Great Expectations: Care and Nurturing of Grad Students and Postdocs

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Welcome to the other side!!

- For many new faculty, this position at UC will be the first time you are out of a trainee and/or highly mentored position.

- When trying to find your way, always remember that riding in the car is not the same view or experience as driving the car. It is different being on the faculty side of things.

- Think explicitly about all the things you DID and DID NOT like about your previous mentors! What is on your top 10 list?

- Be open to learning new ways to enhance the experience for you and your trainees.

I want to lead original research projects of graduate students

- To lead a dissertation (PhD) or thesis (Masters) project, you need to be a member of the graduate faculty.

- If your Department/Division is home to a graduate program, talk with the graduate program director who runs the program about being nominated to join the graduate faculty.

- Graduate faculty are full-time faculty who have an active research program as part of their position (primarily tenure-track faculty).

Other options for involvement with graduate students

If your Department/Division is NOT home to a graduate program, investigate the multi-department programs that intersect with your academic interests. They can also nominate you to join the graduate faculty.

You do NOT need to be graduate faculty to
- be a member of a dissertation/thesis committee
- to teach in graduate courses
- to lead a capstone project.

How do I support a student?

- The Graduate School annually distributes about $40M in tuition scholarships and $20M in stipend to colleges, and colleges decide how to distribute the funds within their graduate programs. GS funds are supplemented by college/dept funds, and grant and contract funds. ~11,000 students.

- Most PhD students get full tuition scholarships and a stipend, but the stipend amount and duration of support from the graduate program varies widely.

- In general, Masters student support is less lush. Most commonly students get no, or minimal, scholarship. Stipends are unusual for these students, except in departments that lack a doctoral program.
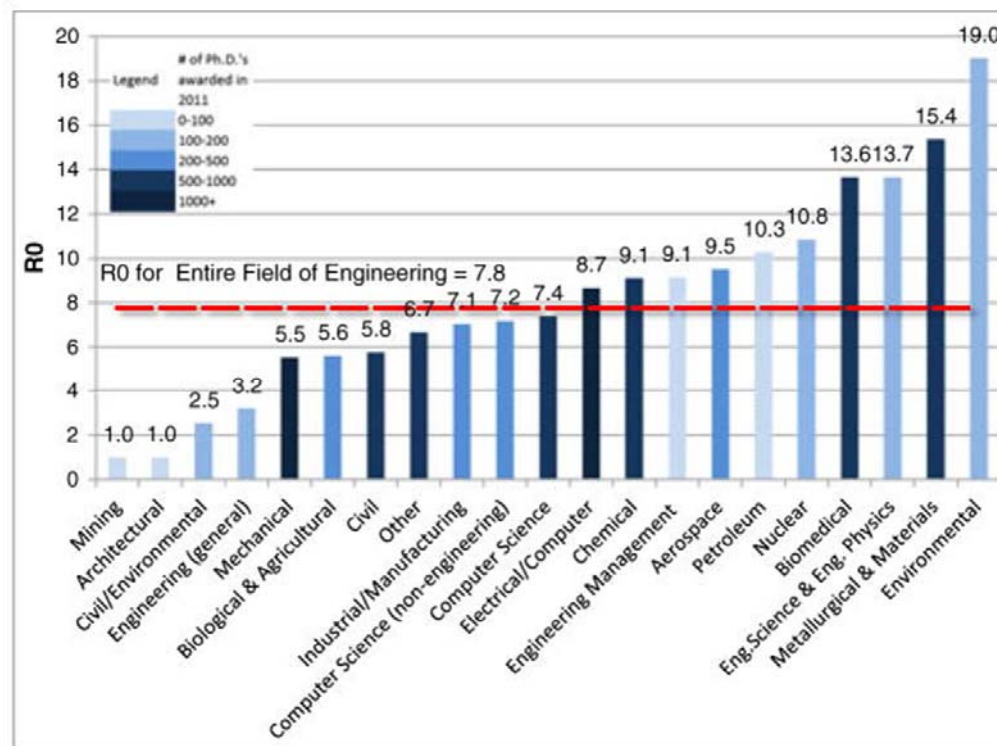
More money stuff about students

- Grad students are less expensive than postdocs in both salary and fringe benefits.

- Graduate Assistants (Research or Teaching) are eligible for a subsidy of their student health insurance from the Grad School.

- In some disciplines/programs, it is expected that the primary mentor will support their student after a certain point. Make sure you know local expectations.

- Always look for external funding opportunities, and many of you will have included support for trainees in your startup funds request. There are some college specific funds.
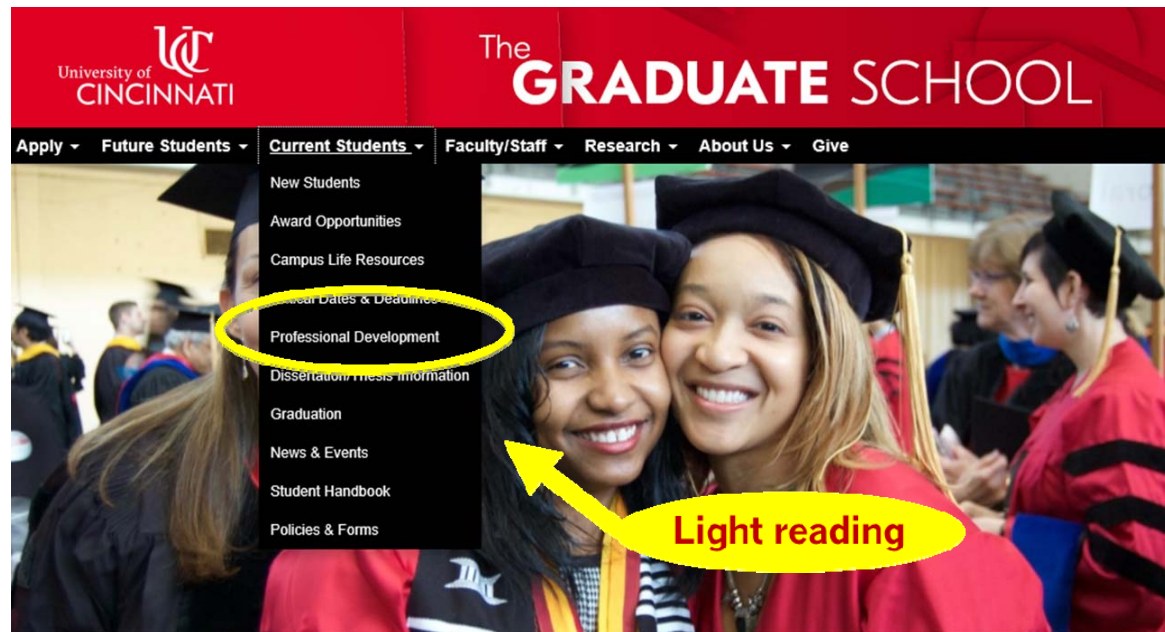
Support for graduate students

- http://www.uc.edu/cetl/gate.html GATE = Graduate Association of Teaching Excellence. Student-run group providing teaching advice and workshops.

- http://www.uc.edu/aess/lac/writingcenter/grad.html Graduate Writing Center. Get help with writing challenges faced by all young professionals.

- https://www.uc.edu/gsga.html GSGA = Graduate Student Governance Association. Travel awards! Fellowships! Social events!

Students need to have broad career options

R. C. Larson, N. Ghaffarzadegan and Y. Xue, *Systems Research and Behavioral Science, 2013,* **31, 745-750.**

Professional Development
for all trainees; http://grad.uc.edu/

The Graduate School

Professional Development
for all trainees; http://grad.uc.edu/student-life/grow.html

Individual Development Plan

A strategic tool to guide students through career and professional development.

Donuts and Development

This yearly event is a one-stop shop to visit various professional development groups, offices and courses across the university.

Campus Resources

Offices across campus provide professional development opportunities for graduate students such as writing assistance, teaching guidance, job search help, and more!

Preparing Future Faculty

A graduate certificate program in modern teaching and learning; offers rich mentoring experiences to strengthen career skills!

Graduate Student Expo

A yearly event that showcases graduate student research, scholarship and creative works.

Workshops

Workshops supplement a students academic training by providing brief, specific skill-building sessions on professional and personal development.

Mentoring is work

The U.S. Council of Graduate Schools studied what employers value in graduate students.

They are:
Advanced content knowledge
Ability to analyze and synthesize data or information
High-level skills to examine & solve complex problems
Creative intellect to inspire innovation and drive discovery

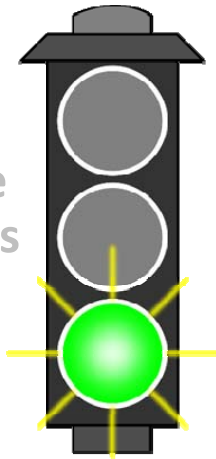*You have to foster these talents by working closely, and sometimes things don't always go as planned. What to do then?*

Managing a deficit

Identifying the deficit EARLY gives everyone time to adjust and compensate while minimal damage has been done and communications lines stay open

No one is perfect

- Realign a project to suit everyone better and invest time
- Meet regularly and talk frankly about challenges
- Work hard and smart to restore enthusiasm and optimism
- Share/review things in writing so no one forgets or misunderstands (selective hearing loss)

Managing a deficit

Identifying the deficit **LATE** means adding some more ways of compensation to balance deeper concerns and strained communications
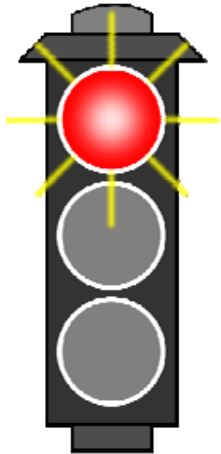
Consistent concerns

- Get help if you need it to bridge the gap (mediators, alternate mentors)

- Salvage what you can from the investment you have made (smaller papers, lowered ambitions)
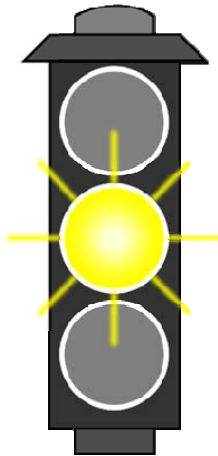
Managing a deficit

A deficit is **TERMINAL** when it degrades performance and every communication is problematic

It is the centerpiece of the relationship

- Always keep it professional: be fair, calm, and constructive
- Get advice on how to handle situations
- Develop an exit strategy and timeline that meets everyone's needs

A roadmap to avoid potholes with any trainee

Be aware, open, and talk

- Clarify expectations of how time is invested

- Set up regular meetings and expect robust, challenging discussion

- Come to meetings prepared, with talking points (data/ideas, questions)

- Make it easy to get and give formative feedback

- Share one personal item in each meeting. Help the other person understand you and your goals

Postdoc Mentoring and Considerations

❖ UC averages around 150 Postdocs and 50 Visiting Scholars.

❖ Currently, no formal required programming. There is a proposal from the Research Advisory Board to the VPR to change this.

❖ Fall survey to all current Postdocs and Visiting Scholars (sometimes called VAPs).

❖ NSF requires a mentoring plan for all proposals that fund Postdocs who are not included as Senior Personnel on the grant.

❖ The NSF mentoring plan must be no more than one page and can include activities such as:

- o Career counseling
- o Training in preparation of grant proposals, publications, and presentations
- o Guidance on ways to improve teaching and mentoring skills
- o Guidance on how to effectively collaborate with researchers from diverse backgrounds and disciplinary areas
- o Training in responsible professional practices

Resources

Barker, K. 2010. *At the Helm: Leading Your Laboratory*, 2nd Edition. Cold Spring Harbor, New York: Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press.
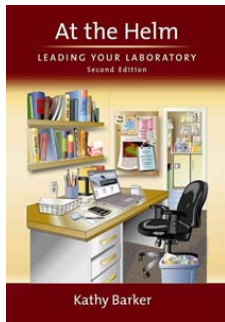
National Postdoctoral Association, http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/ (recommends Individual Development Plan and Research Roadmaps)

Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences, and National Academy of Engineering. 2000. *Enhancing the Postdoctoral Experience for Scientists and Engineers: A Guide for Postdoctoral Scholars, Advisers, Institutions, Funding Organizations, and Disciplinary Societies.* https://doi.org/10.17226/9831. (Free to download from NAE site)
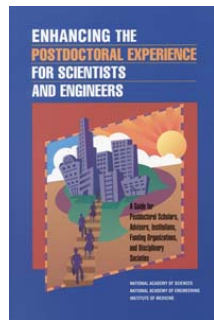
Thank you, and Welcome to UC!
Questions?

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