John Prescott
*International Student & Scholar Advisor*

Gail Lucasan
*Pursuing PhD in Economics*

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*Pursuing Masters in Sustainable Systems*
Workshop overview

- Advisor/Advisee relationship
- How to find your advisor(s)
- Communication best practices
- Navigating cultural differences
- What to do when challenges arise
- Further resources
Schmoozing with your professor:

H-hey Dr. Smith.

I'm going to the lab after this.

Good.
Advisor/Advisee Relationship

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*
Advisor/Advisee Relationship

What is a mentoring plan?

- Agreement between mentor and student about training/educational goals
- Includes both short term and long term goals
- Specifies amount/type of mentoring needed to accomplish goals
- Modifiable (e.g. yearly)
- Establishes process to evaluate whether the goals are met
How to find your advisor(s)

Identifying your landscape

*Three scenarios for finding an advisor*

1) *Advisor is assigned*

2) *Advisor is assigned, but flexible*

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

Identifying your landscape, continued

- **What are your academic and professional objectives?**
- **What are your strengths? What skills do you need to develop?**
- **What are the current projects and research interests of available faculty?**
- **How many advisors do you need?**
AVERAGE TIME SPENT COMPOSING ONE E-MAIL

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 ATTACHED (IN ATTENDANCE JUST IN CASE). I CONSIDER IT VERY IMPORTANT IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS (WHICH I DON'T HESITATE TO).

WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM
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 advisor 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
Communication best practices

- Get to know your advisors and their specific characteristics
- Know what their expectations are
- Try to meet frequently and keep them updated on your research progress
- Demonstrate that you are working hard and making the required effort
- Advisors are there to help, so don’t be afraid to ask questions/ask for clarification
Tajel, it's perfectly okay for you to go on vacation.

I mean, you did take work with you, right?

Excuse me?

You spent the whole time thinking and obsessing about your research project, I assume?

Uh...

In academia, "vacations" just mean you're doing work somewhere else.

I don't think we're using the same dictionary.

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Navigating cultural differences

International students might face different challenges, like a language barrier or loneliness, and may find it harder to communicate,

So:

- *Try to avoid feelings of isolation by joining a club or social events (Escapade, Festifall, Northfest, etc.)*
- *Get both emotional and educational support from your peers*
Navigating cultural differences

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

- *Do they allow you time to take a break, visit home?*
- *Support on immigration issues, e.g. work authorization, travel and visa issues, etc.*
- *Support with financial aid*
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, suggesting 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 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

• Share expectations for each other, create a plan, and revise goals as needed
• Learn how to say no, or to defer tasks
• Leverage other relationships, and resources
• Give advisor advance notice of immigration processes, e.g. CPT, OPT, visa application, etc.
Further resources

✓ IC orientation workshops:
  ○ Writing Academic Email
  ○ Stress Less for Success
  ○ Making Friends with Americans
  ○ Creating your Elevator Pitch

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

Further resources

Types of U-M resources

✓ Sweetland Center for Writing
✓ English Language Institute (ELI)
✓ Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
✓ Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT)
✓ Center for the Education of Women (CEW)
Workshop Evaluation

Your feedback is valuable to us and will help us to improve the experience of future participants. Thank you!

bit.ly/umicorientation