EMORY

LANEY GRADUATE SCHOOL

Building Successful Mentoring Relationships

Student Guide

August 2015

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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.
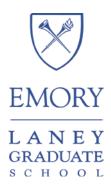
Sincerely,

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
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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
Student 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 and mentoring styles. 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 *mentoring team*.

Basic Steps to Identifying a Mentor
Some students enter graduate programs with an advisor/mentor already assigned to them based on their interests or intended research areas. Many others, however, will begin their graduate programs without an advisor/mentor and must seek out and cultivate those relationships. Below are some basic steps that a student might take to begin that process.

Self-Appraisal
It is your responsibility to engage with faculty, cultivating interactions that give rise to a mentoring relationship. But which faculty should you engage? This is often the question for students early in their graduate careers who are beginning to develop their research interests.

While engaging faculty at this stage can be intimidating, there are other resources available to you, including advanced students in your program who can offer suggestions and advice. Even before this step, however, you should consider a self-appraisal exercise to articulate your own needs, interests, priorities and working style.

❖ What are the personal and professional goals that led you to graduate school?

- ❖ What areas of research interest you? What kinds of research projects and methodologies pique your interest?
- ❖ Is there a particular kind of training that you desire? What skills do you want to develop?
- ❖ What are your strengths as a student, researcher and/or professional? What areas need improvement or development?
- ❖ What are your career interests?
- ❖ What kind of mentoring style is going to be most effective for you? Do you want someone who is going to be very *hands-on* and who meets with you often? Or, do you prefer a more *hands-off* approach, that is, someone that will give you more space?

Remember: a single person does not need to meet all of your mentoring needs. As you consider what mentoring approach might work best for you, keep your mind open to the possibility of multiple mentors.

Due Diligence
Once you have identified your own interests and priorities, focus on the graduate faculty in your program. Your research interests and desired training will lead you to several people who seem like good fits.

Get Involved
Make efforts to become involved in the academic and social activities of your graduate program, as well as those in the larger LGS and Emory communities. Interact with advanced students in your program and others who can speak to experiences with faculty you wish to engage. You might find that these students have insight and experiences important to your own research.

Initial Conversations
Initial conversations with a possible mentor are important, but they are just that: conversations. The point of these conversations is to establish a rapport and to get a better sense of whether or not this faculty member is available and is actually a good fit for you.

Cultivating the Advisor/Mentor Relationship
If initial conversations lead to a more formal meeting with a prospective advisor/mentor, it is then time to pursue a discussion that demonstrates that you have exercised due diligence in learning about the faculty member's areas of interest. This is where you discuss your goals, identify mutual synergies and interests, and outline what you expect to accomplish during your time in graduate school.

Listen attentively. It is important to ensure that your expectations of the prospective advisor/mentor will match with what she/he can provide.

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
Advisor/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 program requirements and deadlines.

- The advisor/mentor should then 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:
  - How often can the advisor/mentor meet with you to discuss progress?
  - Typically, what is the best way to reach your advisor/mentor?
  - If questions or problems arise, what is the best way to contact your advisor/mentor 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. If a mentee feels as though informal progress reports would be helpful to work through emerging or ongoing concerns, she/he should bring this to the attention of the advisor.

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.

Mentee Responsibilities
Timeliness
- Be mindful and respectful of faculty time. In addition to their personal lives, faculty must balance a number of activities, including teaching, research, service, other advising relationships, dissertation/thesis committee responsibilities, grant writing, and more.
- Be on time when meeting with faculty. If you must cancel or reschedule a meeting, do so in a timely manner and be flexible in rescheduling.
- Be aware of program requirements and deadlines. As you work with your advisor/mentor to set goals and develop work plans for achieving them, it is important that you meet all objectives in due and appropriate time.
- If you are unable to meet a deadline set by your advisor/mentor, you should inform her/him in a timely manner and negotiate a new deadline.

- It is appropriate for you to know when to expect feedback on your work. If not already established, ask when you can expect comments.
- When submitting your work for feedback, take into account the agreed upon response time, and factor this into your own timelines and progress.
- When you receive feedback on drafts that require revision, work with your advisor/mentor to set a deadline for submission, and be sure to meet it.

Quality and Professionalism
- Unless otherwise indicated, you should submit a draft to your advisor/mentor that is polished and presentable. Graduate school is your current *career*, and as in any career, it is your responsibility to put forward a quality product.
- It is your responsibility to keep your advisor/mentor informed of prospective new directions or changes to your research foci and/or interests and to evaluate these changes against the work plans that you have established with your advisor/mentor.
- Be receptive to feedback offered by your advisor/mentor and professional in receiving criticism or discussing differences of opinion.
- In some situations, it might be helpful to draft a summary of discussion following a meeting with your advisor/mentor. Document any action items that should be taken, and share this summary with your advisor/mentor 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, but it is your responsibility to initiate these conversations. You should discuss with your advisor/mentor, the following:

- Which professional organizations to join and which conferences are important to attend.
- How to ready your project to present at conferences.
- How to navigate the publishing process and how to prepare your work for submission.
- How to select funding agencies to pursue and how to craft grant proposals that will help you to obtain external (and internal) funding to support your work.
- How to identify – and even facilitate – connections that establish and expand your professional networks.

The advisor/mentor and mentee should set aside dedicated time to discuss professionalization as you progress through stages of the graduate program.

Do not expect your advisor/mentor to bear responsibility for all aspects of your professionalization. Graduate programs offer a number of seminars and opportunities to learn about professional development in your discipline, and you should make every effort to participate. Likewise, the Laney Graduate School offers a range of professional development programs that students should consider.

Career Guidance
The Laney Graduate School emphasizes that it is never too early for you to think about and prepare for your career. 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.

There are resources that your advisor/mentor can help you to explore:

- 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 you to become familiar with and participate in this programming.

It is your responsibility to pursue career resource opportunities and programming offered by your graduate program, 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 for 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.