Statement of Advising Philosophy

November 2019

The purpose of this statement of advising philosophy is to promote transparency and positively support communication in my mentor-mentee relationships. This is a “living” document, to be used as a reference, a foundation, or a structure, rather than a rigid guideline for our work together. This document will be revised periodically.

I recognize that humans and human connections are dynamic, and subject to time and growth. I also appreciate that there is variation in personalities, and goals. As an advisor, I will strive to also be a mentor to my students. My intentions are to go beyond plotting course schedules and addressing the minutia of academic details, to focus on identifying students’ strengths, fostering mastery of skills, developing new skills, and of course, extending critical thinking abilities.

I invite discussion with students about any of the topics below.

Note: This statement was adapted from a statement of adviser philosophy distributed by Scott Lanyon, Dean of the Graduate School, and then adapted by Gordon Legge, and Moin Syed. Scott, Gordon and Syed invited faculty to edit and use their text in their own statements of adviser philosophy.

Guiding Philosophy and Career Paths

My efforts are to ensure that my mentees will be successful (as defined by the mentee) in a chosen career. To that end, I will expect that the mentee considers many options and share this thinking with me frequently. I expect to have ongoing discussions about possible and forming career plans, at the minimum once during the annual review. My role will be to make sure that the mentee is aware of, and considers taking advantage of numerous opportunities to learn, explore, grow, and envision how to apply experiences to a career. I will do my best to inform the student of upcoming coursework, research, grant-writing, co-authorship, and teaching opportunities.
Our school is focused on providing education and experiences that advance a student’s critical thinking, creativity, and sensitivity to the care of a whole person. I tend to focus on preparing my students and mentees to think dynamically, conceptually, and pragmatically. I also default to academic pursuits that have the potential to make a meaningful impact on vulnerable populations. I encourage my students and mentees to let me know whether, and to what extent, their interests and goals match with an academic pursuit. I welcome discussion of, and wish to support, many different career paths.

Diversity

I expect to work with, and mentor, students from all backgrounds. I welcome diversity with respect to race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, sexuality, immigrant generation status, nationality, religion, size, and worldview, among other aspects of diversity. Diversity provides richness and depth to professional and personal life. I strive to teach and learn with my mentees, but I will never claim to be perfect. In fact, I will make mistakes. It is my hope that students will gently correct me and offer me valuable insights (and forgive me). I try to be aware of positionality, and will encourage my mentees to cultivate this same awareness. My mentees should also anticipate that I will question and prompt them for potential biases that might be held, acted on, and even influence their/our research.

Personal Life

To maintain a healthy lifestyle and prevent regrets, I insist that my mentees have a personal life that is fulfilling and active. I believe that family is just as important as work. Balance is especially key when a mentee has a partner and/or children. While I do expect eagerness to learn as well as excellence in a project, task, etc completed in a timely manner, I am keen to acknowledge that personal life matters. Time marches on, and special moments happen – so I urge my mentees to be present and engage in life holistically. I do believe that people who overly focus on work tend to be less productive over the long term, less creative in problem-solving, and less physically and emotionally healthy in general. So, that scenario won’t do for my mentees. My mentees must protect both work time and personal life, and be clear with me about those boundaries. I expect to have regular check-ins about work-life balance and adjusting boundaries.
Conduct

**Resolving Conflicts**

I highly value clear and intentional communication. I strive to create an environment that feels comfortable and safe, and one that fosters candid discussion and questioning. I believe that good communication skills will minimize or quickly resolve conflicts. For example, this statement is an important effort to clearly communicate my expectations to reduce the possibility of misunderstandings between my mentees and myself. If you have concerns about interactions with me or with anyone else, please don’t hesitate to bring the matter up and engage in a thorough discussion with me. If you are uncomfortable speaking with me, please seek out the Department Chair, or the Office of Student Conflict Resolution. If you wish for your conversation to remain anonymous, be sure to indicate that at the start of the conversation.

**Time Management**

I expect a lot of my students, and especially my mentees. I also intend to provide the support needed to all of my students so they can make notable achievements. The less time efficient a person is, the more hours/week it will take to meet those expectations, and to make notable achievements. I will encourage each student to consider time management strategies to prioritize tasks and complete work through a satisfying process. I am happy to discuss strategies for time management.

**Relationships with Student Peers and Others**

My mentees can learn a great deal from their student peers and from others around them. Therefore, I expect my mentees to develop solid, professional relationships with peers and others in the School of Nursing, and more broadly, across the University, within hospital/clinic settings, and in the community. These relationships should be supportive, productive, and positive. Novice students should seek out the advice of more advanced students. In turn, it is my hope that the more advanced students will be generous with their time, and offer constructive, and sound advice.
Ethics

My advisees should familiarize themselves with, and abide by, the University of Minnesota "Code of Conduct"


Human Subjects

My students and mentees are required to have a working knowledge of, and to abide by all University requirements for human subjects research. The appropriate ethics training and certifications must be kept up to date. If there are questions, please ask me. It is essential for all members of my research team to be respectful of our research participants, to comply with all of the principles of informed consent, and to store and access data in a secure manner.

Meetings and Consultations

Research Team Meetings

I expect my mentees to attend research team meetings that we jointly schedule unless they are traveling or have some other unavoidable conflicts. Team meetings in the summer are less frequent. I generally consider the summer as a time of independence.

Individual Meetings

I expect my mentees to schedule individual 30-60 minute meetings with me. We will meet either weekly or every 2 weeks. Additional ad-hoc meetings can be scheduled, as necessary.

Communication

I am available by e-mail, text, face-to-face in my office, or by video-conferencing. My office phone is not a reliable way to reach me. I will make every effort to respond to e-mail within 72 hours. At times, my e-mail response may be slow due to competing demands. If there is a matter of urgency (personal or research-related crisis, deadline for a letter, etc.) please let me know immediately with a label of “ATTENTION NEEDED.”

Regarding a letter of reference or other similarly important document, the student or mentee should e-mail me a week, and again a few days prior to a deadline
as reminders. When I submit a letter of reference or other document, I will typically e-mail the student or mentee when the task is completed.

**Independence**

While I expect that there will be many points of contact each month, I support my mentees to work without daily input or guidance from me. My general approach is to encourage students and mentees to “figure it out,” using resources available and your own good judgement, *and to keep me informed*. Students and mentees should contact me for input or guidance as needed. If guidance is needed from me in order to move forward, it is the student’s or mentee’s responsibility to seek me out. View my online calendar and propose 2-3 times to schedule a meeting. These meetings could be in person, by video-conference, or phone. I prefer to provide more frequent guidance to students and mentees initially, especially for those who are not accustomed to working independently. As graduation nears, I expect students and mentees to be ready to function as independent researchers and teachers.

**Working with Other Faculty or Research Teams**

My mentees should take advantage of opportunities to work with other faculty, paid or unpaid, during graduate school. Working with other faculty diversifies experiences with research methods, mentoring styles, and builds relationships with other faculty who might serve as readers, committee members, and references. Sometimes faculty will have positions or assistantships available that they may advertise, but generally the best way to get involved with other faculty research is to contact the principle investigator directly to express interest. Be clear upfront whether a paid or unpaid position is sought. Be sure to indicate whether there is an interest in “sitting in” on research team meetings. Finally, although mentees are encouraged to work with other faculty, if funded to work on a specific project (by me or someone else) that work must be top priority.

**Switching Advisors**

Although we adopt a one-to-one mentorship model and students are formally assigned an advising faculty member, it is also the case that students are technically admitted to the School of Nursing as a whole. Therefore, changing advisors is permitted for personal or professional reasons. Such a change must be mutually agreeable to all parties: student, original advisor, and new advisor. Ideally, a change would occur relatively early in a student’s graduate career (first or second year), but this might not be the case. Additionally, students
have the option of adding a secondary advisor at any point. Adding a secondary advisor could make a lot of sense if a student's interests align well with another faculty member's expertise, and the student does not wish to make a full change of advisors.

**Publications and Authorship**

Publishing is essential for most career paths followed by my mentees. I expect that by year 1-2 that my mentees will be working on manuscripts for publication continuously. My mentees should have multiple publications in the pipeline (published, in press, in review, in preparation) as first author and co-author. Ideally, a minimum of one first-authored paper plus a few additional co-authored papers should be published by graduation. More publications should be the aspiration, however, not often achieved. Meeting such an aspiration will substantially increase the competitiveness for a post-doctoral or academic position after graduation.

I am continually drafting multiple manuscripts at a time, some of which involve colleagues at other universities. Some of these manuscripts will not involve students or mentees as co-authors. My general approach is to invite students and mentees to work on manuscripts when they have been invested in the research or project, it is clearly related to their expressed interests, and I have a sense that they can contribute sufficiently to the manuscript. In this regard, it is very important that you communicate your interests to me, both ongoing and emerging. I want to be sure to involve students and mentees whenever it is appropriate!

I prefer to decide roles and authorship as early as possible in the collaboration on a project. Identifying and agreeing on authorship arrangements early is essential to maintain positive, mentor-mentee, and collegial relationships. Usually, the first author has taken the lead role in the project execution and will take the lead in writing the manuscript and overseeing the revision process. If I am not in the lead role of the project, or first author, yet have significant involvement in a research project (e.g., developing the original idea, collecting data, analyzing data, and/or writing a portion of the manuscript or editing the manuscript), I expect to be listed as a co-author (typically last, as "senior" author). If roles or priorities change, the earlier decision can be altered by mutual agreement. Whether I or my student/mentee is first author, I expect the first author to retain primary responsibility for the publication process. This responsibility remains my expectation if the student/mentee leaves my research team, or takes a position elsewhere. The same general procedure applies to authorship for conference presentations.
Professional Meetings

Developing a professional network is essential, regardless of career path. Therefore, I expect all my students and mentees to attend local, regional, national or international research conferences/scientific meetings, and to present their research at those meetings. Ideally, the mentee will attend and present at two conferences/meetings per year, pending available funds. At a minimum, the mentee should attend one per year. I am happy to discuss and strategize with my student or mentee regarding conference attendance and presentation.

Funding

Graduate Student Assistantships, Training or Fellowships

Our School of Nursing may offer funding for the first two years of the PhD program. The nature of that funding (e.g., teaching or research assistantships) can be unpredictable. Support of specialized training or fellowships could be available within or outside the university. I expect my mentees to write and submit proposals for appropriate training and fellowships (e.g., T32, F31) whenever possible. Writing this type of proposal is an excellent experience, and receiving support for training or fellowships increases the mentee’s competitiveness for future fellowships and jobs.

Research Funding

Funding the research of my mentees is a joint responsibility between them and me. I will work with my mentees to find the necessary funding. Often, this funding comes from research grants from the department, college, or some external source.

Grant Proposal Writing

Grant proposal writing is a critically important skill regardless of career path pursued. Therefore, I expect all my mentees to be active in writing proposals for both university and external funding opportunities (e.g., training, fellowships, research grants, travel grants, etc.). My mentees will also benefit from contributing to the preparation of university-based and federal grants (e.g., NIH) and/or grant reports that fund my research and research team. By the time my mentees graduate, I expect them to be capable of preparing their own research grants.
Dissertation

The dissertation is the final project prior to receiving the Ph.D. The topic of the dissertation will be determined by the mentee, in consultation with me as mentor. Rather than conceiving of it as a discrete and monumental experience, mentees should think of the dissertation as the next stage of developing a program of research. That is, from entry to the program my mentee should be working towards developing a coherent, independent program of research. The mentee is not expected to know what this program of research is or what it will look like right from the beginning of graduate school! Rather, developing the foundation for a program of research is an evolving process that takes shape over time. Generally speaking, I expect my mentee to be reasonably clear about the research focus by the end of the second year in the program.

The dissertation should be a well-designed study, or set of studies that clearly addresses gaps in existing research and practices. The dissertation format should include a set of at least three manuscripts. When completed, the manuscripts should be the quality required for peer-review and ready to submit for publication shortly after the final defense.

Coursework

I don’t have any standard course requirements beyond those of the School of Nursing graduate program. Instead, I expect my mentees to have, or to develop while at the university, a solid background in the concepts and skills that their research and career path require. Building this background could be accomplished in the form of coursework but also workshops and informal arrangements with other individuals (students, postdocs, faculty or staff). I do, however, expect all students to strive to “speak” quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research languages, and be familiar with a wide range of research designs. I encourage my mentees to take as many methods courses as their schedule allows (most of these will be in other departments). I also encourage students and mentees to develop proficiency in Qualtrics, RedCap, SPSS, and/or MaxQDA for database/survey management and data analysis. It is also very useful to learn commonly used quantitative analysis programs such as R, Mplus, SAS, and/or Stata.

The Literature and State of the Science

Regardless of career path, a current knowledge of the literature is essential. Therefore, I expect my mentees to spend significant time each week reading relevant literature that is both specific/directly related to their research interests and of broad relevance to the field.
I suggest doing the following:

1) Sign up for journal article alerts. E-mails notifications of new issues and new online articles for the journal will be delivered regularly. Please talk with me about appropriate journals for which to receive alerts.

2) Google Scholar alerts. Input custom keywords to receive alerts (usually 2-3 times per week) of matching articles from all across the disciplinary spectrum. Also set alerts for specific researchers who have a Scholar profile. Additionally, mentees should be sure to set up a Scholar profile upon entry into the graduate program (even if there is not yet anything in it).

3) Social Media. Journals are slow. Much of the newest developments take place on social media (e.g., blogs, Facebook groups, and twitter). You should follow a reasonable set of these to stay up to date on the most cutting-edge issues in the field.

Teaching

Teaching is a tremendous way to learn to communicate complex concepts to a novice learners. I expect all my mentees to be involved in teaching. I encourage my mentees to look for opportunities to contribute to course instruction, be a guest lecturer or panel presenter, or ideally, as a teaching assistant (TA). Furthermore, any career path pursued by my my mentees will require that they be able to balance multiple diverse responsibilities (such as teaching and research). Graduate school is a low-risk place to learn to balance such responsibilities.

I encourage students pursuing teaching careers to TA for multiple courses during their graduate career. This is more demanding of their time, but this diversity of experience is excellent training for the heavier and more diverse course loads of faculty at primarily teaching colleges. I intend to invite each of my mentees to give a guest lecture in one of my courses.