UC IRVINE'S GRADUATE MENTORING AND ADVISING POLICY

Approved by Graduate Council 4/13/17

Introduction

A mentor-mentee relationship is based on trust and discretion. Good mentoring involves treating students respectfully and fairly providing reliable guidance, and serving as a role model for upholding the highest ethical standards. The Graduate Council recognizes that faculty mentoring of graduate students, both academic and professional, is a necessary and integral part of the graduate experience. There is a distinction to make between being a mentor and being an advisor—a mentor is someone who is attentive to the professional future of the student, while an advisor is someone who directs the student on what steps are needed to graduate. Both, however, exhibit characteristics that span beyond formal classroom instruction and can be found in one individual together or distributed across multiple supporters. In this document, the term "Graduate Advisor" will be used to reference the faculty member charged by an academic unit with directing a graduate program. Each graduate program has at least one Graduate Advisor. The term "Faculty Advisor" will be used to reference an individual student's thesis chair, dissertation chair, or capstone project advisor. It is common for the faculty advisor to also serve as a student's mentor. In this case, the faculty advisor shares wisdom, technical knowledge, guidance, and support that helps students understand how to succeed in their graduate program, excel in their field of study, and to recognize and choose among career options. Some departments may enhance mentoring beyond the role of the faculty advisor through incorporating peer mentoring, professional development workshops, and other activities. While it is necessary to have one primary faculty advisor, contemporary views of mentoring suggest that multiple mentors may be beneficial to mentees' study, reading, research, writing and career development.

Because disciplines and programs face their own unique challenges, we recommend that each graduate program define their own best practices in terms of mentoring and develop their own set of guidelines for both faculty and graduate students. Understanding that both the mentor and mentee play an active role in this relationship is a vital first step; both should be aware of the following guiding principles regarding this relationship:

- Mentors and students should discuss and come to a clear understanding of their expectations, clearly defining roles and responsibilities.
- Either party has the right to terminate the mentoring relationship if not seen as satisfactory, despite genuine attempts at conflict resolution. However, departments may require students to have a primary faculty advisor at all times to remain in the program.
- The relationship should enable shared decision-making regarding the mentee's professional development, incorporating both individuals' points of view.
- Meetings should be held in an appropriate environment where both parties feel they can speak freely.
- Commitments made should be honored. Both parties should be considerate of each other's time and provide as much notice as possible when cancelling or rescheduling meetings.
- Information shared in mentoring meetings is subject to standard rules of professional confidence.

Role of Faculty

Regardless of the program or department-specific model, it is expected that each student receives advising and mentoring. It is the responsibility of each graduate program's faculty to advise and monitor the academic progress while encouraging the professional development of each student. Faculty should be attentive to the future of their students and serve as advocates on their behalf when appropriate. Guidelines for advising and mentoring are provided below.

Advising

- In coordination with program staff, faculty advisors guide students through degree requirements by providing a clear map from the very beginning. This includes defining a timeline for completing coursework requirements and qualifying examinations.
- Faculty advisors assist students through the thesis and/or dissertation process. This includes providing advice on timely initiation and completion, topic choice, acquiring sources of funding, committee formation, etc.
- Faculty advisors clearly evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their student's research and ensure that the grades assigned for independent study are consistent with the student's performance.
- Faculty advisors provide regular and timely feedback on the progress of students, including constructive criticism on progress. Individual Development Plans (IDP) can be used as a tool to help facilitate these discussions.
- Faculty advisors must meet quarterly with students not making satisfactory progress to evaluate their progress.
- Faculty advisors foster the development of communication skills, written and oral, as it pertains to the students' particular area of study.

Mentoring

- Mentors provide constructive advice and guide the professional development of students.
- Mentors affirm students' pursuit of health and wellness, as well as professional skills beyond research which are necessary to career success.
- Mentors encourage students' participation in appropriate professional meetings of national and regional groups and societies.
- Mentors share their resources and networks, as appropriate, to facilitate interaction with other scholars, both on campus and in the wider professional community.
- Mentors assist with applications for research funding, fellowship applications, and other applications specific to the program or discipline.
- Mentors provide career guidance, assistance in the preparation of a CV and/or resume, coaching for job interviews, and writing letters of recommendation in a timely manner.
- Mentors direct graduate students to various career resources available at the Graduate Resource Center (GRC) and UCI Career Center (workshops, career fairs, etc.)
- Mentors recognize that there are a variety of career options available to their students and encourage students to explore multiple career paths.

Role of Graduate Students

It is essential that graduate students see themselves as partners in the mentoring relationship. As mentees, graduate students should:

- Be aware of their own mentoring needs and how they can change through their graduate tenure. Changes should be discussed with their faculty advisor and/or mentor in a timely manner.
- Proactively seek out mentorship; be aware of advertised workshops and resources. Keep in mind that one faculty advisor may not be able to satisfy all needs.
- Recognize that their mentoring needs must respect their mentor's other responsibilities and time commitments.
- Be aware of, and meet, the deadlines associated with the degree program and develop a plan to accommodate to them.
- Maintain and seek regular communication with their mentor(s), especially their primary faculty advisor.
- Each graduate student must establish an advisee/advisor relationship and formally secure a faculty advisor by the time of their advancement to candidacy.

Role of the University

- New faculty orientations should include a discussion of the importance of graduate student mentoring.

Role of the Program/Academic Unit

- Graduate programs must assign an initial graduate advisor to each graduate student at the time of first enrollment. For doctoral students, the graduate advisor must be a faculty member. For master's students, the graduate advisor may be a faculty member or staff member.
- Annual reviews must be conducted for every graduate student. Students should be provided with timely written feedback following this annual review.
- Share information concerning program-specific mentoring policies with all faculty.
- Academic units should be encouraged to provide training on implicit bias, mentoring, and conflict resolution as appropriate for their faculty, staff, and students.

Best Practices to Consider for Programs/Academic Units

- Develop a program mission statement that establishes mentoring as a core component of the graduate student experience.
- Read and become familiar with *Graduate Policies and Procedures* so that the criteria for monitoring satisfactory progress is clear.
- Hold an orientation for all new graduate students, where program requirements, including normative and maximum time-to-degree, are clearly outlined and provided in writing.
- Provide graduate students with a program handbook.

- Create multiple mechanisms for faculty mentoring such as faculty-graduate student lunches, rotating faculty mentors within a graduate program, and increasing opportunities for enhancing professional socialization.
- Effective peer-to peer and near-peer mentoring can complement faculty mentoring. Faculty guidance for such programs enhances effectiveness.

Principles for Programs/Academic Units

- Remember that all faculty share responsibility for graduate student mentoring.
- Positively reinforce good mentoring practices with rewards and incentives.
- Keep an open mind and show respect for the individuality of students and their different needs and goals.
- Respect students' family responsibilities and be cognizant of students who may need extra support when having a child, raising a child alone, returning to school after child-rearing, carrying for an elderly parent, etc.

The guidelines were developed using the following document:
- **Mentoring Guidelines**, Graduate Council, University of California, Merced Division