Communicating with your academic and research advisors: when challenges arise

Scenario 1:

A PhD student David is working with an advisor Prof Smith. David prefers to develop new ideas using theorems and equations. On the other hand, Prof Smith is a programming oriented model developer. He likes to write codes to verify any hypothesis or theories.

They meet regularly to discuss David’s research progress. David tries to understand and work in the manner that Prof Smith prefers. Prof Smith also tries to develop projects that would best suit David’s working style.

After working for one year together, Prof Smith suggests that David to consider finding other research mentorship, explaining that things are not working out as well as hoped.

Scenario 2:

Olivia is a Chinese student who is pursuing her master’s degree. Her mother at home who has long fought lung cancer always wished for Olivia to receive her degree in the U.S. However, three weeks before the end of the first semester, Olivia receives terrible news that her mother’s condition has worsened.

Discussion Questions:

1) What are the challenges the student is facing?

2) What are the different ways the student can respond to this situation? What are the possible consequences of these responses?

3) With what U-M people and/or resources should the student connect?