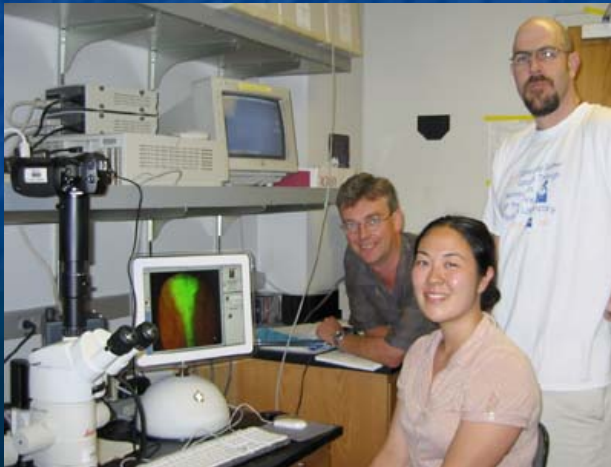


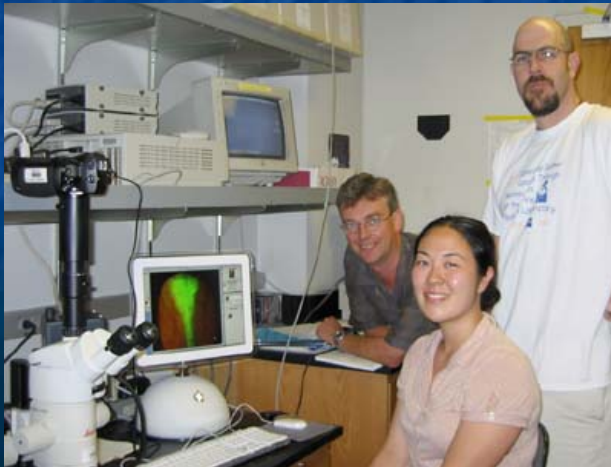
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Professional Communication (or, how
to write an email to a professor so it
gets a positive response)

What is the ideal mentor-advisee relationship?



How do you make it happen?
What's worked for you?



Our agenda

- Overarching rules of thumb
- Finding a mentor relationships)
- Nurturing and maintaining the mentoring relationship

Overarching rules

1. Better too formal than too informal
2. Better too polite than not polite enough
3. No typos
4. Make it as easy as possible for them to give you guidance
5. There are ways you can “keep the conversation going” even if they don’t respond.

Overarching rules, cont.

1. Clear subject heading; say what you need, politely
2. Keep it short (2 paragraphs max); use bolding or formatting to make clear the “action items”
3. Summarize in the email; attach or link supplemental information
4. OK to resend after a few days (“you may have missed this”, “sorry to bother you” etc.); after that, follow up in person.

Finding a mentor: 3 routes

- Apprenticeship programs
- Through classes:
 - go to office hours
 - mobilize contacts
- “Strategic doorknocking”

“strategic doorknocking”: 5 steps

- 1) Identify faculty with interests close to yours**
- 2) Check the “grapevine” – what is s/he like to work with?**
- 3) Read an article**
- 4) Meet with top candidates (establish rapport and establish your credibility)**
- 5) Pop the question!**
- 6) Using email as part of this method**

“strategic doorknocking”

1. Find faculty with interests close to yours

- web search (departments, Research Centers)**
- networking (faculty, GSIs, other undergrads)**
- faculty expertise DB**

“strategic doorknocking”

2) Check the “grapevine” – what is s/he like to work with?

What kind of mentor will work best for you?

What to do if this mentor has a different style?

Ask: faculty you know
GSIs or other grads (check with grad advisor)
Undergrads
 Check with undergrad advisor
 Check lab websites
 Get involved w/ student orgs for major

“strategic doorknocking”

3) Read an article

- From library
- From professor's web page

Then think of a couple of interesting questions.

“strategic doorknocking”

4) Meet with top candidates

Agenda:

- Apprenticeship: ask about *their* work
- Independent: solicit feedback on *your* idea
- Both: establish your credibility: resume, recommendations/reference, transcript

“strategic doorknocking”

4) Meet with top candidates

Agenda:

- Apprenticeship: ask about *their* work
- Independent: solicit feedback on *your* idea
- Both: establish your credibility: resume, recommendations/reference, transcript

“strategic doorknocking”

5) Make the “ask” – spell out “contract” and “fit”

- Apprenticeship:

- How many and which hours you'll work
- Why this assistantship is a great fit
 - how skills you'll gain will be useful
 - why you're interested
 - how this experience will get you where you want to go.

- Independent:

- Spell out mentor's commitment:
 - How many semesters? How many pages?
 - How many and what type of credits (honors? independent study?)
 - Additional commitments for program?
- What part of the mentor's expertise will be useful to guide you? Will you have other mentors as well?

Let's do it in writing!

PRE-EMAIL RESEARCH

- 1) Identify faculty with interests close to yours
- 2) Check the “grapevine” – what is s/he like to work with?
- 3) Read an article

IN EMAIL:

- 4) Establish rapport and establish your credibility
- 5) Make clear your motivation (why they're a good fit)
- 5) Lay out the commitment you seek from them
- 6) Request a meeting; tell them when you are available.