

THE REQUIRED AND SUGGESTED ROLES OF ADVISORS AND MENTORS

REQUIRED ROLES

The following roles are required in most graduate school programs, regardless of degree or discipline.

Major Professor

The faculty member who serves as the (co)chair of the graduate student's committee; also known as the "advisor." The advisor and the student work together to develop and implement the student's research program, a social and professional development contract which culminates in the successful defense of a Masters (thesis) or PhD (dissertation) degree. Ideally, the advisor has knowledge, skills and a scholarly network that is imparted to the student in a way which allows the student to become an independently known and successful researcher. Finally, this person may also be the student's employer, in the sense of providing grant or contract funding for an RA.

Graduate Committee Members

The faculty and other degree-holding professionals who collectively form the review and assessment committee for the degree work (Masters Thesis, PhD Dissertation) of the student.

Graduate Program Advisor

The staff member in the disciplinary unit of the student who provides the student with information on the rules and regulations governing the graduate program.

Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC - at UW)

The faculty member in the disciplinary unit of the student who is responsible for maintaining continuity and timely completion of the graduate degrees in the unit. This person may sign initial and continuing (annual) offer letters to students, must sign exam and other milestone documentation, and may become directly involved if the student is failing to meet departmental goals. If there are issues between a student and a Major Professor, the GPC may be able to assist the student.

SUGGESTED ROLES

The following roles are *not required*, but may be very helpful as the student works to complete a Masters or PhD. Note that these roles may be taken on by the required individuals above, or they may be other people in the work life of the student. Finding these people is up to the initiative of the student, ideally in combination with the initiative and developed network of the Major Professor. Note that mentors, sponsors and champions can be people beyond your

department and even your discipline, and are often found organically in the process of doing your work and presenting it to your peers.

Academic Mentor

A faculty member who provides the student with expert advice on a range of academic issues, including but not limited to: coursework, other learning opportunities, the process of degree completion, selection of and interaction with committee members, and interaction with the Major Professor. This person need not be a member of the student's committee; and may be drawn from the ranks of the department faculty (e.g., the GPC – graduate program coordinator), or from other professional mentoring communities found within the university (e.g., WISE – women in science and engineering). In most cases, the Major Professor should also serve as an academic mentor.

Scholarly Mentor

A faculty member, and occasionally a postdoc or professional researcher (e.g., a scientist working for a federal research laboratory), who provides the student with expert advice on a range of scholarly/research issues that bear directly on the scholarly/research work of the student. This person is often a member of the student's committee. In most cases, the Major Professor is also a scholarly mentor.

Sponsor

A person who works to introduce the student to a wider network of academics and professionals that can/will help the student gain independence and scholarly "street cred" within their discipline. Sponsors connect students with opportunities. Ideally, everyone on the student's committee acts as a sponsor.

Champion

A person who puts the student forward as a bona fide member of the scholarly community in discipline. Champions write letters of endorsement, put the student up for awards, and help to pave the way for the next career steps of the student. Champions are great at seeing the possibilities in a student and working to nurture and promote them. Ideally, everyone on the student's committee acts as a champion.

Kitchen Cabinet

A set of people the student chooses to help support their graduate school efforts by providing expert opinion and advice on key issues and at critical times. Cabinet members are not "yes men" but they are supportive, positively critical people who can help in the wide range of decisions a graduate student will need to make. Unlike many other roles, a kitchen cabinet most often includes peers and near-peers (e.g. postdocs) who have recently "been through it." In the life of a graduate student, cabinet members are often found in the academic advisor's lab, in the cohort of students within the student's degree program, and/or through other student-based organizations on and off campus.