staff will know who these people are.
3. When working on group projects, suggest that evening meetings take place at your house if that is possible and if that would be easier for you. Or help arrange for the meeting to take place in a location where you can be there via teleconferencing. Also, discuss with your group the possibility of you contributing via e-mail or other internet means. These strategies can also be used for meetings with your advisor or other collaborators.
4. Talk to your professors about making assignments available in advance, putting class notes on Blackboard, or conducting class opinions with online surveys to help you out if you need to be absent from class.
5. Consider bringing your children to some departmental social functions and/or into the office. Most likely, you will find that the members of your department will enjoy the opportunity to interact with your children.
6. Talk to your mentor about your situation so that he or she will understand if you need to be absent from a class or meeting due to your family responsibilities. Take the responsibility for communication regarding the reason for your absence(s) to your mentor. If you do not want

to describe the circumstances completely, at least discuss how your mentor's expectations need to change so that everyone is on the same page.

7. If you carry a cell phone or beeper in case of family emergencies, discuss this with professors prior to classes, meetings, or seminars so they will be aware of possible interruptions that will force you to step out. And make certain that family members know that they should call you at such times only in the case of a true emergency.
8. Talk to your mentor or other department members about organizing inclusive functions during regular work hours or organizing events that are family-friendly.
9. If you have relocated to attend Case Western Reserve University, and do not have local social networks (e.g., extended families) to help relieve the strain children can put on graduate work, peruse the resources below to help you build a social network.
10. Be realistic about how much work you can do, especially during the transition period. The mentor-mentee need to discuss these expectations, just to make sure everyone is in agreement.

Resources

- The Employee Assistance Service (EASE) program (links with options for both child care and elder care near CWRU are provided)

<https://www.case.edu/finadmin/humres/relations/ease.html>

- Other Local resources that may be of interest include:

Local libraries, daycare resources, parent groups, and toy co-ops

<http://www.heightsparentcenter.org>

<http://www.heightslibrary.org>

<http://www.shakerlibrary.org/Kids/links.aspx?Websites+for+Parents>

<http://cleveland.craigslist.org/kid/>

<http://cleveland.craigslist.org/bab/>

Local Health Care Education Resources

<http://www.rainbowbabies.org>

<http://drsenders.com/?q=event>

<http://www.dailydoseofreading.org>

Local & Federal Early-Childhood Education and Healthy-Start Links

<http://www.ceogc.org>

Local Play Areas and Parks

<http://gocitykids.parentsconnect.com/region/cleveland-oh-usa>

<http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/tabid/11875/default.aspx>

<http://www.clemetparks.com>

<http://ohio.hometownlocator.com/features/cultural,class,Park,scfips,39035.cfm>

VII. Graduate Students Who Have a Disability

In this section, we address issues confronting students who have physical disabilities, learning disabilities (e.g., ADHD and dyslexia), chronic illnesses (e.g., lupus and cystic fibrosis), and/or psychological illnesses (e.g., bi-polar disorder and clinical depression). Students who have a disability have unique needs and concerns.

Reluctance to Ask for Help

Students who have a disability often fear that they may appear to be too dependent—or become too dependent—if they ask for help. In addition, students who have a disability are sometimes afraid of being treated differently by professors.

Disclosing a Disability

Although students at Case Western Reserve University are not required to disclose a disability to anyone, they are urged to disclose to the Office of Disability Resources in Educational Services for Students (ESS) before they wish to receive reasonable accommodations. The Associate Director of Disability Resources and other Disability Resources staff members keep disability information strictly confidential, and the choice of disclosure is left solely to the student. When students wish to notify professors of accommodations or special considerations, Disability Resources (along with the student) will compose a memo to his/her professors that only identifies the approved accommodations for the student and does not indicate the specific disability. The student is then responsible for giving the memo to the professors of the classes in which he or she needs accommodation. This is an opportunity for the student to speak with the professor about his or her needs and work out the logistics of the accommodation(s).

Effort Exerted Just to Keep Up

For those students who have a physical or learning disability, meeting the basic requirements may demand much more time and energy than it does for students without a disability. Some students find they cannot participate in certain professional activities (such as submitting papers for conferences) as much as they would like because they need to devote all their time and energy to meeting the basic requirements of their programs.

Problems that Arise from Last-Minute Changes

Changes in reading assignments can be very difficult for students who are visually impaired, since students who are blind or visually impaired must have their readings converted into alternative formats. Any readings added on at a later date will require them to make special efforts to have these

new materials translated in a short period of time. Changes in room locations can also cause difficulty for students with visual or physical disabilities.

Suggestions

1. If you need an accommodation, you should not hesitate to communicate with your professors. This should be done at the beginning of the semester so that proper accommodations can be made.
2. Strive to complete assignments in a timely fashion as much as possible, but on occasion you may need a longer period of time to complete a task. If strict deadlines can't be relaxed, be sure to request feedback you need from your professors as early as possible. However, sometimes you will simply need to have additional time; these instances should be discussed on a case-by-case basis with the professor giving the assignment, and an agreement should be reached that is acceptable to both parties.
3. Students who have a psychological disability should find a trusted professional practitioner with whom to work. For all students, social support is crucial and should be sought in many forms. Resist any urges to isolate yourself, since many of your peers will be experiencing the same or similar anxieties and worries.
4. Be very realistic about how much work you can do. During the first semester, take the lightest course load possible so that there will be time to adapt to the new environment.
5. Many other suggestions can be found at the following website:

<http://studentaffairs.case.edu/education/disability>
6. Remember in general, however, that simply keeping the lines of communication open with professors or fellow students—and asking them for help when necessary—will help students who have a disability find graduate school to be less intimidating.

Resources

- Education Services for Students (ESS)
470 Sears Building
216-368-5230
essinfo@case.edu
- A list of disability resources operated by ESS
<http://studentaffairs.case.edu/education/disability/>
- Information for faculty members operated by ESS
<http://studentaffairs.case.edu/education/disability/learning.html>
- Disability Resources also deals with making accommodations for students with temporary disabilities, such as broken or sprained limbs.
- Most libraries on campus have large print text materials and CCTVs as well.

VIII. Graduate Students Who Have Different Religious Beliefs

It is important that everyone respect the religious practices that their professors or fellow graduate students choose to follow. It is impossible to reference every practice in every religion in this Handbook. That said, this section outlines some items university community members may want to be aware of when interacting with students of diverse religious beliefs.

Religious Garb

Different clothing may be an important part of a religious practice. However, certain disciplines may require clothing restrictions for safety and/or other applicable reasons. It is important to discuss potential clothing issues with your department and/or mentor.

Absences

Students who follow specific religious beliefs may need to take days off from school for religious holidays, even though they may not be official university holidays. Examples include Rosh Hashanah for students who follow Jewish beliefs or Good Friday for students who follow Christian beliefs. Thus, students may be absent from class or be away from their thesis work on these holidays. It is important to understand that observing their religious holidays should not result in a penalty. Faculty members should help inform such students on any important information they have missed. That said, students should not expect faculty to provide them with a complete set of lecture notes; those should be obtained from fellow graduate students.

Dietary Customs

Many religions have dietary customs. Some of these customs are practiced only during religious holidays. An example is the holy month of Ramadan for the Muslim faith, during which practicing Muslims do not consume food or drink during daylight hours. Other nutritional practices are in force all the time. For example, beef is not eaten by practicing Hindus.

Suggestions

1. The Inter-Religious Council (IRC) is composed of the staffs of the four campus ministries serving the institutions of higher education in University Circle. For assistance in understanding religious beliefs contact the IRC through the Office of Student Affairs.
2. When you are absent from class to follow the practices of your specific religious beliefs, notify your professors in advance and be responsible for making up the work. You should not be penalized for following your religious beliefs.
3. Some religious practices may require some adjustments or flexibility from professors. Communicate such requests early. For example, a student who fasts during the holy month of Ramadan would like to bring food and drink to a meeting or class scheduled after sun set, should make the request ahead of time so that accommodations can be made.
4. When planning social gatherings, avoid referring to these as parties for specific religious groups. Having a “Holiday Party” instead of a “Christmas Party” will make all students feel welcome, including Jehovah’s Witnesses, who do not celebrate many Christian or any civil holidays.
5. In settings where food will be provided, respect the dietary customs that students may follow. Make sure that Kosher options are available for Jewish students who need them (not all will). Vegetarian options will accommodate Muslims, Hindus, and Roman Catholics on Fridays during Lent (as well as students who are vegetarian, independent of their religious beliefs).
6. Finally, remember that not everyone is religious. Some people are agnostics or atheists. In academia, your belief system is considered your personal preference and religious writings cannot be uncritically utilized as the only reference sources in your graded academic work unless you are a graduate student in Religious Studies.

Resources

- CWRU's USG student organization list includes a sub-heading of religious groups

<http://casewestern.collegiatelink.net/Community?action=getOrgBrowse&searchType=Contents&searchValue=&searchField=orgName&orderBy>

IX. Short-term Obstacles to Progress

Situations occasionally arise in which you may be temporarily unable to perform the material duties of your graduate appointment with reasonable continuity. This may come about as a result of sickness, injury, pregnancy, psychological difficulties, or some other unique situation. It is important that you talk to your mentor about this as soon as possible to convey to him/her that it is a temporary situation and to find mutually agreeable solutions to help you meet your goal of earning an advanced degree. You may need additional resources (e.g., counseling) to help you successfully navigate this difficult time. Remember that mentors, departments, and the university have made an investment of time, resources, and money in you as their student. It is important to communicate necessary information about your challenging situation to your mentor or other appropriate university employees to protect this investment.

Understanding Temporary Limitations and Reassessing Expectations

Set up meetings with your mentor to assess the reality of your short-term condition, and discuss your ability to contribute to the team at any level. After further dialogue, it will likely become apparent that you are still able to contribute, but that you simply need to have the work environment and expectations temporarily redefined. Work with your mentor to redefine expectations and create schedules—consistent with university policy and realistic for all parties involved—that take the extenuating circumstances into account. Students should be aware that the University is not

obligated to provide accommodations for students with temporary disabilities, but will attempt to do so when feasible. Schedule a timeframe for reassessing the situation as it develops. The School of Graduate Studies Graduate Student Handbook (page 20) outlines a policy for graduate student leaves of absence that may provide a solution to the temporary situation. Individual departmental guidelines may vary, so a discussion of the circumstances with the department chair and/or the Dean of Graduate Studies may also be necessary.

Financial Considerations

Be upfront about the possible financial ramifications of the situation. If you find it necessary to temporarily leave the University or if you can only continue in a reduced capacity, it may not be possible to continue to receive a stipend at the same level.

Suggestions

1. Always be honest (without going into any personal detail that makes you uncomfortable) with your mentor about a situation that requires a temporary leave of absence or inhibits your ability to do your graduate work. Make sure to discuss new expectations or schedules that could help you still make progress in your work while dealing with your difficult situation.
2. Explore alternative departmental service activities such as grading exams part-time or from home. Sometimes you will still receive a stipend for this type of work.
3. If the department allows it, consider developing a reading course for credit where you can read articles pertaining to your research and participate in discussions via email. Some departments may offer independent studies where you can do a variety of computer work (analyzing data, creating digital maps of field sites, performing computer simulations, etc.) for credit.

Resources

- School of Graduate Studies

<http://www.case.edu/gradstudies/>

- Graduate Student Handbook

<http://www.case.edu/gradstudies/downloads/2010-11%20Graduate%20Student%20Handbook.pdf>

- Financial Aid

<http://finaid.case.edu>

- University Counseling Services

<https://studentaffairs.case.edu/counseling/>

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<http://studentaffairs.case.edu/education/disability/>
- “Disability Resources One-Pagers - Case Educational Services for Students.” Retrieved from:
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Additional Reading

The following resources were used in the writing of this handbook and are quality references in the mentoring of graduate students.

Graduate School Handbooks and Guides

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Organization Websites

American Indian Graduate Center

<http://www.aigcs.org/>

American Psychological Association, A survival guide for ethnic minority graduate students

<http://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/brochures/surviving.aspx>

Commission on Professional in Science and Technology

<http://cpst.org/index.cfm>

The Leadership Alliance

<http://www.theleadershipalliance.org/DefaultPermissions/Publications/tabid/161/Default.aspx>

Appendix A – *Phases of a Graduate Student’s Professional Development*

As mentee becomes:	Senior Learner	Colleague-in-Training	Junior Colleague/Colleague
Emphasizes mentor’s role as	Manager	Educational/Professional Model	Colleague/Mentor
	“Do the task the way I’ve laid out and check back with me.”	“Think about the problem, generate options, then let’s talk about potential outcomes/decisions.”	“You make the decision. Let me know how I can help. I’m interested in the outcome.”
Views own teaching role as	Assistant	Associate	Collaborator
	Grading papers Holding office hours Planning quizzes Collecting feedback	Writing assignments Generating test questions Doing some teaching, lecturing, or small group discussions	Designing, developing, or revising advanced courses or curriculum; instructor of record or co-teaching
Views research role as	Assistant	Associate	Collaborator
	Performing specific duties under relatively close supervision	Assuming design and implementation responsibility for part of a grant or for own research project	Conducting research project (or own portion of it) with high degree of independence; sees mentor as a resource
Understands practitioner, applied or service roles as	Assistant	Associate	Collaborator
	Learning the ropes; acquiring discrete technical skills	Providing strategic assistance or expertise; ultimately defers to mentor	Co-leading, co-designing, co-facilitating; sharing responsibility equally
Prefers evaluation to be	Assistant	Associate	Collaborator
	Frequent and focused on immediate performance	Systematic and focused on overall development of skills, aptitudes	Collegial, informal, and focused on style, approach, values
Sees mentoring needs as	Assistant	Associate	Collaborator
	Self-assessment; goal assessment; regular meetings	Observations; job shadowing; meetings; attend/present at conferences together; networking	Reflective practicum; retreat; opportunistic meetings; networking; generate new project together; co-stewardship

Adapted from Nyquist, J.D. and Wulff, D.H. (1996). Working effectively with graduate assistants, p. 27. Thousand Oaks, Ca.: Sage. (See Chao [1997] for a four-phase model of graduate student development.)

Appendix B – *A Worksheet for a Mentor's Expectations*

Use this worksheet to develop an understanding of what you, as a faculty mentor, expect to gain from your mentoring relationship. By clarifying your own expectations, you will be able to communicate and work more effectively with your students. Add items you deem important.

The reasons I want to be a mentor are to:

- Encourage and support a graduate student in my field
- Establish close, professional relationships
- Challenge myself to achieve new goals and explore alternatives
- Pass on knowledge
- Create a network of talented people
- Other _____

I hope that my student and I will:

- Tour my workplace, classroom, center, or lab
- Go to formal mentoring events together
- Meet over coffee or meals
- Go to educational events such as lectures, conferences, talks, or other University events together
- Go to local, regional, and national professional meetings together
- Other _____

The things I feel are off-limits in my mentoring relationship include:

- Disclosing our conversations to others
- Using non-public places for meetings
- Sharing intimate aspects of our lives
- Meetings behind closed doors
- Other _____

Appendix B (*continued*)

I will help my student with job opportunities by:

- Finding job or internship possibilities in my department, center, lab, or company
- Introducing my student to people who might be interested in hiring him/her
- Helping my student practice for job interviews
- Suggesting potential work contacts to pursue
- Teaching him/her about networking
- Critiquing his/her resume or curriculum vita
- Other _____

The amount of time I will spend with my student will be, on average:

1 2 3 4 hours every: week other week per month (circle one)

Worksheet adapted from: Brainard, S.G., Harkus, D.A., and George, M.R. (1998). *A curriculum for training mentors and mentees: Guide for administrators*. Seattle, WA: Women in Engineering Initiative, WEPAN Western Regional Center, University of Washington.

Appendix C – *A Worksheet for a Student's Expectations*

Use this worksheet to develop an understanding of what you, as a student, expect to gain from your mentoring relationships. By clarifying your own expectations, you will be able to communicate them more effectively to your mentors. Add items you deem important.

The reasons I want a mentor are to:

- Receive encouragement and support
- Increase my confidence when dealing with professionals
- Challenge myself to achieve new goals and explore alternatives
- Gain a realistic perspective of the workplace
- Get advice on how to balance work and other responsibilities, and to set priorities
- Gain knowledge of the “do’s and don’ts” in my field of study
- Learn how to operate in a network of talented peers
- Other _____

I hope that my mentor and I will:

- Tour my mentor’s workplace and explore various teaching or work sites
- Go to formal mentoring events together
- Meet over coffee, lunch, or dinner
- Go to educational events such as lectures, conferences, talks, or other University events together
- Go to local, regional, and national professional meetings together
- Other _____

I hope that my mentor and I will discuss:

- Academic subjects that will benefit my future career
- Career options and job preparation
- The realities of the workplace
- My mentor’s work
- Technical and related field issues

Appendix C (*continued*)

- How to network
- How to manage work and family life
- Personal dreams and life circumstances
- Other _____

The things I feel are off-limits in my mentoring relationship include:

- Disclosing our conversations to others
- Using non-public places for meetings
- Sharing intimate aspects of our lives
- Meeting behind closed doors
- Other _____

I hope that my mentor will help me with job opportunities by:

- Opening doors for me to job possibilities
- Introducing me to people who might be interested in hiring me
- Helping me practice for job interviews
- Suggesting potential work contacts for me to pursue on my own
- Teaching me about networking
- Critiquing my resume or curriculum vita
- Other _____

The amount of time I will spend with my mentor will be, on average:

1 2 3 4 hours every: week other week per month (circle one)

Adapted from: Brainard, S.G., Harkus, D.A., and George, M.R. (1998). *A curriculum for training mentors and mentees: Guide for administrators*. Seattle, WA: Women in Engineering Initiative, WEPAN Western Regional Center, University of Washington.

Appendix D – *Planning for first meetings: A Mentor’s Checklist*

Use this checklist to plan initial meetings with your students in light of what you hope to help them achieve over the long term.

- _____ Arrange first meetings with potential students.
- _____ Explain the goals for meetings and discuss how confidentiality should be handled.
- _____ Discuss what each of you perceives as the boundaries of the mentoring relationship.
- _____ Review the student’s current experience and qualifications.
- _____ Discuss and record the student’s immediate and long-term goals; explore useful professional development experiences in light of these goals. Record these on a professional development plan. Discuss strategies and target dates.
- _____ Discuss and record any issues that may affect the mentoring relationship such as time and financial constraints, lack of confidence, new to the role, etc.
- _____ Arrange a meeting schedule (try to meet at least once a quarter). Record topics discussed and feedback given at each meeting. Ensure that all meeting records are kept confidential and in a safe place.
- _____ Discuss the following activities that can form part of your mentoring relationship:
 - Giving advice on strategies for improving teaching.
 - Organizing observation(s) of teaching and providing constructive feedback.
 - Organizing a session of work shadowing.
 - Consulting on issues or concerns the student has with colleagues or study and research groups.
 - Providing feedback from other sources (students, faculty, administrators, and other mentors in or outside the University).
- _____ Create a mentoring action plan that reflects different professional development needs at different stages of the student’s graduate program.
- _____ Encourage your student to reflect regularly on his or her goals, achievements, and areas for improvement. Ask the mentee to compose a brief reflection essay (e.g., 1/2 page) prior to each meeting.
- _____ Amend the mentoring action plan as needed by focusing on the student’s developing needs.

Adapted from: *Mentoring towards excellence*: Section 4: Handbook and guidelines for mentors and mentees. Association of Colleges and the Further Education National Training Organization, Learning and Skills Council: Coventry, England.

Appendix E – *Planning for first meetings: A Student’s Checklist*

Use this checklist to plan initial meetings with your mentors in light of what you hope to achieve over the long term.

- _____ Arrange first meetings with a prospective mentor.
- _____ Explain your goals for meetings, and ask how confidentiality should be handled.
- _____ Discuss what each of you perceives as the boundaries of the mentoring relationship.
- _____ Review the current experience and qualifications.
- _____ Discuss and record your immediate and long-term goals. Explore useful professional development experiences in light of these goals. Record these on a professional development plan. Discuss options, strategies, and target dates.
- _____ Discuss and record any issues that may affect the mentoring relationship such as time and financial constraints, lack of confidence, being new to the role, etc.
- _____ Arrange a meeting schedule with your mentor (try to meet at least once a quarter). Record topics discussed and feedback given at each meeting. Request that all meeting records are kept confidential and in a safe place.
- _____ Discuss with your mentor the following activities that can form part of your mentoring relationship:
 - Getting advice on strategies for improving teaching or research.
 - Organizing observation(s) of teaching and providing constructive feedback.
 - Organizing a session of work shadowing.
 - Getting advice on issues or concerns with colleagues in study and research groups.
 - Providing feedback from other sources (students, faculty, administrators, and other mentors in or outside the University).
- _____ Create a mentoring action plan that reflects different professional development needs at different stages of your graduate program.
- _____ Encourage your mentor to reflect regularly with you on your goals, achievements, and areas for improvement. Compose a brief reflection essay (e.g., 1/2 page) prior to each meeting.
- _____ Amend your mentoring action plan as needed by focusing on your developing needs.

Adapted from: *Mentoring towards excellence: Section 4: Handbook and guidelines for mentors and mentees*. Association of Colleges and the Further Education National Training Organization, Learning and Skills Council: Coventry, England.

Appendix F – *Sample Mentor and Student Agreement*

Consider using this agreement, or another one that you and your student(s) create together, if you believe the mentoring relationship will be strengthened by formalizing a mutual agreement of roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

We are voluntarily entering into a mentoring relationship from which we both expect to benefit. We want this to be a rich, rewarding experience with most of our time together spent in professional development activities. To this end, we have mutually agreed upon the terms and conditions of our relationship as outlined in this agreement.

Objectives

We hope to achieve:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

To accomplish this we will:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Confidentiality

Any sensitive issues that we discuss will be held in confidence. Issues that are off-limits in this relationship include:

Appendix F *(continued)*

Frequency of Meetings

We will attempt to meet at least _____ time(s) each month. If we cannot attend a scheduled meeting, we agree to notify one another in advance.

Duration

We have determined that our mentoring relationship will continue as long as we both feel comfortable or until:

No-Fault Termination

We are committed to open and honest communication in our relationship. We will discuss and attempt to resolve any conflicts as they arise. If, however, one of us needs to terminate the relationship for any reason, we agree to abide by one another's decision.

Mentor

Student

Date

Date

Agreement adapted from: Brainard, S.G., Harkus, D.A., and George, M.R. (1998). *A curriculum for training mentors and mentees: Guide for administrators*. Seattle, WA: Women in Engineering Initiative, WEPAN Western Regional Center, University of Washington.