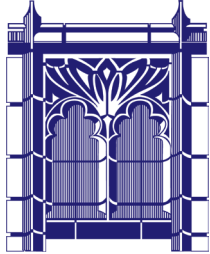


Building Your Network: Finding Mentors



THE GRADUATE SCHOOL **mentor memo** SPRING QUARTER 2008

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This Mentor Memo, part of a series, responds to graduate students' requests for advice about navigating graduate studies successfully.

The series also addresses topics in career preparation and professional development. For more information and to suggest topics, contact Graduate School Dean Suzanne Ortega at ortegas@u.washington.edu.

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What do mentors do?

Mentors help you learn and often share common topical, methodological, or conceptual interests. They also are available to work with you in a professional and sometimes a personal manner. Mentors understand you, see potential in you, and help you develop that potential. They inspire you and challenge you.

What you need to know about finding mentors

Multiple mentors

Create a broad network of support. Find multiple mentors for the multiple parts of your career. You can have different mentors for research, teaching, and other forms of professional development.

Who can be a mentor?

Anyone can be a mentor; the key is: can you learn from this person? Mentors can be faculty, staff, other students, and people outside your department or outside the University of Washington.

Helping with your career

Mentors often are willing to share the "insider" perspective on your field. This means they could give advice on how to network with other faculty within and outside of your department, give you advice on attending conferences, or send you pertinent information about job listings, internships, postdoctoral positions, or fellowship opportunities. Your mentors can also help you build professional experience, giving you advice on research projects and conference papers. Additionally, your mentors can include you in their research projects and provide you with the opportunity for co-authorship on published papers in professional journals.

Finding a mentor

- Mentors can be anywhere: Faculty, staff, and even other graduate students within your department and outside of your university.
- Be proactive: Take the initiative on scheduling meetings with your mentors and following up on those meetings.

there's more... >

- Seek out mentors who have careers of interest to you: If you are interested in becoming a faculty member or an administrator, find mentors in those positions and ask questions on how to maximize your graduate school experience.

Setting boundaries

Mentors serve as a “realist” and help you put ideas and priorities into the larger context of your academic career.

- Learn to accept criticism: Your mentors’ advice should challenge you; do not take criticisms personally and do not get defensive when your work is criticized.
- Respect time limits: Mentors can be very busy, so schedule appointments and limit the length of your meetings.
- Be aware of different mentoring styles: Recognize that some mentors will want to keep the relationship professional and will not desire a personal relationship.

What you can do

- Seek out mentorship: Create your own network of mentors that fits you best.
- Show up on-time and prepared for your meetings: This will maximize your time with your mentors.
- Read your mentor’s work and ask questions: Reading your mentors’ work can give you good ideas on how to approach your scholarship.
- Conduct informal interviews: Ask questions about your mentors or potential mentors’ interests and their style of mentoring.
- Invite mentors to paper presentations for feedback.

“Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction.”

~John Crosby

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