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UMD SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE, PLANNING AND PRESERVATION (MAPP+D) GRADUATE STUDENT MENTORSHIP POLICY

Purpose and Grounding of Mentoring in Strategic Plans

The purpose of this policy document is to articulate our collective commitments to excellence in graduate student mentorship that centers core values of the school and creates an accountability structure to ensure that students are given mentorship and resources throughout their graduate program, promoting their ability to thrive.

Excellence and effectiveness in student mentoring is fundamental for the realization of the 2019 Strategic Plan for the School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, "Stewarding the Designed and Built Environment". MAPP+D's Strategic Plan identifies as its first Strategic Initiative to "Lead in interdisciplinary education for the built environment." Additionally, drawing on our foundational values of resilience, social justice, critical inquiry, innovation, collaboration, and leadership, we identified four fundamental Commitments and Principles in the Strategic Plan. The first Commitment and Principle states:

> PREPARE future practitioners and scholars to meet the challenges of 21st-century practice and research
>
> We will prepare our students for interdisciplinary and collaborative practice and research to address the world's major social and environmental challenges like climate change, housing, immigration, and health.

These Strategic Initiative and Commitment and Principle are in line with the first Strategy of UMD Strategic Plan "Fearlessly Forward": "We reimagine learning and teaching as inclusive, experiential, publicly engaged, creative, integrative, holistic, and empowering."

Distinction of Mentoring vs. Academic Advising

Academic advising offers information on program requirements, course registration, departmental and university deadlines, and matters of policy. It also includes advising for a thesis, a dissertation, a required internship, a competition (like the Urban Land Institute's), publication, and conference presentations. Mentoring is primarily designed to engage with students and further their professional goals, to help them choose a plan of study to meet these goals, and to offer suggestions for academic opportunities and development. Mentoring discussions may also engage interpersonal issues and work/life balance.

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Mentoring Key Values

These are the key values that guide MAPP+D's expectations for graduate student advising and mentoring:

- **Student-centered:** We center students' best interests and needs in the mentorship relationship.
- **Holistic:** We enact mentoring strategies that foster academic, professional, and personal wellbeing and growth.
- **Intersectional:** We adopt an intersectional approach to mentoring that considers the multiple traits of identity which impact the students' graduate school experience and mentorship dynamics. They include but are not limited to race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, international student status, learning and other (dis)ability statuses, familial and work responsibilities, and religion.
- **JEDI-based:** We are guided by justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) principles in our mentorship approach, creating an environment where diverse students are supported, redressing the historical harms that higher education institutions have had on racialized and minoritized graduate students.
- **Generous:** We offer students plentiful advice, opportunities, recognition, time, connections, and resources to the best of our ability for them to flourish.
- **Ethical:** Mentors model professional integrity as scholars, teachers, and authors. They recognize and avoid conflicts of interest, collect and use data responsibly, fairly award authorship credit, cite source materials appropriately, use research funds ethically, and treat graduate assistants and human research subjects properly.
- **Self improving:** We develop mentorship skills as a faculty, which include centering wellness/wellbeing, empathy, problem solving, and collaboration with our graduate students.
- **Protective:** We prevent and defend mentees from exploitation of graduate student labor, unhealthy competition among them, and any other conditions conducive to a hostile or toxic climate.
- **Transparent:** Mentors regularly discuss clear rules of engagement and expectations with mentees for their relationship and invite and consider student feedback to shape and reshape them.
- **Negotiable:** Sometimes a designated mentor-mentee partnership is not a good fit, for a variety of reasons. Mentees should have clear and straightforward options for changing mentors, with assurance and support that such changes are not problematic or disruptive.
- **Reciprocal:** We model these behaviors and expect mentees to be respectful, professional, responsive, communicative, and accountable.

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- **Accountable:** We commit to open accountability processes regarding these commitments informed by both graduate student and faculty needs and desires, and to the ongoing work, reflection, and adjustments needed as graduate students advance in their program.

Mentoring Key Goals

These are the goals that guide MAPP+D's expectations for graduate student advising and mentoring, based on the aforementioned values:

- Create healthy and enjoyable learning spaces.
- Align expectations and assess understanding.
- Promote vibrant intellectual environments.
- Promote personal, professional, and scholarly development.
- Support career guidance and development.
- Foster excellence in research.
- Foster intellectual and professional independence.
- Cultivate ethical behavior.
- Address issues of justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Mentoring Expectations

Basic Expectations for Student Mentees. Students must meet with their mentor(s) at least twice every semester. It is up to them to contact their mentor (via email) to set up these meetings. If a student has difficulty contacting her/his mentor, please contact the relevant Program Director. Students are advised to write a self-evaluation assessment of their progress and share it with the mentor in advance of the meeting. It is also a good idea to take the program's plan of study and share it with the mentor so that everyone is on the same page about timelines and expectations. Meetings will be most productive when students accept responsibility for leading the meeting. Students are advised to raise issues and questions of their interest for the professors to respond.

Basic Expectations for Faculty Mentors. Mentoring is consistently cited by graduate students as an important aspect of graduate programs. A good faculty mentor will take an active interest in all aspects of the professional life of her/his mentees. Faculty mentors should meet frequently with students, at least once a semester; preferably more often. This is a time to discuss the student's goals, to share fellowship opportunities, conferences and publication opportunities, new library resources, etc. as well as to offer intellectual guidance in terms of how to carve out a research and/or professional niche. Mentors should review and return student work

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promptly, with explicit feedback, establishing a timeframe for responding when the student turns in the work: within 2 weeks for feedback on written documents and within 2 business days for email correspondence.

The Faculty Mentor-Graduate Student Mentee Relationship

A critical component of the mentor-mentee relationship is the establishment of clear lines of communication surrounding coursework, research, teaching, and the student's overall wellbeing. This clear line of communication should be established as the graduate student begins the graduate program and maintained throughout their program. Both parties should expect their counterpart to be responsive to communications and work products. They should reach consensus about what are reasonable timelines for this responsiveness in advance. Communication should focus on monitoring student progress, establishing mechanisms for providing ongoing feedback to the student, imparting concrete guidance on research/internship development, assisting students in effectively managing their time, and encouraging participation in departmental/campus life. Through these ongoing discussions, mentors should seek to model and cultivate ethical relationships and behavior surrounding research conduct and authorship, including clearly articulating and using conventions for co-authorship as relevant.

The smooth functioning of the faculty mentor-graduate student mentee relationship is essential to student success and should be predicated on the values and goals articulated above. Once the mentor-mentee relationship has been formalized, the faculty mentor and graduate student mentee will meet on a regular basis (at a mutually determined interval) until the student graduates from the program. During periods of intense data analysis, writing activity, and/or processes when additional support is deemed necessary, mentors and mentees may need to meet once a week or more frequently. Should either the student or faculty member be away (for example, conducting fieldwork, on leave, or attending to other responsibilities), they should still check-in at least once a month via email or zoom call.

As students begin their program of study, mentors and mentees should strive to align expectations about their graduate training and career aspirations and revisit options on a regular basis. Document those in a Statement of Mutual Expectations at least once a year.

Mentors should engage with their mentees holistically, focusing not only on their academic journeys but also challenges they may be facing in their personal lives that impact degree progress. Mentors should recognize that the educational and personal needs of each of their mentees will vary and that what works for one student may not work for another. Mentors should aim to provide concrete forms of support (e.g., referrals to campus support services) during challenging times and help students find creative solutions to address these challenges. Students are also encouraged to engage in these personal conversations as helpful with faculty

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who are not their mentors. Faculty will respect students' personal boundaries and decisions about confidentiality and disclosure of personal circumstances.

If the student's aspirations are to work outside of academia or traditional applied settings, the mentor should be supportive and foster connections to other mentors who can provide guidance on career development and navigating the job market. Mentors should model professional responsibility and have open conversations with their students about professional development and professionalization.

Faculty mentors also need support so that they may provide good advising on diverse issues of interest to their graduate student mentees. Faculty mentors should reach out to their Program Directors and Assistant Deans of Academic and Faculty Affairs as needed to receive information on upcoming milestones, activities, and associated forms they will need to complete with their graduate student mentees. They will also participate with fellow departmental faculty members in the annual review of graduate students to develop greater awareness of their mentees' needs and any resources available for assistance. Faculty mentors are strongly encouraged to engage in regular training opportunities for mentoring to ensure that they are up to date on best practices and emerging issues.

From Academic Advising to Mentorship

These are illustrative examples of concrete actions to take with your mentees to go beyond academic advising to mentorship:

- Beyond giving consistent feedback for their academic progress, help them develop professional skills, such as writing abstracts for conferences, finding/identifying jobs that fit their goals, writing cover letters and CVs, practicing a job talk, preparing a paper for publication, and applying for fellowships and grants.
- Review and return students' work promptly, with explicit feedback. Establish a timeframe for responding when the student turns in the work. Strive to respond email correspondence within 2 business days and provide feedback on written documents within 2 weeks.
- Meet frequently with advisees and mentees, at least twice a semester; preferably more often.
- Share fellowship opportunities as well as information about conferences and publication opportunities, etc. Discuss the major pre-doctoral and post-doctoral fellowship opportunities in your field with students from their first year in the program (also ACLS/ Mellon and archival research grants). Encourage them to check frequency and apply, taking advantages of services and tools, such as:
  - https://research.umd.edu/resources/proposal-development-services/proposal-development-services-graduate-students-and,
  - https://gradschool.umd.edu/funding/fellowships-awards/external-fellowships and

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- https://apps.grad.illinois.edu/fellowship-finder/
- Discuss your own work with students and offer intellectual guidance for them in terms of how to carve out research and/or professional niches. E.g., what approaches or methodologies do you take in your writing? What are trending methodologies and approaches in your field right now? What archives, special collections, etc. within your field might you suggest to students?
- Offer to work with your advisees on how to develop an original thesis topic/proposal or how to navigate a specific database that is important in your field.
- Offer guidance and encouragement on a personal level and be accommodating of any problems your advisees discuss with you.
- Ask both specific and open-ended questions: When do you plan to take your [insert benchmark here]? What opportunities for sharing your research are you interested in? Why did you decide to go to graduate school? What do you hope to achieve in pursuing a graduate degree? What kinds of experiences do you anticipate will help you prepare for this outcome? What kind of mentoring relationship would you like with me?
- Ask about long term career goals and multiple career outcomes. Be aware that not all mentees will want to attain university teaching positions. For those students who do want academic jobs, go over job listings with them early in their career; discuss what will make them a successful candidate for the types of jobs in which they are interested. Help them get these skills.
- Students from historically underrepresented or marginalized groups may have a harder time finding faculty whose background and experiences may have been like their own. Commit to helping them find the resources or mentors they may need if they are not readily available.
- Consult with the Graduate School if you encounter a student who needs special support.

Come up with a written mentoring plan with your mentee. Here is an example: http://www.rackham.umich.edu/sites/default/files/developing-shared-expectations.pdf

Special Phases of Mentoring

Graduate Student Onboarding

Effective mentoring and successful graduate outcomes require establishing and implementing best practices from the beginning of a graduate student's career within the school. All faculty and students will be provided with their respective program's handbook outlining policies, responsibilities, expectations, and available resources for graduate students. Incoming students will receive their copy of this handbook during their orientation meeting with the Director of their programs. Faculty mentors are advised to review the handbook with their student advisees so that both parties are familiar with departmental and university expectations and

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resources and will seek information together on areas of uncertainty they may have, consulting with the Program Directors and Program Management Specialists as needed.

Students will be assigned a temporary mentor in their area of concentration/subfield of study at the time of admission. Once they start the program, they will meet for the first semester or year of study until the student and mentor collaboratively determine to continue the relationship or find a suitable faculty mentor. Until the mutual determination is made official, the student will continue to meet with the temporary mentor to ensure they are receiving the support and guidance necessary for their success at the University of Maryland.

Changing Advisors

Per the UMD Graduate School, the faculty advisor-graduate student advisee relationship is one of mutual agreement. Either party may request termination of the relationship at any point in the student's graduate career. A change of advisor may occur for a variety of reasons, such as students and advisors having different research interests or work styles, or if faculty retire or leave the university. If both parties agree to terminate the relationship and the student has secured a satisfactory arrangement with a new advisor, no further discussion is necessary, though all parties (the student, the former advisor, the new advisor, and the Program Director) will need to complete and sign off on a transition plan, which will be maintained for administrative purposes. When a change of advisor cannot be resolved amicably, the party seeking the change should initiate a confidential conversation with the Program Director.

Separate or joint meetings may be held between the graduate student, current advisor, proposed new advisor, Program Director, and faculty members of the Graduate Committee if needed. If agreement is not achieved between the former advisor and student in terminating the relationship, there is no clear replacement advisor presented by the graduate student, or if this proposed new advisor has not agreed to replace the former advisor, then the Program Director will discuss the best possible candidates to serve as the new advisor. The Graduate Committee and members of the relevant area of concentration will be brought in to discuss possible candidates if needed and at the discretion of the Program Director. The consideration of advisor candidates will consider the best possible match in terms of interests as well as the equitable distribution of faculty advising responsibilities. Candidates for advisor will be approached after these deliberations if they were not already part of them.

The Program Director will work with the student, old advisor, and new advisor to develop a clear transition plan for the graduate student moving to a new advisor. This plan should address, among other topics, implications for program requirements (coursework, exams, advancement to candidacy), students' funding, and intellectual property concerns (ownership of data, fieldwork participation and obligations, authorship on completed or ongoing research). The student, the former advisor, the new advisor, and the Program Director will sign the transition plan, which will be maintained for administrative purposes.

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Mentorship Beyond the Advisor

Graduate students should foster a diverse network of mentors because they will need multiple types of support for success. Support needs shift throughout the course of a graduate student's study program, and no single individual can provide all the support they will require to be successful in graduate school. This support can come from other committee members and even other faculty members who do not have formal advising relationships with the student. This support could include resources and assistance for physical/mental health challenges, financial stress, family tensions, caregiving responsibilities, and personal distress, in addition to the recognized learning, research, teaching, and service challenges associated with academia. As such, graduate students are encouraged to seek multiple mentors *within the school and outside of the school*.

These mentorship relationships do not need to be formalized in the same way as the faculty advisor-graduate student advisee relationship, though may be per the preference of the mentor and student to allow mentors credit for their labor and to ensure transparency with the student's advisor. For example, graduate students regularly serve as teaching assistants and instructors for diverse classes at the University of Maryland. Identifying and working with an experienced teaching mentor assists graduate students in building instructional skills, strategizing difficult classroom situations, finding useful learning resources, and developing a personal pedagogy.

Peer-to-peer mentoring is also strongly encouraged as more experienced students can offer insights into available resources, departmental norms, and non-academic support. Having multiple mentors provides graduate students the opportunity to receive the holistic support they need to be successful.

Mentoring in MAPP+D Programs

Each graduate program has its own mentoring process, detailed in their respective program handbooks.

Masters Graduate Student Mentoring

ARCH. Please refer to the ARCH Program's Handbook ([link](#)).

URSP. The 2024 Urban Studies and Planning Strategic Plan includes Objective 2.4: "Ensure that URSP students have access to quality advising and mentoring." Additionally, the MCP Student Handbook states: Faculty mentors play a critical role in the student learning experience while in the Urban Studies and Planning Program. Mentors provide academic guidance as the student navigates her/his course of study and provide professional insight and support as the student plans for her/his professional career. To register for classes, a mentor's approval is required. In practice this usually means a scheduled meeting every semester to

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discuss progress and plans. Mentors are assigned in the first semester of a student's study. If students need to register and do not yet have a mentor, they can contact the Program Director for course approval. The initial assignment of mentors is made by the Program Director, based on faculty availability and student interests (as best as can be determined). Students have the option of changing their assigned mentor as they continue their studies. In this case, they can submit a completed Change of Mentor form to the Program's Administrative Assistant or Management Specialist.

> **HISP**. Please refer to the HISP Program's Handbook.

> **RDEV**. Please refer to the RDEV Program's Handbook.

PhD Graduate Student Mentoring (excerpts from the URPD Program's Handbook)

> **PROGRAM ADVISING** (p.5). Ph.D. students are required to work with a faculty mentor or more responsible for advising and providing academic support over the course of their studies. It is advised that students meet with their faculty mentors on a regular basis and initiate conversations on their areas of interest early on. This will ease their process of defining their research focus and formulating their dissertation topic.

Academic advising and mentoring are particularly critical for students regarding their selection of major and minor fields, comprehensive exam, and dissertation research, while not limited to these. Mentors provide guidance to students in developing two fields of specialization, a major and a minor field and course taking in these two fields, based on the student's own background, areas of interest, and career plans. Mentors, particularly a primary adviser, provide guidance to students for forming the examining committee, members of which are selected for their expertise in the student's chosen major and minor fields, in addition to the area of planning theory. In consultation with their faculty mentors, students prepare and submit to their mentors and the URPD director for approval a reading list for their chosen major and minor fields as well as planning theory. Finally, mentors provide guidance to students for assembling a dissertation committee, made up of at least five faculty members with expertise in the student's proposed research area. The student's dissertation committee, including her/his mentor, will supervise her/his dissertation from its proposal to its completion. Students are required to meet with their faculty mentors on a regular basis and with their committee annually.

References

The University of Michigan's Graduate School' Mentoring Guidelines for Faculty.
UMD Department of Anthropology Graduate Student Mentorship Policy.
UMD English Department Mentoring Policy.