

Department of Human Development and Family Studies

Mentoring philosophy and best practices for graduate mentoring

Literature across a range of disciplines defines mentoring as a process whereby a more knowledgeable and experienced person supports, oversees, and encourages reflection and learning within a less experienced and knowledgeable person, so as to facilitate that person's career and personal development. Faculty in the Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS) Department at Utah State University view mentoring as an essential component of our departmental and professional mission, and therefore strive to achieve excellence in graduate and undergraduate student mentoring.

Excellence in graduate and undergraduate student mentoring is characterized by faculty who act as counselors and guides, and who encourage, instruct, and advocate for their students. The HDFS faculty mentor students in a variety of capacities including through research and teaching endeavors, internships, assistantships, community engagement, and professional practice. Importantly, faculty mentors serve as role models for methods of inquiry in a field of study, for the responsible conduct of research, and for professionalism in a field. Faculty mentors also model the idea of the future to their students in leading by example as they demonstrate what it means to be a responsible, ethical, engaged, and balanced scholar/professional. Collectively, HDFS faculty aim to facilitate the development of students' knowledge and expertise by supporting, counseling, and guiding them, while engaging in a relationship of mutual trust, characterized by open conversation on issues of mutual concern.

The HDFS department acknowledges that "excellence" in graduate and undergraduate mentoring will be judged uniquely within each mentor-mentee pairing, and that faculty-student relationships will manifest in distinctive ways across HDFS's diverse faculty. Indeed, an over-formalization of mentoring relationships may hinder the formation of rapport, affecting the degree of trust and openness among faculty and graduate students. This, in turn, has the potential to negatively impact the degree of learning and development that is likely to occur among students. Despite the differences that will naturally occur across faculty-student relationships, a number of common, evidence-based strategies should guide faculty mentors.

The subsequent pages detail a range of strategies for graduate and undergraduate mentoring, as well as examples of evidence that can be used in promotion and tenure documentation, annual reviews, and peer nomination for awards.