

On Being a Mentor-Mentee

Mano Singham
UCITE
Case Western Reserve University

Thursday, March 5, 2009

Issues for beginning students:

- choosing an advisor
- choosing a thesis topic
- establishing mutual expectations, good working rules, and rapport with thesis advisor
- establishing good study/work/writing habits

Advisor choice factors

- availability of funding
 - area of research of a faculty member
 - personality of the advisor
 - graduation track records
 - career prospects
 - collegiality and comfort
 - credibility (junior/senior/tenured/pre-tenured)
- Liang, Joy, Bilimoria, Perry

Ideal mentors:

- Prepare you for success in field
- Are ethical with you and your work
- Do not exploit students
- Are interested in students as persons
- Treat students with respect and courtesy
- Give regular feedback on your work
- Know the rules for graduation and help you meet them
- Help improve your writing and presentation skills

Sources of information

- courses
- fellow students
- small exploratory projects
- social events

Issues for mid-career students:

- making contacts and networking
- keeping a steady writing schedule
- dealing with frustrations/setbacks in research
- lack of progress
- feeling of burnout
- conflict with thesis advisor and/or fellow students

Issues for late-career students

- deciding when the research is done
- finishing writing of thesis
- giving talks
- preparing for a career after school

General rules:

- At any given moment, you need different mentors to meet different needs
 - Whether you like it or not, you are also a mentor to others
 - The only person's behavior you can change is your own
 - You need to be self-reflective enough to identify and develop the skills to be a good mentee/mentor
- PEOPLE FORM IMPRESSIONS OF OTHERS VERY QUICKLY, AND ONCE FORMED, THEY ARE HARD TO CHANGE**

When you are the mentee:

- How would you like to be perceived by others?
- What are the qualities that *you should have or develop* that would make others want to:
 - assist you
 - advise you
 - help you succeed?

When you are the mentor:

- How would you like to be perceived by others?
- What are the qualities that would make others want to:
 - listen to you
 - seek your advice
 - seek your assistance?

Clues:

In meetings, who are the people who when they speak:

- other people pay attention to?
- other people roll their eyes and start talking and whispering with each other?

END