# *Advising &Mentoring Graduate Students*

Advising and mentoring are distinct, although sometimes related, relationships.

**Advising** is the right of every graduate student. The Department assigns temporary advisors to all incoming graduate students. After students get to know faculty, they may choose to stay with their temporary advisor or ask another member of the faculty to advise them. In any case, the advisor's job is to help students navigate and complete the program.

Advising is accomplished through meetings and other exchanges in which advisor and advisee discuss routine academic matters such as coursework, plan of study, and deadlines. In addition, advisors should provide advisees with counsel on less routine issues such as unusual course loads, leaves of absence, and negotiating procedures with the Department and Graduate School. Students should also be active in self-advising, which includes reading Departmental manuals and memos, familiarizing themselves with the FAQ handout provided at orientation, and staying abreast of deadlines as announced.

**Mentoring**, on the other hand, is an individualized personal relationship that is earned over time and that grows out of interests and investments on the part of both mentor and student. It follows that mentors cannot be assigned or guaranteed. In some cases, a student may not seek or earn a mentor. In other cases, a student's advisor may become a mentor. A mentor may also be a person who is not advising a student. In other words, mentoring and advising may, but do not necessarily go together.

Mentoring is a relationship in which an experienced and accomplished professional guides a novice's professional development. Mentoring is not primarily an advisor-advisee or friend relationship. It is also not a relationship in which a mentor presumes a student will provide uncompensated or compensated personal services. Although mentors and students may interact personally, exchange favors, or become friends, the nexus of mentoring is educating, guiding, and providing opportunities for students to develop as scholars, teachers, and citizens of a field.

Mentoring relationships are earned over time and they develop in stages. Typically, although not always, serious mentoring begins during doctoral studies. At the doctoral level, the expectation is that students will take responsibility for seeking mentors. Ideally, doctoral students develop a variety of mentoring relationships with multiple faculty members and other professionals. Students are expected to demonstrate initiative in seeking mentoring, identifying what types of mentoring they need and want, inquiring about opportunities, scheduling meetings, and otherwise collaborating actively in their professional development.

Following are examples of activities that might be part of mentoring. This list is illustrative only because faculty members mentor differently. Not all mentors will engage in all of these activities, and some mentors may engage in other activities to support development of students.
**Mentoring students' development as scholars** is fostered by activities such as

- guiding students to recognize what constitutes focus, coherence, and rigor in intellectual pursuits
- giving extensive oral and written feedback on multiple drafts of students' work
- co-authoring papers and articles with students
- calling students' attention to important conferences, including small, specialized ones
- inviting students to review manuscripts that faculty receive to review for journals
- introducing students to scholars and/or to work by scholars germane to students' work
- sharing working papers with students to prompt research-focused discussions
- discussing the process and value of the peer-review process
- encouraging students to address areas of weakness (for instance, writing)
- talking with students about normative procedures of scholarly publishing (e.g., how to interpret "revise and resubmit" decisions, how to craft responses to same)
- encouraging students to reflect on how their work does or could speak to multiple constituencies
- talking with students about grant and fellowship funding for their work

**Mentoring students' development as teachers** is fostered in a variety of ways, including

- reviewing students' syllabi, discussing pedagogical goals, philosophies, etc.
- talking with students about how an instructors makes pedagogical choices regarding course content, readings, activities, assignments, testing, and so forth.
- volunteering to visit students' classes and giving feedback on observations
- encouraging students to avail themselves of resources at the Center for Teaching and Learning
- discussing teaching philosophy, goals, concerns, and so forth with students
- talking with students about the relationships between research and teaching interests
- encouraging in students a willingness to take on teaching responsibilities beyond areas of narrow specialization
- supporting students' efforts to receive teaching assignments that further their development as teachers and professionals


**Mentoring students' development as citizens** of the field, academic institutions, and various public communities is fostered by activities such as

- nominating students (or encouraging them to volunteer) for service roles in the Department, University, and professional associations
- explaining the value of business meetings and special programs at conferences
- inviting students to assist in editing journals or books
- modeling collegiality by, for example, attending programs honoring colleagues
- modeling professional behavior and talking with students about what it is (and isn't)
- discussing the value of service to individual careers, departments, and institutions
- encouraging students to attend talks given by visiting scholars
- talking with students about important moments in the life of departments and explaining what these involve and mean (e.g., search processes, curricular reviews, self studies)
- acquainting students with the politics of departmental and disciplinary associations

**Mentoring students' entry into professional positions** involves the three foci of mentoring discussed above. In addition, it may involve activities such as

- guiding students to understand what is involved in developing and pursuing intellectually coherent programs of study over the course of a career
- engaging in ongoing conversation about how students want to market themselves and what is required to achieve that
- collaborating with students to guide them in preparing for job interviews (e.g., writing letters of application, participating in on-campus interview trips)
- helping students learn how to balance multiple commitments in professional life


Mentoring involves guidance and feedback, but it should not entail excessive hand-holding or time commitments. Mentoring is not necessarily limited to formal conferences; in fact, much good mentoring transpires in brief exchanges in hallways or over e-mail.

It bears repeating that mentors do not have sole responsibility for doctoral students' professional development. Students are expected to engage in self-mentoring by, for instance, developing relationships with multiple faculty, engaging in readings beyond those required, attending scholarly talks given by their mentors and others, and independently seeking out professional associations that further their intellectual growth. Ideally, mentoring fosters students' abilities to think and work in progressively independent ways.