**Communicating with Faculty Workshop for International Graduate Students  
February 4, 2016, 11:45am – 1:15pm**  
Panelists:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Faculty** | | | |
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Positive Experiences with faculty as former grad students (Question for faculty)

* Faculty mentor encouraged and **challenged** me to develop my own conceptual model for social work practice. I didn’t think I could do this but I eventually did.
* Faculty mentor had strengths in research publications. As a former graduate student, I learned to see that all their feedback in red ink on my papers was actually a good thing. I could make my research papers stronger. **Learned to not take “red ink” feedback as a personal criticism**.
* Faculty mentor instilled in me the confidence to do good work, and this was important because I was an international graduate student. My mentor **treated me like an equal** and expected me to be responsible (in other words, accountable) for my work.

What are your general expectations of graduate students? (Question for faculty)

* Be **honest** with a graduate student about how you work as a faculty member and how your lab works. Be transparent
* Make sure you have shared theoretical and work ethics
* Faculty are all different, therefore they have different expectations of their graduate students
* Faculty need you to **carve your own path and to be** **self-motivated**
* Learn to take risks, but don’t be careless
* Expect to be challenged in ways that promote your strengths to become a community practitioner or researcher. I push you hard as faculty so I can feel confident that you will go out into the world and do good work.
* I am here to support my students’ passions, but **they’ve got to take initiative**.

What are the differences between faculty advisors in your home country versus faculty advisors at UW? (Question for grads)

* In my home country of China, as an undergrad, there were advisors for different things: education, jobs, etc. In terms of my school work, when they advised me to do something, I just did it. I didn’t have a conversation with them about it. I just followed the advisor’s directions. Here at UW, there is this thing called small talk. Faculty want you to have a conversation with them. They want to talk about the work. It was hard to say hello to faculty at first, but then I eventually got used to it.
* I got my Masters degree in English in Korea where I’m from. At my university, my faculty advisor was high ranking in the department. If she gave me feedback about something, I tried to figure it out on my own. I am getting my PhD in English here, and I had to learn to be more proactive and also cultivate interpersonal communication skills. I had to learn that respecting my advisor’s time meant taking the initiative to request meetings, have things prepared to discuss for feedback, and make a plan to move forward.
* In Iran, I only asked requests of faculty if I knew that they would say yes. Here, my advisor teaches me to clearly communicate what I want out of my education.

What are some challenges in your work with graduate students? (Question for faculty)

* Help students **find that middle ground** between working efficiently and not getting too stressed out.
* Learning to treat every graduate student as an individual with their own needs.
* Expressing to students that **they can say it’s okay if they don’t understand something**, and to say they don’t understand something to their advisor sooner than later, not simply try to please advisors.
* Expressed concern that for doctoral students where English is their second language, it might be helpful to use software in the English language rather than the home language to get more proficient with English.
* Getting students to learn to be more comfortable to **speak up in class** and to participate in group discussions. It is recommended to write down the questions before asking to be more accurate.
* **It takes time** to build a good relationship, especially for doctoral students.

In your working relationships with faculty, give an example of a time when you faced a challenge in communication. Please describe how you navigated this challenge? (Question for grads)

* I don’t communicate with faculty and that’s a challenge.
* Encouragement from faculty did make a difference, especially in front of other students in class.
* How do I show that I actually am self-motivated and actually do a lot of work and put in time and effort? Trust is built over time.
* Early on, I actually needed more time to think before speaking up in class because I had to work hard to figure out how to say things in English first. It’s not that I didn’t want to participate. One faculty thought I was being lazy, but actually, when your peers speak English really well, they only have to think in one language and not have to do internal translation work before speaking in class.
* Faculty don’t have to love you. This doesn’t mean you’re not a good student. Sometimes it’s just their personality.
* I also found it hard to speak up in class because of the language barrier, but I slowly became more confident.

What are your suggestions for master level international students (Question for faculty)?

* **Don’t be afraid to interact with faculty** on a more consistent basis, especially when it comes to advising meetings.
* If you don’t understand something, make sure to **ask your faculty sooner than later**. This can relieve problems that can become bigger problems further into your graduate education.
* Ask your advisor for **summaries of your advising meetings**.
* Don’t think you are infringing upon a faculty’s time, if you want to meet with them. Knock on their door, if they can’t meet that same time you can schedule another time to meet.
* **Give advance notice (more than two weeks) if you want a letter of recommendation** for a job.
* To figure out the classes you want to take, get to know your faculty’s research.
* In preparing for meetings, always write down what you want to discuss ahead of time so you can feel prepared.
* Figure out which faculty in your department has more experience working with Masters level students.
* Get support from the Graduate Program Advisor.
* **Learn professional skills** like how to format your resume, how to present your work to industry professionals.

In closing the student panel, please share 1 thing you wish you had known when you first started grad school at UW? (Question for grads)

* Know the faculty members in the departments and discuss with them your plans.
* Understand the expectation from faculty in a clear manner.
* Plan ahead! Do not wait until the last moment to do things, there is no time.
* Presentation skills are really important to share your research with a community.