Mentoring Undergraduate Researchers

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Topics for Today

• Getting Started

• Expectations

• Communication

Blogs.acu.edu/undergradresearch
Common Goals

• Build a productive relationship
• Communicate effectively
• Provide context/background
• Develop skills
• Establish appropriate benchmarks
• Foster high-level performance
• Provide effective assessment & feedback
• Addressing obstacles and challenges
• Foster critical thinking & synthesis
• Foster independence
• Introductions to the scholarly community
• Assist with career planning
Finding Research Students*

- Classes – Look for students who are doing well and enjoy the subject
- Extending class projects
- Students come to you – makes it publically known that you want to do research
- Being available/ relational to students
- Be careful with blanket invitations
- Collegial with other faculty members/ they can send you students

*Ideas generated during the Adams Center Session 10/01/14
Blogs.acu.edu/undergradresearch
What can Research Students Do?/How Do You Pick a Project?*

- Sociology – relatively easy taking general survey data, challenge trying to get them to look at interesting data
- Starting at the beginning, from IRB, taking through the whole process not just collecting data
- Generated from professor interest
  - Sometimes student generated idea
- Look for students that want to go to grad school so they will be invested
- Encourage them to take classes that will help their research (for example programming)
- Having some students that have some relevant experience, starting ahead of time meeting, starting with relevant papers
- In some fields they can work along side you with whatever you are doing.

*Ideas generated during the Adams Center Session 10/01/14
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Setting Expectations

• What are common mentor expectations of mentees?

• What do you imagine mentees expect of mentors?
Amazing Mentees*

- Follow through
- Self-motivated
- Prompt and dutiful arrival
- Show up when they ought and do what they ought
- Professionalism
- Superior writing skills
- Aptitude to learn what’s needed
- Inquisitiveness
- Interest
- Exhibit initiative
- A mini-Ph.D. (already knows how to do stuff)
- Finished what is asked of them

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Expectations of *fabulous* mentees*

- Flexible schedule to get what needs to be done, done
- Make mistakes—common/necessary in research; don’t be afraid to fail
- Be positive
- Dedicated, “whole heart”
- Get excited/share in others’ excitement even if you don’t fully understand
- Try to problem solve on your own before asking for help
- Make a contribution to project; suggest an idea
- Reliable
- Be organized, especially with lab notebook
- Ask questions
- Be open to feedback

*Generated by 2013 UW Amgen & HHMI EXROP Summer Scholars, Orientation 6/14

Blogs.acu.edu/undergradreasearch
Awesome Mentors*

• A lot of personal and individual time
• Readily available on mentees timeline
• Respectful of the mentee
• Soft critique
• Personable and helpful (Leonard not Sheldon)
• More structure than we are used to giving
• Constant feedback
• To treat student as equals
• That mentors will protect them from the Sheldons during presentations
• Give parameters/ benchmark/ schedule
• Liaison to great community

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What makes a Good Mentor?

- Committed to Educational process
- Sacrifice time, energy and resources
- Encourages student make the project his or her own
- Patience
- Encouraging
- Passionate about the research and helping student grow
- Clear Communication
- Allows students to make mistakes and helps correct it with constructive direction
- Involving the student in every step
- Guiding to answers instead of telling the answers
- Dependable
- Take time to ask their students questions and then push back on their answers
- Punctuality/ showing up to scheduled meetings
- Friendly attitude
- Confidence in students
- Helps understand WHY you do certain steps
- Specific – ask specific questions about the direction of the student’s work, doesn’t accept vague or general responses
- Keep student accountable
- Take them to educational/ professional events

*From survey of undergraduate researchers September 2014
Communication*

- Emailing
- Meeting face-to-face
- Detail in writing
- Redundancy
- Getting everyone in a group meeting together
- Shared google doc
- Willingness to give cell phone number
- Praise within a group/ meet privately to share concerns
- Establish the mentor is the person to come to when there are problems

*Ideas generated during the Adams Center Session 10/01/14
Blogs.acu.edu/undergradresearch
Communicate Effectively*

- Ask students how they prefer to be communicated with
- Regular (team) meetings
- Establish Checklists
- Talk to the mentee about your concerns
- Check-in with the mentee about how they feel about the process

*Ideas generated during the CUR conference June 2014

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Resources

• Members of your department
• University Undergraduate Research Council
• Cur.org

• Blogs.acu.edu/undergradresearch/
  – Under Faculty mentors
  – Resources