Part 2.

Essay of Mentoring Philosophy and Doctoral Professional Development Accomplishments

This essay offers a summary of the doctoral mentoring philosophy that has shaped my work in the Department of Linguistics and TESOL at UTA. Here I lay out the approaches that have succeeded for me and the students I have worked with in my 23 years at UTA. Helping students prepare to write a dissertation is not a case of conveying a secret stock of templates and arcane linguistic knowledge, so much as inviting them into a growing, jointly-built understanding of our field. By jointly built I mean that I have observed over time that as I explain different methods for sampling and analysis of data on different projects, or for laying out results and considering the motivations for those results, my own projects become clearer to me as well. I can see in my own writing new shifts that reflect how the shape of a project has sharpened due to discussions with others. My most focused research discussions are with dissertators. My goal is to provide them that same opportunity to explain and refine their thought.

Many of our students arrive in the department with degrees from adjacent fields. For students to be able to show their acquired knowledge of this discipline, while also being able to explain core issues to those new to the topic are sometimes new skills, which are separately mastered. I try to remember how overwhelming it can be when so much of your daily input and structuring is new. I use my memories of the most useful mentoring that I received from multiple professors in graduate school. And my recollections of some relevant anti-mentoring, too. I have had so many students become successful dissertators because I work to recognize where they are starting from and that each of them requires different steps to becoming a stronger researcher. I recognize that each of them may have family and emotional needs that they are dealing with. These are areas that they need to learn to balance with their scholarship, as these will also be valid components of their future academic lives.

One key aspect of successfully writing a dissertation results from encouraging writers to develop projects that excite them and supporting them in learning to systematically examine the questions at the heart of those topics. Often these projects develop at the point when students' academic time has become less structured by course work. Hence, it's important to plan regular meetings to help build in accountability, to monitor each writer's progress, and to provide feedback along the way.

The goal is not just to see students graduate having written a dissertation, but to provide them with the chance to master the milestones that lead to it and the presentation of parts of it along the way—which includes finding the right conference audience for their work. I also encourage students to consider the chance to take part in both conference and journal reviewing in order to see the other side of feedback and revisions. Many of them have found this to offer a great insight into the larger academic conversations occurring outside the department. I also encourage them to prepare for opportunities to explain their work to those outside the field, such as can be developed by learning to navigate an IRB protocol or a funding proposal.

Developing as a mentor

My professional development accomplishments can be seen through my engagement with graduate students across multiple settings. Within our department, I've presented on issues that support doctoral student development, such as how to use the Zotero reference management system and how to prepare a CV. I've participated as a panelist on topics of teaching abroad and on submitting work for academic publications. For the graduate students within my college, I presented "Your (Academic) Online Identity: Social Media and Online Presence" at the College of Liberal Arts Ph.D. and MFA Welcome Orientation. And for an Open Access Week event at the UTA Library, I was the UTA member of a panel discussing "Wikipedia in the Classroom" with co-panelists from SMU and UT-Dallas, to discuss the benefits of students creating academic content for Wikipedia as a form of disciplinary research.

At the national level, I have also taken part as a mentor to doctoral students in the professional organizations that I am a member of, including the Pop-Up Mentoring Program (PUMP) organized by the Linguistic Society of America's Committee on the Status of Women in Linguistics and the Speed Mentoring event at the Modern Language Association annual meeting held in Seattle, Washington. I have also attended cross-disciplinary events that help me to develop as a mentor, such as an EAB talk on the Faculty Role in Student Success; a forum on Sponsorship and Mentorship in Academia: A Toolkit for Faculty and Campus Leaders at UTA; and a seminar on Ways Faculty Use Social Media to Promote Work and Engage with the Larger Community from the Faculty Center for Innovation and Support at The New School, NYC. These types of experiences enable me to stay current in the approaches I can use to help the students I work with. My goal is for them to master the set of skills they'll need in completing a PhD. These include not just writing up their dissertation, but learning to present their research, attending specialized seminars and workshops, seeking funding to pay for their participants and for their own research or conference travel.

I attempt to model for students the ways that they can continue to build support for ongoing research projects that might not come from a single source, but can add up in ways that show a successful record of scholarship with different partners. Likewise with teaching and publication, I discuss with my students and model ways to choose publication venues and teaching approaches that fit their topics, their methodological strengths, or their pedagogical needs.

Integrating doctoral students into the culture of academia is not only about research, of course, but is also closely involved in the training of those who will do classroom teaching. I hope that a positive influence I have had on doctoral students in my department involves planning, discussing, and modeling engaged teaching. In addition to working with TAs in my own classes, I have steadily taken part in classroom observations and feedback of our graduate TAs, and in coordinating the TAs and new instructors across our sections of lower division courses. In addition to logistical issues of textbooks, projectors and syllabi, in this coordinator role I developed a series of groups discussion about the needs and expectations of undergraduates, how to bolster their skills, pique their curiosity, and train them in better organizing claims and evidence.

Specific examples of success

My excellence in mentoring doctoral students shows up in both the quantity and quality of dissertation work produced by my students at UTA. This school year will see the graduation of the 21st doctoral student I have supervised. Since arriving at UTA I have also served on the dissertation committees of 19 other students. A more telling sign of the effectiveness of the mentoring they have received, however, comes through the conference presentations where they have explained their own research. In addition to presenting regularly at our North Texas linguistics conferences (The UTA Student Conference in Linguistics and TESOL, the DFW Metroplex Linguistics Conference, COLA's Spotlight Student Research Forum, etc.) my students succeed in presenting their work at national and global discipline-specific conferences: The Linguistic Society of America, The American Association for Applied Linguistics, the Annual Meeting of the Acoustical Society of America, The Women's Leadership Symposium at Oxford University, The International Pragmatics Association, etc. One of them won the Five-Minute Linguist competition at the Linguistic Society of America in 2020. They've been asked to write book chapters, they've reviewed books, they've been asked to do peer review for journals. They are impressive scholars before they ever leave UTA.

Another metric of effective mentoring can be seen in the job placement of my mentored students and the professional success they have achieved. Their research and teaching skills in linguistics have enabled them to serve as university Scholars-in-Residence and teaching professors, as data scientists in industry, as translators, as tenure-track professors and department heads in the U.S., Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Kuwait. As linguists, their interdisciplinary and multilingual training means that they not only end up employed in Linguistics departments, but have found positions in English Departments, Modern Languages departments, and Translation departments across the globe. It has been an honor to work with and learn from these talented scholars from UT Arlington.