Presenters

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Workshop overview

I. How to find your advisor(s)
II. Communication best practices
III. Navigating cultural differences
IV. What to do when challenges arise
V. Further resources
How to find your advisor(s)

Schmoozing with your professor:

H-hey Dr. Smith.

I'm going to the lab after this.

Good.

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How to find your advisor(s)

Academic advisor
- Navigate academic options and requirements
- May or may not be faculty
- *Getting stuff done*

Research advisor
- Primary research mentor
- Faculty member
- *Research & professional development*
How to find your advisor(s)

Identifying your landscape - three scenarios for finding an advisor

1) Assigned

2) Assigned, but flexible

3) Find advisor during year one
How to find your advisor(s)

Identifying your landscape, continued

✓ How many advisors do you need?
✓ How straightforward are the curricular requirements?
✓ What are your academic and professional objectives?
✓ What are your strengths and weaknesses?
✓ What are the current projects and research interests of available faculty?
Communication best practices

**Average Time Spent Composing One Email**

**Professors:** 1.3 seconds

Yes. (Send)  
Do it. (Send)  
See attached. (Send)  
No. (Send)

**Grad Students:** 1.3 days

Dear (?) Prof. Smith,

I was wondering if perhaps you might have possibly gotten the chance to potentially find the time to maybe look at the draft paper that I am attaching (in case). I hope you are very thusly to have any questions if you don't hesitate to.
Example email #1

Dear Professor Smith,

My name is David International. I am a student pursuing Bachelors in Space System Engineering Program in the Atmospheric, Oceanic and Space Sciences Department at the University of Michigan.

I went through your work and admire the efforts put into the Solar Neutron Experiment and found that to be invaluable research.

I would like to meet up with you and work under your guidance as a research scholar so that I can learn and at the same time provide expertise from my program here. I have attached my resume to this email to show some of the project experience that I have gained.

If you would like a point of reference, Professor XXXX was my Program Adviser and could provide more details about the program and projects I have taken part in. His contact email is xxxx@xxxx.com. I have also attached my resume and transcript from my previous year.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email. I look forward to your reply.

Kind Regards,
David International
Example email #2

Hi Stephanie,

Hope you had a wonderful holiday break! Are you in Ann Arbor now? Weather here is very scary and I hope you are staying safe and warm wherever you are. :)

I am attaching two documents here. The first one is my draft for the XYZ conference presentation abstract. The due date for the submission is Friday, January 10. Could you take a look at it and give me some feedback before then? Thanks!

The second document is my updated draft for the ABC write-up. I tried to address most of your feedback in this version. This is less urgent than the XYZ thing (you can wait to review it when you have a chance).

Thanks so much for your help! I look forward to talking to you soon!

Warm wishes,
Olivia
Navigating cultural differences

1. Tajel, it's perfectly OK for you to go on vacation.
2. I mean, you did take work with you, right?
3. Excuse me?
4. You spent the whole time thinking and obsessing about your research project, I assume?
5. Uh...
6. In academia, "vacations" just mean you're doing work somewhere else.
7. I don't think we're using the same dictionary.

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Navigating cultural differences

- Different cultures in different departments
  - Research advisor as source of funding
    - STEM: funding frequently tied to advisor
    - Non-STEM: funding not usually tied to advisor
  - Size of department
    - In small departments, students can face special hardship if their advisor relationship sours
Navigating cultural differences

- How much experience does your dept. have with international students?

  - Danger of isolation
  - Do they allow you time to take a break, visit home?
  - Support on immigration issues, e.g. work authorization, travel and visa issues, etc.
  - Stereotypes of international student as more complicated, more unpredictable, harder to communicate with
What to do when challenges arise

Potential challenges

✓ Life events
✓ Competing demands
✓ Changing advisors
✓ Employment considerations
✓ Immigration matters
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.

After working for some time 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.
What to do when challenges arise

- Be optimistic, but do not assume your advisor will put in equal effort on relationship
- Share expectations for each other, revise goals as needed
- Give advisor advance notice of immigration processes, e.g. CPT, OPT, visa application, etc.
- Learn how to say no, or to defer tasks
- Leverage other relationships, resources
Further resources

Recommended reading - Rackham Graduate School

- How to Get the Mentoring You Want: A Guide for Graduate Students

Further resources

Types of U-M resources

Research, writing and teaching

✓ Sweetland Center for Writing
✓ Rackham Graduate Student Success office
✓ English Language Institute (ELI)
✓ Center for Statistical Consultation & Research (CSCAR)
✓ Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT)
Thank You

Please complete your session evaluation.