

## **How to mentor graduate students**

Graduate students want effective mentoring, as this helps students learn more successfully. But not all students' needs are the same. Just as the effective teacher tailors lessons to the learning needs of diverse students, skilled mentors tailor their guidance strategies to the goals and circumstances of individual mentees.

NC State has a wide range of students, including those who have been underrepresented or marginalized, and face significant challenges in their graduate programs. Mentoring, like all academic and professional activities, takes place in historical, social and political contexts that influence our institutional culture. The NC State Graduate School acknowledges this fact in its commitment to identify, pursue, and encourage strategies that enhance success, diversity and multiculturalism in all facets of graduate education.

## **What is mentoring?**

In graduate school, mentoring relationships are close, individualized relationships that develop over time between a graduate student and one or more faculty members, or with other professionals who have a strong interest in the student's educational and career goals. It includes not only academic guidance, but also prolonged nurturing of the student's personal, scholarly and professional development.

Good mentoring includes talking regularly about research, coursework and teaching, examining the multiple roles of a professional in a particular field and jointly exploring funding avenues and job opportunities. Graduate students consistently describe these themes as high priorities.

## **Mentors are:**

- advisors, who have career experience and share their knowledge
- supporters, who give emotional and moral encouragement
- tutors, who provide specific feedback on performance
- masters, who serve as employers to graduate student "apprentices"
- sponsors, who are sources of information and serve as academic role models

## **Mentoring enables faculty members to:**

- engage the curiosities and energies of fresh minds
- keep abreast of new research questions, knowledge, paradigms and techniques
- cultivate collaborators for current or future projects
- identify and train graduate assistants whose work is critical to a research project or course offering
- prepare the next generation of intellectual leaders in the disciplines and in society
- enjoy the personal and professional satisfaction inherent in mentoring relationships

## **Mentoring enables graduate students to:**

- acquire a body of knowledge and skills
- develop techniques for networking and collaborating
- gain perspective on how their discipline operates academically, socially and politically
- acquire a sense of scholarly citizenship by grasping their roles in a larger educational enterprise
- deal more confidently with challenging intellectual work