



RESPONSIBLE MENTORING

PURPOSE: To grow the student professionally and personally

WHAT IS A MENTOR?

- Someone with more experience in a common area of interest
- Someone the student knows
- Someone from whom the student can take direction

A GOOD MENTOR:

- Asks lots of questions that help the student expand their knowledge
- Teaches the student how to think rather than what to think
- Establishes a connection to the student being mentored
- Challenges the student with penetrating insights
- Expects discipline from the student, but fosters creativity

MENTORING UNDERGRADUATES

Tips for faculty/staff acting as mentors

1. Identify ways to socialize the student into the culture of your discipline, lab, project, etc. What is proper lab/studio/work environment etiquette? What are the roles and responsibilities of the various members of your professional group? Who can answer what questions? How does one keep track of information/data collection?
2. Provide the student with background reading to help them understand how their piece of the project relates to the larger project.
3. Make clear to the student who can answer what questions in your absence and make sure the members of your professional group understand their roles and responsibilities for the student.
4. Set-up regularly scheduled meetings if not weekly, then biweekly. Take a few minutes during each meeting to ask how the student is doing outside of your project.
5. Make your expectations clear from the beginning; this includes deadlines, best methods to communicate with you, hours of work, the level of detail you require in reports, lab notebooks, timelines, etc.
6. Let the student know when you want them to check in and how much freedom they have to problem-solve on their own and be independent.
7. Provide opportunities for the student to take on increasing responsibility and more difficult tasks and responsibilities when they have demonstrated competence.
8. Make time to discuss with the student the ethical issues they may encounter from the fabrication of data to who owns the research, intellectual property, confidentiality, etc.
9. Let the student know there will be ups and downs in the research/service/internship process and that there are many tedious moments, failures, etc. as well as the exciting moments.
10. Make some time to talk to the student about life outside the project, how things are going in their classes, personal goals, adjustment to campus, etc. This means a great deal to a student when you take an interest in them as a person.

BEING MENTORED

Four words: Interest, Effort, Discipline, Relationship

Tips for Students:

1. Consider why you are interested in an engaged learning experience, what you hope to get out of the experience, and your level of preparation.

- What am I interested in?
- How much time will I commit to the experience?
- What type of work environment suits me best?
- What do I know about doing research/community service/working in my field of interest? What skills can I already bring to experience, and what skills might I need to learn during the experience?

Engaged Learning experiences tie directly into coursework, but you might consider any additional courses that might make for an even better experience.

2. Identify a mentor willing to guide and advise you through your EL experience.

- Search various SMU departmental web sites. Don't limit your search to just what you know. Sometimes (often) a good statistics project is hiding in another department.
- Check out faculty lists in several departments. Again, don't limit yourself to the obvious choices. In most cases, you can "click" through from the list to the specific interests of each faculty member.
- Talk to faculty who teach courses you enjoy and see if they can assist you with finding research opportunities in those areas. Talk with your advisor and get ideas from him or her.
- Apply for appropriate research programs or research positions on campus.
- Have more than one potential mentor in mind.

3. Contact potential advisors.

- E-mail is a good method to make the first contact. First impressions mean a lot, therefore, be professional when constructing the e-mail.
- Unless positions are advertised, students should generally propose volunteering to gain experience. Volunteering can lead to paid positions over time. You might also plan to register for an independent study. Check with your advisor to determine if independent study credits fulfill degree requirements.
- If you have previous experience, let your potential mentor know about it.
- Be honest about the time and resources you can commit to and make sure you do all of it.
- Put together a resume or CV that you can attach to your email.
- Make your interest clear in the e-mail. For example, "I read about your research and it really piqued my interest."
- Come to the meeting prepared! Be familiar with the faculty member's scholarly interests, recent publications, etc.

4. Establish a relationship with your newly selected mentor.

- Clarify expectations then follow through.
- Determine frequency and method of communication.
- Your mentor is the key to you reaching your aspirations. The mentor may also become a source of continued support and guidance long after you complete the research project.
- Keep in mind that the type of project you can undertake will be limited; however, projects suitable for beginners exist in many disciplines.