A Roadmap to Success in Grad School

Dr. Kathleen Flint Ehm
Assistant Dean, Graduate and Postdoctoral Initiatives
Graduate School

Dr. Kim Bell
TA Development Specialist
Center for Excellence in Learning & Teaching
Meet the Graduate School

Interim Grad Dean
Celia Marshik

Associate Dean
David Rubenstein

Associate Dean
Miguel Garcia-Diaz

Interim Asst Dean,
Finance & Admin
Dana Jecewiz

Exec Assistant to the
Dean
Gianna Juliano-Hooper

Senior Assistant Dean,
Student Services
Melissa Jordan

Data Analyst, Student
Services
Colleen O’Toole

Student Services
Specialist
Ally Brasino

Asst Dean, Graduate
& Postdoc Initiatives
Kathleen Flint Ehm

Asst Dean, Diversity &
Inclusion, Director, CIE
Karian Wright

Program Manager,
Turner, GEM, IMSD, CIE
Rosalia Davi

Program Coordinator,
CIE
Lisa Ospitale

Program Coordinator,
CIE, Elizanne Warren-
Russell

CIE Administrator
Erica Valdez

Stony Brook University
Graduate School
TO Fabulous GRADUATE SCHOOL
Tips for a Satisfying and Productive Graduate Experience

• Own your own learning
• Be proactive in managing your career
• Practice Self-Care
• Connect with faculty and mentors
• Take advantage of resources & new opportunities
Why come to grad school?
Welcome to SBU from CELT!

Who are we? What do we do? How can we help you?

celt.stonybrook.edu
What is metacognition?
Self-Regulated Learning

WELCOME TO THE SELF-REGULATED LEARNING LAB

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Self-regulated learners strategically manage how they learn in order to meet their goals. Self-regulation strategies help students achieve more academically, study more efficiently, and have a more positive school experience.

GET STARTED
Use metacognition to succeed in your graduate courses

- **Study smarter**
  - Avoid procrastinating
  - Form a peer study group
  - Have a plan

- **Self-assess**
  - Keep up with course material, check-in regularly
  - Is everything clear?
  - Is there a topic you need help with?

One suggestion: Keep a journal

- Reflect on what you know and what isn’t so clear
- Make study strategies
- Plan how to acquire what you may be lacking

What steps, processes, or conclusions lead you to choose the answer you did?

What additional factors (confusion about course materials, poorly matched learning strategies, outside factors) contributed to your overall challenges?
Applying the three steps of metacognition

**Plan**
- Ask students about their goals
- Give explicit instructions
- Suggest study strategies

**Monitor or**
- Ask what was challenging
- Pair discussion after a question
- Reflective journals

**Evaluate**
- Muddiest Point
- Exam wrappers
- Retrospective post-assessments

**Teaching**

**Grad School**

- ?

- ?

- ?
“Our plans miscarry because they have no aim. When a man does not know what harbour he is making for, no wind is the right wind.”

-- Seneca the Younger, 65 AD
• The unexpected can happen
  – e.g., the pandemic, financial changes, your goals change
• Planning can help you be nimble in the face of uncertainty
Graduate training prepares you for a wide variety of careers.

A plan can help you clarify & reach your goals.

But take it 1 year at a time!
Core Individual Development Plan (IDP) Components

- Self-Assessment
- Career Exploration & Professional Development
- Goal Setting

REPEAT
Identify your skills, interests and values ... and purpose.
What is Purpose?
An abiding intention to achieve a long-term goal that is both personally meaningful and makes a positive mark on the world.
Integrating Purpose with Career

What am I interested in?

What/Who do I care about? What problem can I help solve?

What skills do I like to use?

What capacities can I offer to contribute to the good of others?

What do I value?

What (ultimately) matters? What is worthwhile?
Integrating Purpose with Research

What research topics or questions interest you?

Which groups/communities would care about the outcomes of this research?

What is your ideal research outcome/impact?
Make an action plan for the year with S.M.A.R.T. goals

Want goals to be S.M.A.R.T.

- **S**pecific
- **M**easureable
- **A**ction-oriented
- **R**ealistic
- **T**ime-bound
Then what??

You’ve made your plan

Monitor your progress toward SMART goals

1yr later, evaluate completion

THEN REPEAT with new plan
Do It Yourself Online

- myIDP.sciencecareers.org
- chemIDP.org
- imaginePhD.org

Join a Workshop

- *Planning Your Path to a Satisfying Career*, every semester
  - 2 hours and done
  - Other workshops from professional societies, etc

Take a Course/Join a Program

- PhD Career Ladder Program (GRD 510)
  - 7 step, peer-led career exploration
- Career Planning Seminar (CAR 510)
Grad School can be a stressful time of life. Acknowledge that stress & practice self-care.
• Connect with family/friends/hobbies
• Proactively practice good habits: Diet, exercise, sleep
• When stress strikes, relax
  – Relaxation response is the opposite of stress response
  – Breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds and then breathe out through your mouth for 6 seconds; do this for 1-2 minutes
• Practice & build resilience
  – Acknowledge stress & apply coping strategies to bounce back from adversity
  – Resilience can be strengthened with practice

• Combat cognitive distortions and negative self-talk
Cognitive Distortions

Examples
“I’ll never understand this.”
“I never do anything right.”
“I will never graduate at this rate.”

Use alternative thoughts to challenge cognitive distortions

- Am I 100% sure that ________?
- What evidence do I have that ________?
- What is the likelihood that ________?
- What is the worst thing that could happen? How bad would that be? How could I cope with it?
- Could there be any other explanations?
- Does ________’s opinion reflect everyone else’s opinion?

Think realistically – this does not always mean more positively!
If you need some additional help with your strategies.

- **Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS)**
  - Crisis intervention, brief counseling for individuals, couples (free; usually 10 sessions max)
  - Support groups
  - Skills groups

- **Krasner Psychology Center**
  - Individual, group treatment (small fee/session)
  - Parenting, marital therapy (also small fee)

- **Ongoing Mental Health Therapy**: Consult a doctor or therapist through your health insurance
  - [Resources on finding a local therapist](#)
Connecting with Faculty

- Take advantage of the great faculty we have here at SBU
- When selecting an advisor for your thesis, consider what you need as a mentee
- Connect outside of your advisor or PI
- Build relationships that can yield letters of reference for jobs and fellowships
- Build a circle of mentors
What is a Mentor?

- Advisor
- Advocate
- Role Model
- Teacher
- Colleague?
- Friend?
- Supervisor?
What is a Mentor’s Role?

- Establish effective communication
- Be clear about needs and expectations
- Help trainees become capable professionals & researchers
- Support for trainee’s career and professional development
- Socialization into profession
- Advocacy for the mentee
What is a Mentee’s Role?

- Establish effective communication
- Be clear about needs and expectations
- Identify career and professional development goals
- Be an active participant in feedback and learning
- Take responsibility for contributions to projects and advancement toward goals
Your Mentorship Needs

Take a moment to think about one important research or career goal you want to achieve this academic year.

Then jot down up to 3 things that you need from your mentors to support the accomplishment of this goal.
What do you need?

What can you do to be a proactive mentee and communicate what you need?
Sarah Parker is a doctoral student in entomology. Her mentor, Dr. Russell, is one of the world’s experts on fire ants. He is very busy, as he supervises five students and often gives invited lectures. He also provides advice for agricultural groups on controlling fire ants. He rarely meets with Ms. Parker in person and provides most of his comments on her thesis by email. He encourages students to work independently so they will learn how to deal with problems on their own.

Ms. Parker’s thesis defense is next week. One of the members of the committee says that he cannot approve her thesis because she does not have enough data pertaining to one of her studies of fire ant mating.

Ms. Parker is very upset when she learns about this, because Dr. Russell had assured her that she was ready to defend. It will take her several months to collect the additional data, which will put her career plans on hold.

- Do you see any problems with Dr. Russell’s mentoring approach?
- How could this problem have been prevented?
- Should Ms. Parker have requested that Dr. Russell provide her with more help?
- How should she have gone about this?

From Shamoo & Resnick (2015), Responsible Conduct of Research, p. 93
How does the background or identity of the mentor and trainee impact how you might react to these different scenarios? For example, does the situation change:

- If this happened in your discipline?
- If the mentor and trainee have the same gender identity?
- If the mentor and trainee are from different racial/ethnic backgrounds?
- If the trainee has an invisible disability?
- If the mentor was born in another country?
- If the trainee is the first in their family to go to college?
- If the mentor is from a big urban city and the trainee is from a small rural community?
Quiz questions:
Do you think Dr. Russell was a good mentor?
Do you think Dr. Russell should have recommended Ms. Parker defend?
Are there differences in how this would have played out in your discipline?
Finding Multiple Mentors

Think back to the goal you imagined that a mentor could help with. Are there other areas a mentor could support you?

A mentor can play roles across 5 domains:
- Research skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Psychosocial skills
- Cultural Diversity skills
- Sponsorship skills

Can one person play all these roles?
## Identify Your Mentoring Needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Check for Roles Currently Needed</th>
<th>Roles Mentors Can Play Across 5 Domains* of Attributes Needed for Effective Mentoring Relationships</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Research Skills</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Help me develop research skills specific to my area of focus</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Help me become a better science communicator (presenting and writing)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Help me learn how to collaborate effectively</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Help me write grant proposals and seek other funding</td>
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<td><strong>Interpersonal Skills</strong></td>
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<td>Work with me to define and align the expectations we have for our relationship</td>
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<td>Provide me with constructive feedback</td>
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<td>Communicate honestly and build a trusting relationships with me</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Psychosocial Skills</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Help me build my research self-efficacy</td>
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<td>Help me build my career self-efficacy</td>
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<td>Help motivate me</td>
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<td><strong>Cultural Diversity Skills</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Help me develop a sense of belonging in my program/department</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Be open to conversations about diversity and how it impacts my training experience</td>
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<td>Help me address issues of bias and stereotype threat</td>
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<td><strong>Sponsorship Skills</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Foster my independence</td>
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<td>Help me network (colleagues, funding sources, stakeholders)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Help me find ways to better balance my work and personal life</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Help me navigate and explore career options</td>
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### Mapping Your Mentors

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<tr>
<th>Mentor Roles</th>
<th>Mentor At My Institution</th>
<th>Mentor External to my Institution</th>
<th>Mentor Community Partner</th>
<th>Have no Mentor</th>
<th>Do Not Need a Mentor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Skills</strong></td>
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<td>Area-specific research skills</td>
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<td><strong>Science Communication</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Effective Collaboration</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Grant Proposals and Funding</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Interpersonal Skills</strong></td>
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<td>Define and Align Expectations</td>
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<td>Constructive Feedback</td>
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<td>Honest Communication and Trust</td>
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Consult the Grad School’s new student roadmap

Watch Grad School orientation videos (health insurance, ID cards, etc)
**Graduate School**
Office of Student Services (courses, records, degree clearances, etc.)
Graduate & Postdoctoral Professional Development
External Fellowships Advising
Center for Inclusive Education

**Grad Student Resources from Student Affairs**

**Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT)**

**Graduate Student Organization (GSO)**
**Graduate Student Employees Union (GSEU)**
Kathleen Flint Ehm
Graduate and Postdoctoral Professional Development
Graduate School
2401 (old) Computer Science
kathleen.ehm@stonybrook.edu
grad.stonybrook.edu/professional-development/
stonybrook.edu/fellowships
QUESTIONS?