Building Successful Mentoring Relationships

Faculty Guide

August 2015

May 20, 2015

Mentoring touches nearly every aspect of graduate education. The desire to be mentored by particular faculty attracts prospective students. Once here, the mentoring relationship often blossoms from those initial one-on-one interactions to broader mentoring networks and passionate engagement with the discipline and field. From start to finish, mentoring is a cornerstone of the graduate student experience, as well as a substantial component of the work of the graduate faculty.

Mentoring can come from a number of places: from a primary advisor, from a faculty member in another program, from a network of faculty across programs and units, from a colleague at another institution and so on. Mentoring can vary across disciplines and research contexts. Mentoring can also vary depending on individual needs and expectations, and can evolve over time to meet the changing demands of students and faculty, and of higher education. For all of these reasons, there is no single document that can capture all of the nuances of the mentoring relationship. There are, however, some common principles and guidelines that can help graduate students and graduate faculty build successful mentoring relationships.

In spring 2014, the Laney Graduate School Executive Council initiated a mentoring project with a two-fold mission: 1) to enhance the quality of graduate faculty mentoring; and, 2) to prepare graduate students to become good mentors themselves. The project's goal was to produce two documents to serve as mentoring references and guides for graduate students and graduate faculty. Through the dedicated work of the Executive Council, and Directors of Graduate Studies and graduate students, and with colleagues in the Laney Graduate School, our goal was achieved.

It is our pleasure now to present *Building Successful Mentoring Relationships* in both a faculty guide and student guide.

Sincerely,

Lisa A. Tedesco
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs – Graduate Studies
Dean, James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies
Professor, Rollins School of Public Health

and

P. Barry Ryan, on behalf of the Laney Graduate School Executive Council
Chair, Laney Graduate School Executive Council, 2014-15
Professor of Environmental Health
Rollins School of Public Health and Laney Graduate School

In preparing these documents, the Laney Graduate School and the Laney Graduate School Executive Council consulted the work of several graduate institutions in the area of mentoring. We extend special acknowledgement to the University of Michigan's Rackham Graduate School guides How to Get the Mentoring You Want: A Guide for Graduate Students *and* How to Mentor Graduate Students: A Guide for Faculty *for their comprehensive breadth and impressive form.*

Building Successful Mentoring Relationships
Faculty Guide

Advisors and Mentors. What's the Difference?
It is possible – indeed, likely in some programs – that the advisor will also be a student's primary mentor. An advisor has charge of the formal responsibilities of student progress: academic planning, adherence to requirements, setting objectives and goals, and degree completion. By contrast, a mentor's role in a student's graduate career goes beyond formal responsibilities. Mentors share knowledge, experiences, networks and resources that help students adjust to and progress through graduate school and beyond. In addition to offering feedback and guidance in their academic work, research, and sometimes teaching, mentors also guide students in their professional development, including career planning. Mentors advocate for the student as necessary and fitting, and they often help students to find other mentors when appropriate.

No One-Size-Fits-All
Every mentoring relationship is different. Mentoring needs differ across fields, disciplines and graduate programs, as do perceptions of effective mentoring. There are also uneven mentoring practices among faculty and uneven needs and expectations among students. One mentor need not satisfy all areas of mentoring or meet all mentoring needs. In fact, it is wise for students to develop a mentoring network or team for additional perspective and to ensure that other mentors are available should a primary mentor no longer be available.

Initial Conversations
As you approach initial conversations with a prospective mentee, it might be useful to reflect on your own experiences as way of connecting to the student's.

- ❖ How would you characterize your own mentoring experience?
- ❖ What mentoring practices or behaviors have you adopted as your own? What practices or behaviors have you avoided?
- ❖ How well did your advisor/mentor help you progress through your graduate career? How did your advisor/mentor help to prepare you for your academic career?
- ❖ What practices would have improved your experience or have been helpful to you as you transitioned during the various stages of graduate school?

As initial conversations with a student lead to a more formal consideration of a mentoring relationship, consider these questions:

- ❖ Why have you decided to advise/mentor this student?

- ❖ Why does the student wish to be advised/mentored by you?
- ❖ Are you able to devote the time and energy for the next 1-2 years (for master's students) or 5-6 years (for doctoral students) to invest in the student's development?
- ❖ Do you have the resources (if it is a grants culture) to provide the student with stipend support and research dollars to complete their project?
- ❖ What are the goals of the relationship? Important milestones?
- ❖ Both the advisor/mentor and mentee are responsible for the success of the relationship. What responsibilities must each meet?

Building a Framework
Establishing parameters early in the advisor/mentor-mentee relationship can help to reduce misunderstanding and miscommunication and to build accountability into the relationship.

Policies and Procedures
Advisors/mentors and mentees should be familiar with Laney Graduate School and graduate program policies related to academic progress, affairs and conduct. This includes milestones and deadlines, curricular requirements, rules of conduct, and procedures for adjudicating conflicts or differences.

Goals
- The mentee should develop and share with the advisor/mentor a plan that includes short-term and long-term goals.
  - o The plan should include timeframes for meeting these goals.
  - o The plan must adhere to all Laney Graduate School and graduate program requirements and deadlines.

The advisor/mentor should provide feedback on the plan and work with students, as necessary, to revise.

Meetings and Communication
- The advisor/mentor establishes meeting and communication parameters. It is important that the advisor/mentor discuss the following with mentees:
  - o How often can you meet with your mentee to discuss progress?
  - o Typically, what is the best way to reach you?
  - o If questions or problems arise, what is the best way for the mentee to contact you to ensure a timely response?
- It is the mentee's responsibility to arrange and be prepared for meetings.
- Mentees should reach out to the advisor/mentor – in a timely manner - when issues arise.
- The advisor/mentor should respond to the mentee in a timely manner.
- When mentees must conduct field work, the advisor/mentor and mentee should develop a communication plan that ensures progress towards objectives and allows for revisions to plans or research foci.

Assessment and Feedback
- The advisor/mentor should discuss with the mentee how often he/she will receive feedback on drafts, progress against objectives, and other matters. As always, timeliness is important.
- While responsiveness can vary by field, faculty and circumstance, it is recommended that students receive feedback on submitted work within two weeks, ideally, and within one month, at the latest. *This timeframe assumes that the mentee has submitted work to the advisor/mentor in a timely manner or at an agreed-upon time.*

Many advisors provide formal feedback on an annual basis as part of an annual review or progress report. The advisor should gauge whether informal progress reports would be helpful as a way to document emerging or ongoing concerns or to clarify and/or revise expectations.

Presentations, Publications, Collaboration
- Advisors/mentors should be transparent in their expectations regarding co-authorship, publications, and intellectual property.
- This communication should take place prior to undertaking a project with the mentee.
- The advisor/mentor should impart to the mentee the standards of the field as it relates to presentations and preparing work for submission to publications or conferences.
- The advisor/mentor should inform the mentee about the extent to which she/he can be assisted by the advisor/mentor.

Mentor Responsibilities
Availability and Communication
- Availability and interpersonal interaction vary by discipline/field and graduate program, but you should aim to interact with your mentee at least once per month and ideally more. Interaction can include in-person meetings, email exchanges or video-conferencing, for example.
- Recognizing the inherent power dynamic in the relationship, advisors/mentors should exercise transparency and clarity in communicating expectations and offering feedback to mentees.
- Mentees should likewise be transparent and clear in communicating with advisors/mentors.
- At all times, both advisors/mentors and mentees should approach discussions with respect and collegiality.
- In some situations, it might be helpful to suggest that the mentee draft a summary of the discussion with you, being sure to document any action items that should be taken. The mentee should send the summary to you, and you should make comments as necessary to be sure that you are on the same page.

Professionalization
Professionalization is crucial to success in a graduate program. Typically, students do not enter graduate school with an understanding of how to ready their work for presentations, navigate the publishing process, obtain funding to support their research, or establish professional networks. Advisors/mentors play a critical role in these areas and more. As appropriate:
- You should set aside dedicated time with the mentee to discuss professionalization as she/he progress through stages of the graduate program.
- You should advise students about which professional organizations are important to join and which conferences are important to attend.
- You should discuss with students how to ready their projects to present at conferences.
- You should help students to understand the publishing process and how to prepare their work for submission.
- You should guide students in the selection of funding agencies to pursue and discuss with them how to craft grant proposals that will help them to obtain external (and internal) funding.
- You should help students to identify – and even facilitate – connections that establish and expand their professional networks.
- The Laney Graduate School also encourages advisors/mentors to familiarize themselves with [professional development programming](#) offered by the Laney Graduate School and recommend opportunities as appropriate.

Mentees must also be their own advocates in this area. It is the student's responsibility to seek out and become familiar with programming offered by their graduate programs and by the Laney Graduate School.

Career Guidance
The Laney Graduate School emphasizes that it is never too early for students to think about and prepare for their careers. This is particularly true as changes in the job market and global economy have impacted the professional landscape in significant ways. Many students enter graduate school with a desire to pursue a career in the professoriate, and faculty are comfortable and prepared to discuss the career pathway that leads to those positions. As college and university landscapes change, however, it is clear that those conversations must also change to include career considerations in the academy and beyond.

Many faculty are unclear about the best way to advise/mentor a student whose career path differs from her/his own. Likewise, students can feel intimidated about talking to their advisors/mentors about career pathways that lead beyond the professoriate. There must be open communication that allows students to discuss goals, interests and career plans. As their advocates, advisors/mentors should support student development that prepares them for the career they desire or plan to pursue.

There are resources that advisors/mentors can explore and recommend to mentees:

- Connecting students with alumni from your program is a productive way to glean guidance from those who have forged successful career pathways. Both advisors/mentors and mentees should consider alumni connections as a way to expand a student's mentor or professional network.
- The Laney Graduate School offers career planning programs and encourages advisors/mentors to become familiar with this programming in order to recommend it to students.

It is the mentee's responsibility to pursue career resource opportunities and programming offered by their programs, the Laney Graduate School and other units at Emory.

Conclusion
On the page that follows are links to additional resources on mentoring. Also provided are links to offices, policies, and support services that support and guide students, faculty and staff at Emory University.

Additional Resources on Mentoring

There are many resources available online and in print that can help you to build and strengthen the mentoring relationship. Below are links to a few of these.

- How to Get the Mentoring You Want: A Guide for Graduate Students (Rackham Graduate School – University of Michigan, 2014)
- How to Mentor Graduate Students (Rackham Graduate School – University of Michigan, 2014)
- On the Right Track: A Manual for Research Mentors (Council of Graduate Schools, 2003)
- Mentoring: A Guide for Faculty (The Graduate School - University of Washington)
- How to Obtain the Mentoring You Need: A Guide for Graduate Students (The Graduate School – University of Washington)
- Mentoring Essentials for Supervisors and Supervisees (McGill University)

Resources at Emory University

Emory offers a breadth of resources, services and policies to support and guide students, faculty and staff. Below are links to some that might be particularly helpful. Also included is a link to the Laney Graduate School Handbook, the authoritative document of LGS policies for students, faculty and administrators.

If you have questions or concerns about available services and resources at Emory – or if you need to consult with LGS on matters related to student affairs – please contact our Dean of Student Affairs Dr. Cora MacBeth (cmacbet@emory.edu).

Emory Offices and Support Services
- Student Health and Counseling Services
- Office of Health Promotion
- Office of Access, Disability Services, and Resources
- Office of Equity and Inclusion
- International Student and Scholars Services
- Office of International Student Life
- Office of Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Life
- Office of Multicultural Programs and Services

Selected Emory University Policies
- Policy 1.3: Equal opportunity and discriminatory harassment policy
- Policy 7.9: Guidelines for responsible conduct of scholarship and research
- Policy 8.2: Sexual misconduct
- Policy 9.3: Confidentiality and release of information about students
- Policy on consensual teacher-student relationships (from Emory University Faculty Handbook)

Visit Emory's policies web page for a complete list of policies. (http://policies.emory.edu)

Laney Graduate School Handbook
The Laney Graduate School Handbook is the authoritative document of LGS policies for students, faculty and administrators. It is revised annually.