Student Guide to Mentoring Plan

As you become involved in a research project, it is very important that you know what is expected of you. Here are some issues that you may wish to address with your mentor, if you have not already done so:

SUPERVISION

- Who will supervise and/or direct your research efforts? Do you have a different daily supervisor/contact?
- Remember that all direct mentors, including graduate students, must provide a mentoring collaboration form with Magellan grant applications

COMMUNICATION

- Develop a communication plan:
  - Be sure to get phone numbers and emails of supervisors and other important project personnel
  - Who should you talk with if you have questions or problems occur? What about when you are working alone? For some projects, you may not be allowed to work alone – ask!
  - Who do you contact (and how) for emergencies, illness, tardiness, or unexpected absences?
  - Is texting mentors ok or off limits?
  - Is there a time limit (ex. no calls/texts after 9pm)? What about weekends?
- How often will you meet with your faculty advisor? Are there group or project meetings? What are your responsibilities for each type of meeting (do you need to bring an agenda, list of questions, project status report, prepare a presentation for the group, etc.)?
- If you are traveling abroad, how will you stay in contact? What if questions or concerns about the project arise while abroad? Does your mentor have contacts or resources available to you at your destination? Be sure to troubleshoot and prepare!

SCHEDULE

- What are your work hours, hours per week, or flexible hours? Be sure to discuss your course schedule, expectations about working or not working on breaks (fall, winter, and spring breaks), exam time, summer, and end of semesters.

PROJECT OBJECTIVE/TASKS

- Is your project contributing to a larger on-going project? If so, be sure to understand the focus and goals of the project and how your piece contributes. Be sure to get the big picture and understanding of the impact of both your project and the larger initiative when complete.
- Are there background articles/websites/information that would be helpful to understand the big picture?
- What tasks are you specifically responsible for? If you do not already know how to do these, who will be teaching you? Are there standard protocols, processes, etc, that you can review and learn?
- What is the timeline, expectations, or deadline for these tasks?

TRAINING/PROTOCOL

- Are there skills or special procedures for which you will need training?
- Are there resources, special documents, equipment, etc that is not available at UofSC that will need to be accessed and what is the process?
- Are there preferred methods or specific procedures or protocols for note taking, record keeping and/or data collection?

EXPECTATIONS - GENERAL

Most faculty have similar general expectations from their students:

- Learn how to plan, design, and conduct high quality research in your discipline
- Learn how to present and document your experiences, activities, and findings
- Be honest, ethical, motivated, and enthusiastic
- Be engaged with the project and, if applicable, within the research group

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- Work hard – don't give up!
- Ask questions
- Treat your project team with respect, as well as equipment, supplies, and materials (remember these cost money!)
- Take advantage of professional development opportunities such as workshops and trainings. Some are offered by the Office of Undergraduate Research.
- Obtain your degree – academics are why you are here. If you are struggling, having problems, or just feeling overwhelmed, talk with your mentor! Help is available and it might be as simple as adjusting your schedule one week because you have 3 tests in 2 days – ask.
- Review the Researcher Rights, Responsibilities, and Resources on the USC website

EXPECTATIONS - SPECIFIC

- Are there other expectations that your mentor has for students?
- What is the best way for you to get feedback on your performance so that you know you are meeting expectations?
- What is the expected level of independence for students on this project?
- Are there publication or presentation opportunities? How would this process work in terms of preparation, editing/drafting, authorship, etc?
- One great final question to your mentor might be "Are there questions that I should have asked or other things I need to know that haven't been addressed?"

GOING FORWARD

- Your mentor can be a great resource for your personal, career, and academic success – find out if it's ok to talk with your mentor about: career plans and options, graduate or professional school, classes, etc. Be sure to share your successes and challenges, your mentor may be able to help!
- Remember that a mentoring plan changes over time. Be sure to review this with your mentor regularly.
- Have fun and enjoy!