Saint Louis University

Graduate Education Mentoring and Advising Manual

Faculty mentors are a critical component in graduate education. Students and faculty both benefit from effective mentoring relationships. Well-mentored students are more productive in their research and more successful in timely completion of degree requirements. Good faculty mentors have improved personal and professional satisfaction and attract better students. In accordance with Saint Louis University's commitment to provide an outstanding educational experience for all of its students, the Office of Graduate Education has put together tips and resources to help facilitate strong, lasting mentoring relationships that meet the needs of both students and faculty.

According to the National Academies of Science:

> "In academics, *mentor* is often used synonymously with *faculty adviser*. A fundamental difference between mentoring and advising is that mentoring is more than advising; mentoring is a personal, as well as, professional relationship. An adviser might or might not be a mentor, depending on the quality of the relationship. A mentoring relationship develops over an extended period, during which a student's needs and the nature of the relationship tend to change. A mentor will try to be aware of these changes and vary the degree and type of attention, help, advice, information, and encouragement that he or she provides."
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> National Academies of Science (2007). *Adviser, Teacher, Role Model, Friend: On Being a Mentor to Students in Science and Engineering.* Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press. P. 1.

At Saint Louis University (SLU), we frame mentoring in the larger context, consistent with the values and principles in accordance with the Jesuit tradition. Though mentor/mentee relationships will vary based on personal style and characteristics, the needs of the program, and the needs of the student, there are some fundamental components of the mentor/mentee relationship that apply across graduate education. At SLU, we view mentoring as a separate distinct responsibility from academic advising. Though mentoring arrangements may include aspects of academic advising (and faculty mentors may also serve as academic advisors), the role of faculty mentor is a more complex and dynamic relationship between the faculty and student than the advisor/advisee relationship. Faculty mentors are expected to:

- Establish a mentor/student relationship
- Discuss the *student's* personal, educational, and career goals
- Discuss academic courses of study, experiences, and resources as they relate to the Saint Louis University Mission
- Help students foster relationships with faculty and staff, and practicing professionals both within and outside of their respective discipline
- Discuss academic performance as it relates to the student's career and continuing professional development
- Help students identify their own career goals either within or outside of the academy
- Be responsive to student needs and learning style

Academic advisors are expected to:

- Aid students in developmental transitions (from college to graduate school to beyond)
- Assist students in creating their curriculum plans, including review of academic performance

- Clarify the program/curriculum requirements, particularly as it relates to the Saint Louis University Mission
- Introduce students to resources for academic and career success

As described by the National Academies of Science, "an effective mentoring relationship is characterized by mutual respect, trust, understanding, and empathy. . . . They [mentors] are *good listeners, good observers,* and *good problem-solvers*" (p. 2). Though there are a multitude of styles and activities that may characterize the mentoring relationship, there are general characteristics that are common among successful mentoring relationships. Ideal mentors:

- Are open, approachable, and available to students.
- Help the student develop a list of short and long term professional goals based on the professional interests of the student.
- Are explicit about expectations and clarify program policies.
- Know the program milestones and requirements.
- Listen carefully to students without judgment or interpretation.
- Have regular contact with the student.
- Provide opportunities for networking and facilitates introductions where appropriate.
- Model and teach time management.
- Provide opportunities for professional growth of student.
- Provide timely constructive feedback on written and oral work.
- Encourage development of communication skills.
- Acknowledge that students have responsibilities outside of their program.

Ideal students:

- Are cognizant and respectful of the time demands placed on faculty.
- Develop short and long term goals and communicate them with their mentor.
- Recognize their own strengths and weaknesses and accept constructive feedback.
- Communicate clearly and regularly about their progress and their professional needs.
- Seek clarification of their mentor's expectations.
- Are pro-active in their mentoring relationship.
- Know the requirements for their degree program and, when needed, ask for help in completing those requirements.
- Submit work on time and come prepared to meetings.

Faculty tend to mentor as they were mentored, often without conscious action on their part. After considering your own mentoring experience, you may want to use the answers to these questions as a framework for developing your own mentoring strategy. By explicitly evaluating your own mentoring experience, you can become more cognizant about what did and did not work and develop more successful strategies for working with your own students. When contemplating your own graduate mentoring relationship, it can be helpful to consider the following:

- What kind of mentor(s) did you have as a graduate student?
- What do you feel worked and what did not work in that relationship?
- Did your mentor help or hinder your progress through your own graduate program? How?

- What did you not receive from your mentoring relationship that would have helped you in your program and in your subsequent academic career?

When entering in to a new mentoring relationship, you should communicate clearly and explicitly about the roles and responsibilities of both the mentor and the student. Consider discussing these areas in your first few meetings:

- Student's short and long term goals. Understand why the student chose this graduate program and what s/he would like to do with the degree. Work with the student to set feasible timeframes for meeting both short and long-term goals.
- Inform students how frequently you will be able to meet with them. Make it clear that it is the student's responsibility to arrange and lead these meetings. Many mentors and students find it helpful to have a standing meeting (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, etc. depending upon student needs) to ensure regular contact and facilitate communication. Mentors should let students know if they have a busy travel schedule, are taking a sabbatical, or any other situation that will make them unavailable for an extended period of time.
- Be explicit about how the student may contact you. Let your student know if s/he may contact you at home, on your cell phone, or if you prefer they only contact you during work hours. Ask students for their preferences as well.
- Be explicit about how often, and under what timeframe, students can expect feedback on written work. How often will you meet to discuss general academic progress?
- Explain the standards of authorship for your particular field and establish authorship guidelines prior to embarking on joint research.

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