

GUIDE TO MENTORING CSUN DOCTORAL STUDENTS

Introduction

A mentoring relationship is a close, individualized relationship that develops over time between a graduate student and a mentor that includes both caring and guidance. Although there is a connection between mentors and advisors, not all mentors are advisors and not all advisors are mentors (Zelditch, 1990). Mentors and advisors for the purposes of this handbook are defined and explained in the following two categories.

Assignment of Advisors & Advisor Roles

Ed.D. Candidates will be assigned an initial advisor from among the Doctoral Faculty. The advisor helps the candidate clarify a research focus and offers general information and support, as needed, to ensure successful progress through the program. Once candidates successfully complete the Qualifying Examination at the end of the second year, a Dissertation Chair is appointed by the Director of Doctoral Programs based on candidate requests and faculty availability and expertise. This may or may not be the same person as the original advisor. The Dissertation Chair then serves as the primary advisor. Only Core Faculty in the Doctoral Program is permitted to serve as Dissertation Chairs. Upon request by the candidate or the chair and upon the approval of the Director of Doctoral Programs, the Dissertation Committee chair/advisor may be replaced.

The Director of Doctoral Programs also provides ongoing advising and support for all candidates, in addition to assistance with personal needs and connections to support services on campus as needed.

Assignment of Mentors & Mentor Roles

Mentors are identified from among the educational partners who have agreed to serve in this role. After there are graduates of the CSUN program, they may also be asked to serve as mentors. The advisor approves the candidate's choice of mentor. Attention will be given through a process of mutual selection to making a compatible match of candidates and mentors, so that the experience will be beneficial. Candidates may have one or more mentors during the course of the program. Upon request by the candidate or the mentor and upon the approval of the Program Coordinator, the mentor may be changed.

Mentors agree to create a support system for candidates in the Doctoral Program by conferring with the candidate on a regular basis with respect to their professional development. Mentoring should reflect the candidate's changing needs as s/he progresses through the program, with an emphasis on field-based projects. Possible roles for the mentors include:

- Serving as a coach
- Facilitating professional development of the candidate
- Providing access and guidance in field-based courses and assignments
- Helping the candidate establish professional connections and develop his/her career
- Providing knowledge and expertise on a wide range of issues related to administrative practice
- Acting as a role model
- Providing moral support, guidance, counsel, and advisement
- Serving on Dissertation Committees, if qualified
- Working collaboratively with the Doctoral Program to assist the candidate
- Helping program to identify and recruit potential doctoral candidates

Since the literature on mentoring emphasizes the importance of contact time between mentor and protégé, expectations with regard to ongoing mentoring responsibilities are communicated to the mentor at the beginning of the program. Districts/colleges are expected to provide time to both the mentor and the candidate so that sufficient time can be devoted to the mentoring process.

The Benefits of Mentoring

During their first years, Ed.D. students find out that the doctoral program is vastly different from their previous graduate and undergraduate experiences. One of the main differences is that the goal of an undergraduate is to obtain knowledge, while in graduate school their goal is also to contribute to a field of knowledge. Mentoring is an important mechanism that enables graduate students to acquire the body of knowledge and skills they need as well as an understanding of the way their discipline functions. Research shows that students who have mentoring relationships have higher productivity levels, a higher level of involvement with their departments, and greater satisfaction with their programs (Green & Bauer, 1995).

First Meetings with Mentor and Student

Students

Students should undertake a critical self-appraisal before they meet with mentors. Students will be better able to assess and suggest needed mentors if they have first identified their needs and the type of people who meet those needs. Students should also review the talking points below that mentors may use during the first meetings.

Mentors- Talking points

- Find out about the student's previous educational experiences and why s/he decided to go to graduate school. What does the student hope to get out of the Ed.D. Program?
- Discuss your research or creative projects and how they complement or may be different from the student's interests.
- Offer suggestions about training and work experiences s/he should seek, that will help the

student achieve his or her goals.

- Refer the student to other people inside the educational organization s/he should meet. If you know someone well, offer to send a letter/email of introduction on the student's behalf.

What are the student's strengths and weaknesses?

- Ask about their prior academic, professional, or personal experiences.
- Ask them about their skills (creative, analytical, statistical, etc.)
- If you know them through work experiences in the organization, share your impressions about their strengths as well as the areas that they need to improve.
- Offer ideas about experiences they need in order to improve their skills.

What is the student's work style?

- Discuss with the student what type of guidance s/he seeks. How much independence versus one-on-one work does the student want?

- Discuss your work style and the way you work with graduate students.
- Ask the student about people in his or her past who have been important mentors. Inquire about how these people were effective in helping the student.

Clarifying Expectations

Problems in mentorship most often occur because of misunderstandings about expectations mentors and students have of one another. To avoid this, you and your student need to discuss your respective roles and responsibilities. Although you do not necessarily have to set up a formal contract, some people find it helpful to specify mutual agreements. As a student progresses through his or her program, you may find that you need to reiterate or revise the expectations you have of one another.

Below are some suggestions of areas you may want to discuss:

Goals: Ask your student to develop and share with you a work plan that includes short-term and long-term goals as well as the timeframe for reaching those goals. These lists of goals will need to be revised periodically, so it is a good idea to revisit these with the student on a yearly basis. Make sure the student's work plan meets the Ed.D. program's requirements and is feasible. Ask the student to be in contact with you at least once a month to update you on progress made as well as obstacles encountered. Discuss any additional training and experiences the student needs in order to achieve his or her goals. If modifications to the timeline are necessary, agree upon a new work plan.

Meetings: Inform the student about how frequently you will be able to meet with them. Be explicit if you have a heavy travel/work schedule or are about to take a sabbatical, or will be assuming additional administrative duties. If you will not be able to meet often enough to satisfy some students' needs, discuss alternative means of communication such as e-mail, and remind them of others with whom they can consult. You can also talk to the student about the kinds of issues you feel require a face to face meeting and the kinds that can be dealt with in other ways.

Feedback: Discuss how often you will give them feedback about their general progress. It is also helpful if you talk to them about what type of feedback they can expect from you. If you tend to give a lot of criticism, forewarn them and let them know this is to further their professional growth. If you tend to give sparse criticism, let them know this as well. Also tell students how long it generally takes you to review and provide feedback of their fieldwork. Let them know how they can best remind you about receiving it if they do not hear from you within the specified timeframe. For instance, perhaps you would appreciate a reminder via e-mail or telephone a few days before the agreed upon date. Each time students submit something to you, let them know when they can expect you to return it.

Publishing and Presenting: Discuss your philosophy and expectations about co-authorship and your ability to help your students prepare work for submission to journals and conferences, if appropriate in the field experience.

Intellectual Property: In advance of working with students on a project, clarify who owns the data that is being collected, and whether others will have access to it. Also discuss the ownership of any copyright and patent agreements that might occur as a result of a project.

Recommendation Letters: Let students know how much time you need to write letters on their behalf. Discuss when and in what way you like to be reminded of an upcoming deadline. Let students know that they can help you by providing information about the fellowship, grant, or program for which they are applying and by providing updated copies of their curriculum vitae. You may also find it helpful if they provide details about how they are structuring their applications and what points they want you to emphasize.

Cultural Competence and Mentoring

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies: Mentors and students are directed to several of our Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) regarding our beliefs about cultural competence: SLO 5: Promoting culturally proficient policies and practices that recognize and value difference and ensure equity, and SLO 7: Collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources at the local, state, and federal level.

Michael D. Eisner College of Education: The College Conceptual Framework also states our commitment to diversity and the inclusive community through statement 3 in the Framework: We value an inclusive learning community.

Given our deliberative stance on cultural diversity and competence, our mentoring and student relationships honor the needs of establishing an inclusive community of scholar/practitioners in the Ed.D. Program. To that end, our mentors/students promote policies and practices that value difference and ensure equity in effective organizations. Special emphasis is given to culturally and linguistically diverse populations in P12 school/district or community colleges.

General Advice to Give to Students

What do graduate students need to know about finding mentors? The following are suggestions that mentors and graduate students can use in the mentoring selection.

Be proactive: Students should not take it personally if they find that possible mentors are not approaching them. Instead, students need to be aware that they must often be the ones to initiate contact with educational and partner mentors. The easiest way to do this is for students to visit possible mentors during their office hours at the district or college.

Have realistic expectations of your mentor: Students should identify what they need from an individual mentor and explicitly ask for those things. It is easier for a mentor to respond to specific requests for assistance than to general requests for mentorship.

Practice High Visibility: Students need to understand the importance of being seen in their mentor's organization. Students should be told that office and hallway conversations are an important means for building and maintaining relationships as well as for learning vital information. In addition, students who have a visible presence are more likely to be perceived as being committed to the mentoring relationship.

Take yourself seriously: Graduate students need to make the transition from thinking of themselves as bright students to seeing themselves as potential colleagues with the mentor's organization. Ways to do this include attending district and college activities; joining professional associations and societies; attending conferences in order to network with others; and seeking out opportunities to present their work either inside or outside their district or college.

Be responsible: Students should show up for scheduled meetings on time and be prepared with an agenda of what they need to accomplish. They need to take responsibility for periodically updating their mentors about the progress they are making and the difficulties they are encountering.

Show commitment to the profession: Students need to demonstrate that they are involved in their programs, courses, and research. Receive criticism in a professional manner: students need to accept critiques of their work in a professional manner. This does not mean they have to agree with everything that is said, but they do need to show a willingness to consider other points of view. If students disagree with a criticism, they should demonstrate their ability to defend their ideas.

Let mentors know you are following their advice: Mentors want to know that the time they spend with students is being put to good use. After reading books or articles a mentor suggests, students should share their reactions with them.

Both students and their mentors share responsibility for ensuring high quality mentoring relationships. We understand that there is no substitute for a healthy relationship between students and mentors; this is the key to successful mentoring. This handbook has been written as a guide for both mentor and mentee in achieving effective mentoring relationships.

References

Green, S.G. & Bauer, T.N. (1995). Supervisory mentoring by advisors: Relationships with doctoral student potential, productivity, and commitment. *Personnel Psychology*, 48, 537-561.

Zelditch, M. (1990). Mentor roles. Proceedings of the 32nd Annual Meeting of the Western Association of Graduate Schools, Tempe, Arizona, 16-18 March, 1990, p. 11.

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