CRA-W Graduate Cohort: 2005

Mentors and Advisors

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Advanced degree - research

- You need to find a research adviser/mentor
- What research area
  - Take classes
  - Talk to professors
  - Do projects
What is a Research Advisor?

Apprentice relationship: Shows and helps you do research

- Find a research problem
- Get proper background: literature, skills
- Do research –
  - How to tackle problems
  - Organizing and writing papers & proposals
  - Giving talks
What is a Mentor?

- Mentoring is establishing very special relationship
  - personal as well as professional
  - develops and lasts over an extended period of time
  - provides help, advice, contacts, and information
  - provides encouragement and acts as advocate

- Research advisor may or may not be a mentor
Need both

- If adviser not a mentor, need to find one - or more
- Could be in department
- Could be in research area but in different university or industry
- Assume research advisor is a mentor - ideal
What should you expect

- Research apprenticeship
- Help build confidence - encouragement
- Help with networking
  - Conferences, workshops, email
- Helps prepare you for talks
- Helps prepare you for interviews
- Helps with funding
Finding/evaluating an adviser

- Is the person in a research area you like?
- Is the person’s work current and relevant? Funded? Where publish?
- How many students does he/she supervise?
- How long does it take students to finish?
- What is the placement of past students?
- How responsive is adviser?
  - How long to return written materials?
  - How accessible
Finding/evaluating an adviser

- How much freedom does the student have?
  - Learn to do research – find problems
- Does the adviser publish with students? What is the order of names?
- Who presents the papers that are co-authored?
- Does the person take students to conferences and help with networking?
- Are the person’s work habits compatible with own?
How to find out

- Look at faculty’s web page
- TALK to current and past students!
- Work on a small project with her/him
- Take a class from faculty member
What do students' say?

- From a student's - Kamalika's - perspective!!
Advisors & Mentors - What students think

Kamalika Das
PhD Student, Computer Science, UMBC
Finding a Mentor

- First & obvious choice - advisor
- Other professors in the department/outside
- Support groups at school
- Senior graduate students
Your Responsibilities

- Stay in touch with your mentor - always
- Value your mentor’s time and effort
- Know what to ask for
- Don’t force a relationship - look for a better match
Things to do

- Meet up during departmental Hi Teas / ask for an appointment
- Do your homework
- What to talk about?
- Listen
My Experience

- Undergraduate
  - No formal mentor programs
- Graduate
  - Senior graduate student
  - My research advisor
  - Grad Cohort 2005
Barriers to good mentoring

- Faculty member doesn’t have enough time to devote to mentoring
  - Being too busy is not acceptable
- Faculty member and student are in competition with each other
- Faculty member and student lack personal experience with people of different backgrounds
- Trust is not there - different agenda
- Communication problems - listening
- Unrealistic expectations
Do and Don'ts

Do

- Listen and consider advice of adviser
- Talk to adviser if have a problem in research
- Make sure you are getting what you need from an adviser
- Talk to adviser if not satisfied

Don’t

- Talk criticize your adviser in public
- Get too involved – including sexual relationship
Resources

- "Adviser, Teacher, Role Model, Friend - On being a mentor to students in S & E", NAS, NAE, IOM, National Academy Press, 1997
  - http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/mentor

- CRA-W Career Mentoring Workshops Booklet
  - Getting tenure, Building research career, Finding funding, Time management
  - http://www.cra.org/craw

- Research Student and Supervisor: An Approach to Good Supervisory Practice
  - Council of Graduate Schools, Washington, D.C.