

*“The Effective  
Graduate Advisor”*

## **Best Practices for Mentoring Graduate Students**

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### **What Is Mentoring?**

A mentoring relationship is a close, individualized relationship that develops over time between a graduate student and a faculty member (or others) 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. Mentors, as defined by The Council of Graduate Schools, are:

**Advisors**, people with career experience willing to share their knowledge; **supporters**, people who give emotional and moral encouragement; **tutors**, people who give specific feedback on one's performance; **masters**, in the sense of employers to whom one is apprenticed; **sponsors**, sources of information about, and aid in obtaining opportunities; **models of identity**, of the kind of person one should be to be an academic (Zelditch, 1990).

#### ***JSU FACTS***

##### *Among HBCU's*

# 2 Producer of African-American Doctorates

#1 Producer of African-American Doctorates in Education

##### *All Colleges & Universities*

#5 Producer of African-American Doctorates

#4 Producer of African-American Doctorates in Education

##### *Masters Degrees (African-Americans among HBCU'S)*

# 2 - Physical Sciences

#3 - Education

#3 - Health and Related Professions

#4 - Computer Sciences

#10 - Biological Sciences

*(Source: Diverse, July 10, 2008 and Online issue)*

## *Mentoring of Graduate Students at Jackson State University*



A mentor is “someone who will not rest until you are all that you can be”

*Source Unknown*

### THE GRADUATE FACULTY

The Graduate Faculty consists of the President, Vice President for Academic Affairs, the academic deans and those members of the general faculty who by their scholarly attainments in their own fields of specialization have demonstrated their competence to offer graduate instruction.

<http://strategyforprofessionals.com/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderpictures/TelemachusMentor.jpg>

## Best Practices for Mentoring Graduate Students

Mentoring plays a vital role in the graduate experience and requires a communicative partnership between the student and the mentor, with the support of the program and graduate school.

While mentoring is necessarily an individual matter, the following are good practices that are often associated with a productive relationship between the faculty member and the graduate student. For example, it is the role of the faculty member to...

1. Foster the intellectual development of students during their educational programs and while conducting their research.
2. Provide perspective to students on the scope and emerging trends in their field of study.
3. Inspire students to think independently, critically, and creatively.
4. Acquaint students with strategies for accessing literature and related materials that are fundamental to the field of study.
5. Know the programmatic requirements and deadlines (including selection of appropriate coursework) specified in the departmental handbook and catalog for graduate students and help students to meet them.
6. Offer advice concerning the selection of a dissertation/thesis committee that affords relevant expertise as well as providing access to faculty members who can play a supportive mentoring role.
7. Assist students in the selection/design of a timely and significant dissertation/thesis topic that has an appropriate scope.
8. Evaluate and strive to resolve problems that students encounter during their graduate studies, and direct them to appropriate resources, as needed.
9. Be cognizant of and responsive to the unique needs of international students.
10. Facilitate exchange of information among students so that experienced students can act as mentors for new students.
11. Encourage students to access information from all available sources including peers, faculty members, and other experts in the field.
12. Inform students of funding opportunities, train them in proposal preparation, and encourage them to seek financial support.
13. Assure that students understand the standards of ethical/moral behavior within the discipline, including research activities and urge them to act in accord with those standards.
14. Establish and communicate clear expectations to students with regard to conducting research.
15. Provide timely feedback, both written and oral, to students on their progress through constructive criticism and positive reinforcement.
16. Encourage students to attend and present research in regional and national professional meetings, facilitate networking opportunities at the meetings, and teach the basics of oral presentation skills.
17. Help students to understand the process of manuscript preparation, submission, and review, and provide appropriate authorship on manuscripts.
18. Guide students in the preparation of a dissertation/thesis in its final form with regard to content, style, etc., before it is submitted to the committee for the final defense.
19. Support graduate students in matters related to career development.

*Based upon Best Practices developed by the Council of Graduate Schools and the National Academic Advising Association.*

***“The essential elements of a productive relationship are difficult to put into words.”***



Common sense suggests that good mentoring should begin with:

- ✓ A clear understanding of mutual responsibilities
- ✓ A commitment to maintain a productive and supportive research environment
- ✓ Proper supervision and review, and
- ✓ An understanding that the main purpose for the relationship is to prepare students to be come successful, independent scholars.



*“Different mentors establish different environments.”*



**Some Mentors:**

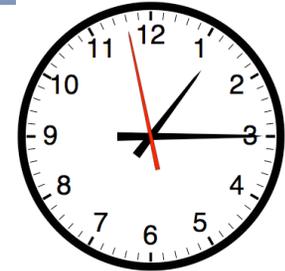
- Highly competitive
- Mentors involved in all aspects
- Dominates the trainee
- Enjoys lab independence

**While Some Mentors:**

- Highly cooperative
- Mentor delegates authority
- Takes pride in trainees independence
- Thrives on collaboration

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1. Mentors have a professional obligation to ensure equal access to their profession.
  2. Competition that puts any distinguishable group at a significant disadvantage is unacceptable.
  3. Mentors should be prepared to take the lead in raising issues that are of concern to the trainee as well as those that are of interest to the mentor.

*“Proper mentoring of a student takes time.”*



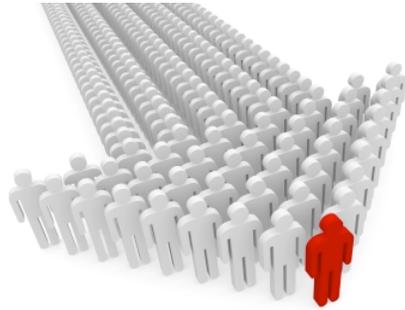
*Be available.*

Both mentors and trainees must encourage one another to participate fully, while respecting differences in their commitment to the mentoring relationship .

*Allow for differences in personalities.*

❖ Some mentors will be uncomfortable offering advice or initiating discussions unless first asked by a trainee, while other mentors will readily volunteer information and advice without any clear indication that help would be welcomed.

❖ Similarly, some trainees see frequent and probing discussion with a mentor as invasive micromanaging, while other trainees thrive on frequent feedback.



*Mentors teach by words and by example.*

1. Modeling good skills and behavior is a necessary element of mentoring.
2. Yet a good example is not always enough; it's important that mentors make explicit the often implicit rationale for their behavior, because a trainee can not learn the policy and philosophy that underlie exemplary behavior by observation alone.

*Mentors do not make decisions for the student, they help the student act “on their own values, goals, and experience.”*





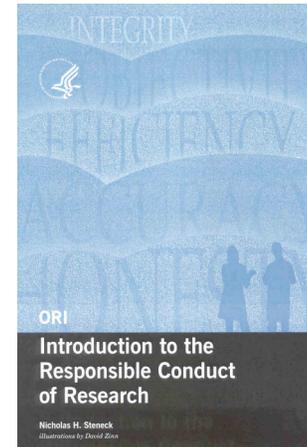
*Mentoring is an ongoing process.*

1. Widely ranging needs at different stages of a career are not likely to be met by a solitary mentor, and few established scholars can bring the requisite time, knowledge, and interest to the full range of issues that are likely to confront a trainee.
2. For these reasons, the term mentor is best used broadly to mean any person who helps another with one or more aspects of the latter's personal or professional development.
3. In this sense, trainees are encouraged to seek out multiple mentors, each of whom can provide the expertise and experience to help fulfill the trainee's needs .

***“Proper supervision of a student takes time.”***

In one way or another, a mentor needs to:

- ✓ Assure proper instruction in research methods
- ✓ Foster the intellectual development of the trainee
- ✓ Impart an understanding of RCR, and
- ✓ Routinely check to make sure the trainee develops into a responsible researcher



***“Mentors should maintain environments that respect accepted practices in RCR.”***

*“The mentor should assume the ultimate responsibility.”*



Mentors should review the work done by the trainee by:

- ✓ Reviewing lab notebooks and other collection of data
- ✓ Reading manuscripts prepared by trainees carefully to assure accuracy and proper assignment of credit
- ✓ Meeting with trainees on a regular basis
- ✓ Encouraging trainees to present and discuss data at lab, local, regional and national meetings.



## *Creating a Mentored Relationship Student Viewpoint*

1. Students Should Seek Multiple Mentors to Help Develop Different Professional Areas.
2. Get to know your potential mentor before negotiating mentorship.
3. Explicitly negotiate a mentored relationship
  - Define the personal and professional goals
  - Discuss expectations re. time, types of contact, types of work, duration of commitment
  - Clarify the style and boundaries of the relationship
  - Discuss data ownership, intellectual property, and authorship plans

<http://www.macombbar.org/associations/4034/files/mentor.jpg>



### *How to spot a good mentor (Tips for Students)*

Talk to fellow graduate students about who to seek out and who to avoid. Take courses from a variety of professors. Attend departmental seminars, workshops, and informal gatherings. Find out who the faculty are and let them get to know you.

Keep this in mind... Some faculty members make good mentors, some do not. Some graduate students make good mentees, other do not. The qualities of a good mentee are the ability to listen and respond to suggestions about your work. You should come to sessions prepared, on-time, and making progress towards your degree.

## Mentoring



A mentor should be a trusted counselor or guide. Usually, your major professor is your mentor, but not always and not exclusively. You do not have to limit yourself to one mentor. Studies have shown that graduate students with mentors tend to do better in graduate studies and complete their degrees in a more timely manner. Other faculty, staff, administrators, postdoctoral fellows, graduate students can serve as mentors during your graduate career.

*(Expectation of Students)*

What can a mentor do for you?

- Help plan your academic program
- Aid in preparing for your comprehensive examination.
- Assist in finding a thesis or dissertation topic.
- Prepare you for your defense.
- Be a confidant
- Be an advocate for you within the department/university.
- Help you find funding for your studies
- Offer honest and constructive criticism of your work.
- Help you network in your job search.



## *A Mentored Relationship Mentor Viewpoint*

Mentors may serve several formal and informal roles

*Conflicting roles of teacher, advisor, employer, counselor, colleague and friend can lead to conflicts of interest*

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Control and avoid conflicts by

1. Maintaining open communication
2. Resolving issues as they arise
3. Remembering that mentorship is a gift, with focus on student.



## *A Mentored Relationship Mentor Viewpoint*

There are some things the Mentor needs to know:

- The trainees will do the assigned work in a conscientious way
- The trainees will respect the authority of others working in the research or creative setting
- The trainees will follow all research regulations and protocols
- The trainees will live by agreements established for authorship and ownership, and
- The trainees will behave honestly and ethically



## *Working with Students on Dissertation/Thesis/Project*

### **Advisor and Committee's Responsibility**

It is the chairperson's and committee members' responsibility to know policies, rules, and regulations of both the Division of Graduate Studies and the major department relative to the dissertation process.

In addition the chair is also responsible for..

1. Ensuring that the student is aware of the rules, regulations and policies of the Division of Graduate Studies and the department.
2. Assisting the student in the formation of a committee.
3. Meeting with the student on a regular basis.
4. Keeping the scheduled appointments.
5. Ensuring that the student's work is properly documented and not plagiarized.
6. Scheduling the prospectus hearing, if required, and the final defense of the dissertation.
7. Notifying the committee members and the Department chair of the place, time & date of the prospectus hearing.
8. Notifying the Graduate Dean, College Dean, Department chair and committee members of the place, time & date of the final defense.



## *Working with Students on Dissertation/Thesis/Project*

### **Committee's Responsibility**

It is the committee members' responsibility to ...

1. Attend the prospectus hearing and final defense.
2. Read the student's work throughout the writing process.
3. Provide written feedback for correcting and/or improving the dissertation.

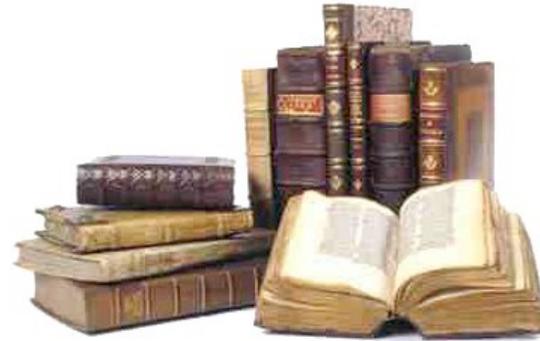


## *Working with Students on Dissertation/Thesis/Project*

### **Student's Responsibility**

1. Choosing a chairperson following the policies & guidelines of the major department.
2. Choosing the members of the dissertation committee in conjunction with the chairperson following the policies & guidelines of the major department.
3. Meeting with the chairperson and setting a schedule for completion of the dissertation in a timely manner.
4. Keeping on schedule.
5. Turning in all dissertation material to chairperson typed in correct format.
6. Knowing and meeting all deadlines.
7. Filing all forms in a timely manner.

## *References*



1. “Mentor and Trainee Responsibilities” Brooks A. Keel, Florida State University.
  - Text and some of the graphics were derived from “*Introduction to the Responsible Conduct of Research*” by Nicholas H. Steneck, illustrations by David Zinn: <http://ori.dhhs.gov/multimedia/acrobat/rcrintro.pdf>
  - **Mentoring**, by P.D. Magnus and Michael Kalichman, September 2002, RCR Education Resources: <http://rrec.org/r/index.php?module=ContentExpress&func=display&meid=80&ceid=46>
2. “Promoting Integrity in the Next Generation of Researchers” University of Minnesota.
3. “How to Get the Mentoring You Want” University of Michigan, The Rackham School of Graduate Studies. (<http://www.rackham.umich.edu/downloads/publications/mentoring.pdf>)
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5. (Graphics, acknowledged on page)

[http://conspiracyclothes.com/images/references\\_bg.jpg](http://conspiracyclothes.com/images/references_bg.jpg)

Jackson State University  
The Division of Graduate Studies



"a gateway to excellence in graduate studies"

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## The Graduate Advising, Assessment and Retention Committee

The Mission of the Graduate Advising, Assessment and Retention Committee (GAAR) is to monitor the academic performance of all graduate students with a Grade Point Average (GPA) below the minimum required 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. The goal of this committee is to

- Provide academic advisement, encouragement, and monitor student's academic performance.
- Identify graduate students with an academic deficiency below 3.0.
- Provide an **Academic Enhancement Plan** on each student.
- Provide follow-up on **Academic Enhancement Plans**.
- Distribute reports to the Graduate Faculty.

Committee follows "Best Practices" as defined by: NACADA Core Values for Academic Advising ([www.nacada.ksu.edu](http://www.nacada.ksu.edu)), the Council of Graduate School and discipline specific bodies.

The Division of Graduate Studies



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