

# Mentoring Philosophy

As mentor, I will not simply lead by example, but instead I will be involved in my mentee's development. I will do this by being mindful of the mentee's future by fostering skill sets that are valuable not only to their present work but also to their future careers.

A common misconception is that formal mentoring begins the day the mentee starts working under you. Effective mentoring must instead begin during the initial interview process. I use this interview to ensure the pairing will be favorable to both parties, not solely in research interests but also in working styles.

This interview is where I will first discuss their interests, the type of work they would like to take part in, and their future goals. I will also address their background and attempt to identify their strengths and weaknesses. This information will help determine what an appropriate research project for them might be. Though it is ideal that both parties share similar interests, that is not the sole factor that needs to be accounted for when selecting a mentee. We will also discuss what style of working is best for them and when they are most productive. Some mentees may prefer a tight schedule with multiple weekly meetings to keep them on track while others might work best with an increased independence only requiring weekly meetings. It is important that whom ever I mentor, my schedule can accommodate their needs and that they are also able to fulfill my expectations.

During this initial meeting, I will also explain how this symbiotic relationship will be beneficial to both parties. I will describe that I desire a mentee that is more more than just a mere drone that allows my research interests to flourish, but instead that I am looking someone who will bring fresh ideas and perspectives. That the mentee they will in turn learn in-depth knowledge, skill sets, and build a network that will aid them in their chosen career path. When designing a project for them, I must realize that their goals might differ from my own. It is my responsibility to talk with them so that any project that they work on is not only interesting to them, but enables them to develop skill sets to work towards their future goals. This is an evolving process. Students often will start one project with great interest to later discover that it is not rewarding for them. It is my duty to aid during these confusing times and to remind them that all projects have portions that are dual and require perseverance. At times, it may become necessary to adjust the project to keep their interests aligned.

Regardless of the project they are working on, necessary skills need to be developed. They need to know how to take data or at least have a understanding of how it acquired. To be able to analysis that data by not only utilizing the available software and programs but to also be able to develop them when necessary. They need to be able to communicate their ideas and results to not just to me, but also in formal presentation and written work as well as during casual conversation. Most students do not excel in all of these areas. It is my goal to identify the areas where the student struggles and help them develop those skill sets.

Mentees struggle with problems at unique times and it is very important that a mentor makes them self available. To ensure that I'm able to provide enough guidance to my mentee, I will establish, at minimum, a standing weekly meeting to check in with them. I will also make myself available to them through email and instant messenger if I or they happen to be away from the office when they have questions. I also plan on making my calendar public to them so that they can anticipate I will be available to answer their questions.

As I work with my mentee, I need to continuously encouraging their independence as this is a necessary skill set for their professional development. One way I will do this is by introducing them to resources that can help them thrive on their own or when I'm not around. Another way is by having them present their work at conferences, which will aid in the exposure of their work and allow them to explore others. This will also enable me to introduce them to people in the field to them and allow them to serendipitously met potential future collaborators who show an interest in their work.

Being a mentor is not always easy. At times, it may require much effort on my part, but the benefits of a successful mentorship far exceeds these small inconveniences. Mentees bring fresh ideas and aid in the progress of research and discovery. They learn skill sets that they can ably to benefit the scientific community at large and that they may later even apply to my own area of research. Being a mentor is part of a the noble process that prepares mentees for their future endeavors. Mentoring is a process that is ultimately rewarding and fulfilling for both parties.