

AN ASPIRATIONAL STATEMENT ON FACULTY MENTORSHIP

The Department of Psychology at the University of Arizona follows a student-focused, mentorship-based model for training doctoral students in psychological science. Mentors are trusted guides to learning, and mentorship occurs in an educational setting when mentors provide this guidance to advance a mentee's career development.


High-quality faculty mentorship is not only the vehicle for the scientific training conducted in our department, but it also serves to promote graduate student wellbeing and a sense of collective satisfaction in our shared place of work. Mentorship occurs not only in the context of students' development as scientists but in the relationship between an instructor and teaching assistants, clinical supervisor and trainee, or in the context of departmental service and committee work. Equally, students may be mentees in some contexts and mentors in others (e.g., when supervising the work of undergraduate students).

We recognize that the mentorship relationship is a "two-way street" in which both mentors and mentees must take responsibility for good communication—about expectations, about what is working well, and about what can be improved. Mentees should be able to communicate constructively with their advisors without fear of retaliation.

Given the importance of mentorship for achieving the Department's strategic plan and training goals, the faculty believe it is critical to codify the observable behaviors that define high-quality mentorship. In many ways, the behaviors listed below constitute a statement of shared values.

We see high-quality mentorship as defined by:

Treating Graduate Students as Junior Colleagues

1. **Treating doctoral students (and their work) with dignity.** This includes: interacting with doctoral students as junior colleagues who are here to be trained in all aspects of the conduct of scientific research; speaking to doctoral students (or about doctoral students' work) with respect. High-quality mentors acknowledge that graduate students are not simply research assistants who complete work that advances their advisor's career. Students should be included in the scientific publication process in a manner that is directly commensurate with their efforts and in accord with ethical standards in the field.
 2. **A commitment to the development and maintenance of professional boundaries.** It is the responsibility of all mentors to create a professional relationship that is in the best interests of their students, one that is safe, non-coercive, and non-exploitative.
 3. **Recognizing the power dynamic that exists between trainees and mentors.** Given that all mentors are in positions of power, high-quality mentors consider how their words and actions can impact mentees' progress.
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Providing and Asking for Constructive Feedback

4. **Providing constructive feedback.** High-quality mentors aim to make their students' work better and to provide feedback that is concrete, actionable, detailed, constructive, and encouraging. Comments that are critical of students' intentions, capabilities, or motives are avoided. When issues arise with trainees or their work, mentors ask questions in an open and curious manner that is neither critical nor condescending.
5. **Providing timely feedback.** High-quality mentors place priority on responsive and timely feedback to their students. Documents are returned promptly, ideally within two weeks, and, if later, the student is given an explanation about the delay and an expected timetable for receipt of feedback.
6. **Providing regular feedback and conducting a review of goals.** High-quality mentors meet in person at least once every two weeks to review progress and movement toward the mentee's professional and career goals.
7. **Being open to and asking for feedback.** High-quality mentors are open to and solicit constructive feedback from their student. High-quality mentors make it clear to their trainees that they can raise issues in kind and considerate ways to improve their relationship and the efficiency of their work together.

Supporting Academic Development & Student Wellness

8. **Recognizing that the work of graduate school is inherently difficult and inquiring about students' needs for support.** High-quality mentors recognize there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to supporting students and enabling their success. These mentors try to understand what would be helpful to each student and, to the best of their ability, provide this type of support or guidance. High-quality mentors inquire about their students' wellbeing and provide positive feedback to encourage students' efforts.
9. **Meeting students "where they are."** High-quality mentors make efforts to "meet students where they are" in their professional development and to provide appropriate oversight and scaffolding that allows for continued growth toward professional independence. When done well, this scaffolding represents a "middle-of-the-road" stance that helps students feel supported in their efforts but not micromanaged.
10. **Maintaining reasonable and predictable expectations for work performance.** People work best under moderately stressful conditions that include reasonable and predictable expectations. High-quality mentors recognize that prolonged, high stress environments, excessive work demands, and unpredictable timelines are detrimental—not conducive—to student progress. In doing science, work stress is unavoidable; our lives are replete with deadlines and full of major projects. To the best of their ability, high-quality mentors take steps to make their students' experiences are manageable as possible, even during periods of intense work.
11. **Providing training opportunities for their students and making an effort to be inclusive and equitable with these scientific opportunities.** High-quality mentors provide time, resources, and opportunities fairly and equitably across students they mentor, and recognize that all students desire opportunities to advance their professional development.