

Mentoring Students Managing TAs and RAs

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Mentoring

- The best part of the professor's job, but a major commitment
 - a long-term relationship
 - quality is more important than quantity
 - don't take students on casually
 - when you do, make them a top priority
 - don't take on too many students - one doctoral student is plenty if you're just starting out!

Advising Problems

- Personality clashes
- Lack of mutual interest
- Time demands on part-time students
 - job and family
- Mismatch between student's abilities and the demands of the area
 - a “trial” project can help detect this
 - help them move on

Advising Problems (cont.)

- Lack of focus
 - “I can’t find a topic!”
 - A period of search is not unusual - in fact, it’s the norm
 - “Do *something*”
 - A preliminary project, not itself thesis-worthy, may be needed to achieve focus
 - “Problems worthy of attack show their worth by fighting back” -- Piet Hiem

How to be a *Bad* Advisor

- Make it clear that your own work is more interesting and important than theirs
 - They should earn every moment of your time
 - Don't give them feedback too quickly
 - Don't worry about your reputation among students
 - After all, there are always more students out there!

Managing TAs

- They need training!
 - Lots of resources specifically for TAs
 - Especially McKeachie's Teaching Tips, which is good for all college teachers, not just TAs
 - Many departments have (adequate?) TA training seminars
 - Don't be afraid to be taped! But watch the tape in private :-)

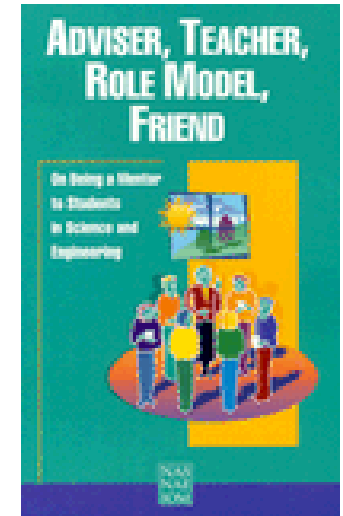
Managing TAs (cont.)

- TA problems include
 - Laziness (rare)
 - Lack of initiative
 - Underestimating the commitment of time and energy
 - Hard to balance TA job and their own courses
 - Overly conscientious (rare)
 - Over-loaded (not rare enough!)

Managing RAs

- Make semester (or conference) deadlines coincide with project deliverables, if possible
- Make sure their degree goals aren't compromised by their RA duties
- Share the secrets of the grant process
 - Get them involved in white papers etc.
- For graduate students in general,
 - Temptation of full-time jobs is a big problem!
 - Part-time doctoral students

Other Resources



- Books

- **Adviser, Teacher, Role Model, Friend**, National Academy Press, 1997

- Available on the web at

- <http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/mentor>

Also, see Marie desJardins’,” **How to Be a Good Graduate Student”**

<http://www.cs.indiana.edu/how.2b/how.2b.html>

Other suggestions at

<http://www.geek-girl.com/gradstudent.html>