

Building a Productive Relationship with Your Advisor and Other Professors (Part II)

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Ask yourself...

- List 2 key things you want from an advisor

Ask yourself...

- List 2 questions/concerns you'd like to ask about advisors and mentoring issues

How do you choose an advisor?

- This is one of the most important decisions you will make as a graduate student



How *not* to choose an advisor...

- Don't leave it to chance!
- Don't pick someone only because they are available, or because they're the only one who works on your preferred area of interest
- Don't pick someone whose "style" doesn't match your needs



Some questions to ask a prospective advisor

- How many students do you presently have?
- How are your students supported financially (research grants, teaching assistants, no support)? What do you expect in return?
- How is your research group structured?
- How many of your students have graduated, and how long did it take on average?
- What are your former students doing now?

How do you find out more?

- Talk directly to faculty members with whom you might like to work; get a sense of how they interact
- Talk to other graduate students in your department (they always know things...)
- Talk to other professors (they don't always know things...)
- Look up publications and citations

What can an advisor do for you?

- Teach you about the field
- Guide you in choosing a reasonable and interesting project
- Help you past the obstacles
- Provide you with resources & feedback
- Tailor your experiences to your career goals
- Promote your work to others in the field
- Help you get a job! (recommendations)

What can an advisor *not* do for you?

- The work! (and the commitment)
- Decide what interests you (choose your passion, drive the bus)
- Write your thesis/dissertation
- Think for you (your goal is to become an independent researcher)

Advisors are busy people...



- They likely have many other responsibilities, like administrative work, teaching, grant writing, other research
- They may have other students as well
- There are many demands on their time

... but not too busy for you!



- A good advisor will always make time for you when you ask... **SO ASK!**
- Use your time wisely, come prepared to every meeting with your advisor
- Keep your advisor informed of your progress
- Don't "disappear"

What about other faculty?

- You will interact with them in classes and in informal settings
- Their impressions are also important
- They can provide useful feedback and insights from another perspective
- Don't think of questions as attacks - rather, think of them as opportunities or expressions of interest

Other advice

- **Take every opportunity to present and talk about your work, and to get feedback**
 - If you can explain it to others, especially non-specialists, you begin finally to understand it yourself.
 - Oral presentations and talks in classes
 - Conference presentations (oral or poster)
 - Conversation with visiting researchers
 - Talking with other graduate students
 - Tell your Mom! your Dad! your Grandmother! your neighbor! your mail carrier! your cat! (you get the picture...)

Potential Pitfalls

- Lack of guidelines, timelines, plan
- Differences of opinion
- Miscommunication or misinterpretation
- Lack of interaction or unresponsiveness
- Sense of isolation
- Not keeping it professional

Useful Resources

- How to Get the Mentoring You Want:
<http://www.rackham.umich.edu/downloads/publications/mentoring.pdf>
- Professor/Grad Relationships: Maximizing the Mentoring Potential
http://www.gradresources.org/articles/prof_grad.shtml
- How to be a Good Graduate Student
<http://www.cs.indiana.edu/how.2b/how.2b.html>
- So Long, and Thanks for the Ph.D.!
<http://www.cs.unc.edu/~azuma/hitch4.html>
- Tomorrow's Professor Listserv
<http://ctl.stanford.edu/Tomprof/index.shtml>

Summary Points

- Communicate, communicate, communicate
- Don't disappear or hide out
- Show initiative, work hard
- Be self-motivated - "Drive the bus"
- Make time for research every day
- Ask for help when you get stuck
- Take advantage of informal interactions
- Learn about process as well as content
- Interact, present, conferences, network
- Keep your "eyes on the prize"