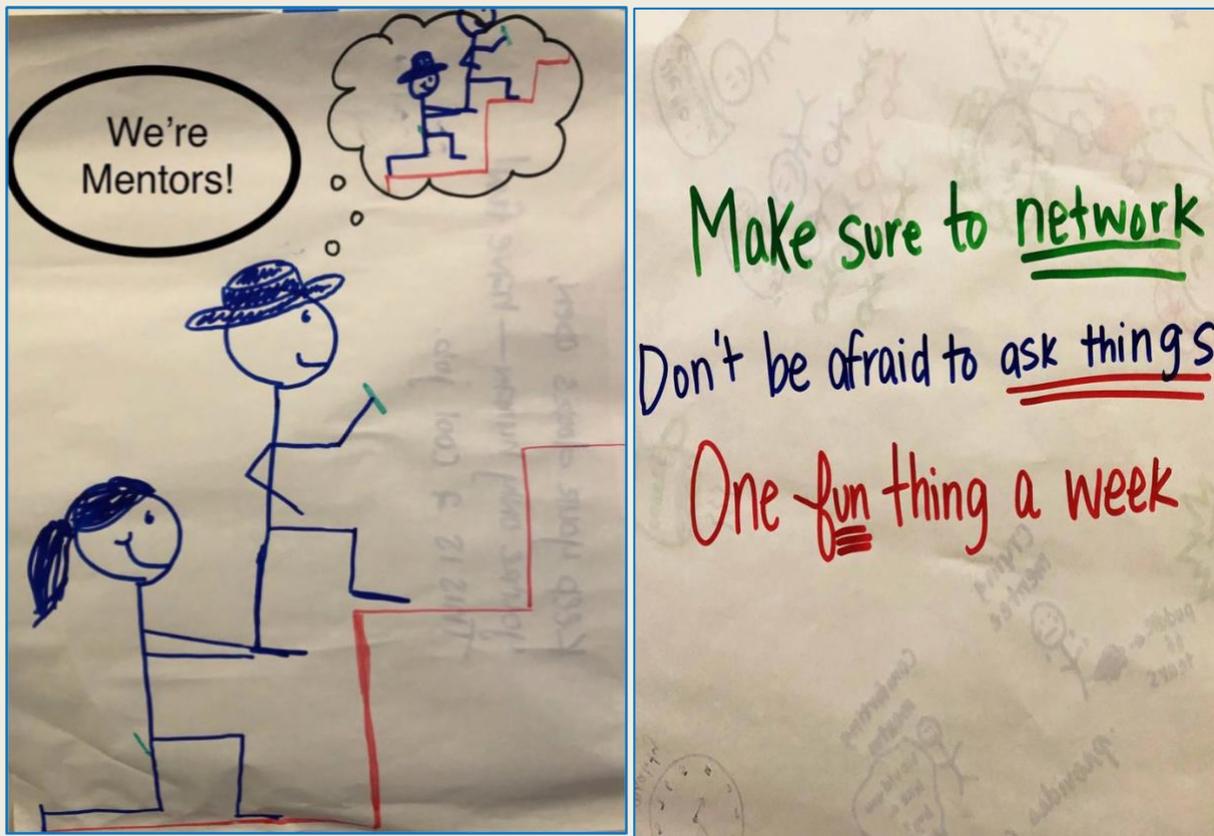# Scripps Institution of Oceanography
Graduate Student Mentor Program

2019-20 Mentor Handbook

2019-20 Goals

The program has four main goals:

1) Increasing student retention and decreasing average time-to-completion rate: The Scripps Department has a long-standing policy to have Ph.D. students advance to candidacy by the end of their third year and defend their dissertation by the end of their fifth year. Although a long- standing policy, it was not until the 2013-14 academic year that the Scripps Department, under the direction of a new department chair, began to actively promote and encourage students to achieve these benchmarks. The Scripps Department believes that a positive a positive and persistent mentor-mentee relationship will positively impact both the percentage of students advancing to candidacy and earning their graduate degree and the average time it takes to accomplish these two milestones.

2) Expanding resources and the student safety net: While the peer mentor will serve as the initial point of contact for graduate students, it is important to understand that graduate students have personal and professional networks of widely varying sizes and strength. Training and workshops will incorporate department and campus professionals to expand the safety net and help the Scripps Department become more proactive and less reactive in addressing student challenges and concerns. While we hope that students will have a strong relationship with their mentor, we hope to give students access to a much larger and interconnected network of mentors that can address concerns across the spectrum. Ongoing partnerships with CAPS and Career Services are critical steps to achieving this goal.

3) Creating a network of engaged students: A formalized peer mentorship program will help students become engaged and stay connected to Scripps and to UC San Diego. This helps our first-year students build a connection to the Department and creates a strong network of student leaders in our mentors. The program presents to the new students a department focused on inclusion and one that is committed to their initial transition to graduate school and long-term success in the program and beyond.

4) Developing mentoring skills: Training and developing our mentors will give them practical experience that will not only benefit their personal growth and development but also serve them will in their future roles as principal investigators, researchers, and faculty members. The Student Mentor Program is not equipped to provide all training and development opportunities so key partnerships with the Scripps Ombudsmen, UCSD's The Commons, and other external units are critical to this goal.

Program Overview

The four main goals of the original Student Mentorship Program will remain the same: we would like to continue our focus on retention and time-to-completion rates, student wellness, and the development of a diverse network of mentors at Scripps. With these goals in mind, we believe that a more structured program with additional events, and more interaction amongst mentors will be a great benefit. The following will be the foundational pieces of this year's Student Mentor Program:

Mentees: All first-year Ph.D. and M.S. students will be assigned a mentor from their curricular group with attempts made to match according to gender preferences. Participation in the program is mandatory for first-year Ph.D. and M.S. students; we currently have 54 incoming students (37 Ph.D. and 17 M.S.) for Fall 2019.

This year, we will continue to give mentees the opportunity to nominate their mentor for Outstanding Mentor of the Year. Awardees will be determined by the Leadership Team. The Scripps Department will recognize three outstanding mentors from the 2019-120 program at Scripps Day in June 2020. The impact of our outstanding mentors goes well beyond academics, as the nomination letters discuss areas such as: housing, work-life balance, developing new hobbies, and navigating difficult relationships.

Mentors: The Student Mentor Program will first focus on third-year Ph.D. students to as mentors. Mentor fatigue is always a concern. However, the Leadership Team will coordinate the initial pairings, with a keen focus on which students they feel will make the most successful mentor. The recruitment goal will be at least 54 mentors in order for each to have only one mentee. In addition, a significant number of second-year students will be asked to serve as a mentor to an incoming M.S. This is due to the overall growth in the M.S. program, specially within the Ocean Biosciences Program. Pairings were by July 15 so that mentees can have access to their mentors over the summer as they deal with the practical challenges of relocating to San Diego. This is two weeks earlier than last year. For students arriving early, they will have access to their mentor and be invited to any Student Mentor Program events over the summer.

Leadership Committee: The 2018-19 Leadership Team consisted of 6 students. A new Leadership Team (7 students) was selected in spring quarter 2019, and played a critical role in the design and implementation of the spring social events. This team completed the initial pairings of mentors and mentees, and will coordinate events in 2019-20.

Training and mentor support: Student mentors will attend a mandatory training session during the summer to prepare them for mentorship duties. During the academic year, we will hold a mentorship seminar for mentors to continue and refresh their training.   These seminars will utilize UC San Diego resources. Over the past years, the Student Mentor Program developed partnerships with CAPS, Career Services, the Center for Student Involvement and The Commons. Last year, the Leadership Team decided to schedule a seminar in fall and spring quarter and not hold a seminar in winter quarter. This change is to reduce obligations during the winter quarter, as students are often asked to participate in the admissions process and annual open house. The program will continue this format in 2019-20.

One-on-one meetings: To facilitate one-on-one meetings between mentors and their mentees, we propose to continue providing mentors a $50 gift card per mentee to be spent over the course of the academic year on coffee or lunches.

Mentors will be expected to meet with their mentees throughout the quarter; offering these funds to mentors, will incentivize these meetings and help ensure frequent contact throughout the year. Mentors will be expected to hold the first meeting by the end of week two of fall quarter. Although the gift cards represent the largest item of the budget, mentors and mentees routinely praise their effectiveness. Whether it be an off-campus meal, or routine coffee, the gift cards not only helps facilitate interaction between mentor and mentee, but reinforces the Department's commitment to the program.

Social events: The Department and the Leadership Team will host routine social events for all mentors and first-year students. The fall quarter event will be our kickoff event, prior to the first week of the quarter, a social mixer for students to meet one another.

In addition, the Student Mentor Program will host two smaller-scale social events per quarter, a change from one event per quarter in past years. Smaller but more frequent events will allow for mentors and first-year students to participate and will hopefully reduce any feelings of obligation to attend. This practice was adopted in 2017-18 and feedback was positive, as students appreciated an additional opportunity to participate, each quarter. By offering a second social event each quarter, the Student Mentor Program can alternate between lunch-time and after-work events. This allows for MS students, with outside employment, and students with children, the opportunity to attend an event during the work day, if their schedule does not permit them to stay after hours. In addition, last year's first-year cohort was a tight-knit, close group. They attributed this, in part, to the regular, ongoing social events, which allowed their cohort to reconnect throughout the year, despite the isolating effect that winter and spring quarter can have on students.

Assessment: We propose to evaluate the Student Mentor Program at multiple points throughout the academic year: at the end of the fall quarter to determine the success of the mentor-mentee match (adjusting if necessary), at periodic student cohort lunches (to incorporate feedback in scheduling future events), at the conclusion of spring quarter to determine overall impact and effectiveness of the program. These evaluations will be conducted through online surveys and focus groups and will be analyzed along with retention data to evaluate the program as a whole. Feedback was solicited this past spring, in the form of one-on-one meetings with the Department's Graduate Coordinator.

Metrics

The Student Mentor Program will continue to take a more holistic approach to understanding and addressing the concerns related to the first-year experience and beyond. Our hope is that we will continue to increase dialogue & engagement and, as students move from being mentees to mentors, The Student Mentor Program will continue to be a vehicle for change. We believe these changes will positively impact not only retention and time to degree rates but overall student satisfaction in the program.

1) First-year curriculum and retention rate: The department's 10-year, 2009-2019, first-year retention rate (a reflection of successfully completing coursework and passing the departmental exam) is 96%. This is a slight increase from last year's 10-year average, 2002-2012, of 92%, when the year before the mentor program first began.

2) Time to Qualify and Time to Degree: Department policy dictates that students qualify by the end of their third year and defend their dissertation by the end of their fifth year. Our previous Department Chair made this policy a priority, beginning in 2013-14. The mentorship program will seek to address concerns typically associated with conducting research as well as easing the transition as students move from coursework to research. These efforts should help establish a culture committed to meeting the third- and fifth-year time limit.

3) Student satisfaction: We should see an increase in overall satisfaction with our graduate educational programs, with particular emphasis on engagement and participation. We will continue to survey mentors and mentees at the end of the academic year and use other opportunities to conduct focus groups and solicit student feedback to gauge student satisfaction.

Qualities of a Good Mentor

What makes a good mentor? That is largely dependent on who you ask: each of us has a different learning style, so each of us will value some qualities over others when rating their mentors. The first thing to remember is that each of you already has the most important quality you can find in a mentor:

A good mentor wants to help. Having an honest desire to help someone goes a long way in actually helping them. You recognized the sometimes-confusing nature of the Scripps graduate experience and have volunteered to help guide another person through it. That's 75% of being a good mentor right there.

In our first training, we discussed a few more important qualities for mentors to have:

A good mentor is also a good listener. It's great to be able to lead by example and to provide tons of advice, but it's just as important to be able to actually listen to what your mentees are saying. Sometimes all we need is someone to listen to us.

A good mentor tries to be empathetic. Trying to see things from another person's perspective is not always very easy, but it's easy enough to put yourself in a first-year's shoes since you were in fact a first-year not that long ago.

A good mentor is not only accessible but will try to reach out. It's always very comforting to know that help is there when you need it. It's even better when you forget that it's there but it still comes looking for you. Especially when it takes you out of the lab for some fresh air.

A good mentor might not have all the answers, but knows where to look for them. Hopefully this handbook will help out with that, but this is definitely where having that strong network of peer mentors helps a lot. You can be a very important resource for your mentees, but you can also be great resources for each other.

Of course, it's a bit inaccurate to call these "qualities." More than anything, they're learned skills, things that require practice, things that can be honed and sharpened over time. No one starts out as an ideal mentor, and it's safe to say that no one expects their mentor to be perfect.

The Role of the Peer Mentor: What You Are and What You Aren't

What role you serve as a mentor is largely dependent on the type of relationship you develop with your mentee, but there are four basic roles that we'd like you to fill:

Guidance – As a more experienced student, it's your job to offer advice on how to handle the graduate school experience, especially at the beginning. For the most part, your mentees will be from your curricular group and academic program, so you can help them decide which classes to take, which faculty members to reach out to, and how to survive the departmental exam. Just think back to your first year here and let them know what you did and what you wish you had done.

Support – We all know how difficult graduate school can be, and sometimes it's nice to just have someone to commiserate with. You don't necessarily have to solve every one of your mentee's problems, but listening to them does actually help. Offer advice when you can and encouragement when you can't, and don't forget how much it helps just to get out of the lab sometimes.

Resource – Scripps can at times look like a massive, archaic, labyrinthine institution, and it's just one department of UCSD. If your mentees need help finding answers—whether physically, academically, technically, or otherwise—we hope that you can help point them in the right direction. You've hopefully been here long enough to learn a few tips, tricks, and shortcuts, and for the rest, just check the last section of this handbook.

Role Model – This is the easiest role to fill: just be yourself! You are the gold standard for Scripps students as far as we're concerned, and even if you don't think so yourself you've survived until this point, and that's something to be proud of.

Again, your mentee might not need you to be all of these, and that's fine. There are also certain roles that we definitely do not expect you to fill:

Advisor – Most of you will have mentees that aren't in your research group, so you're not expected to be able to provide them specific research advice. Feel free to help them with general questions, but when it comes to focused research direction, that's the job of the advisor. If you feel like the advice you're giving is contradicting the advisor, be careful to not step on any toes (and see "Mediator" below).

Counselor – You are marine scientists, not clinical psychologists or psychiatrists, and although you will always want to help, a trained professional should address difficult personal, emotional, or mental health problems. Please see the Escalation section for more on this.

Mediator – While it is perfectly acceptable for you to listen and offer advice to your mentee on problems with his or her advisor or lab group, it is not your responsibility to act as a mediator between the parties. Conflict mediation is the purview of our Scripps ombudsmen, Dr. Peter Franks and Dr. Lynne Talley. Please see the Escalation section for more on this.

Escalation

If a mentee comes to you with a problem that you are uncomfortable with or that you believe requires a higher level of expertise or authority, don't hesitate to ask for help. Be clear with your mentee on the resources available and let them know that you would like to get some assistance.

Immediate assistance – If there is an immediate threat to you or your mentee's safety, call 911 from a campus phone or 858-534-4357 (HELP).

Mental health issues – If students show signs of distress and you are unsure if they have the ability to cope, Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) is an important resource. To quote CAPS's website, "No problem or concern is too big or too small." CAPS has both normal office hours and appointments as well as urgent care and 24-hour crisis counseling; call 858-534-3755 for either. Their office is in Galbraith Hall room 190 on the Revelle College campus, just north of the Mandeville shuttle stop (the first one after crossing North Torrey Pines). CAPS is also available for consultation if you would like advice on how to talk to your mentee. If you or your mentee need help contacting CAPS or getting to CAPS, or would like to make the Department aware of the situation, please contact the Grad Office, Gilbert Bretado gbretado@ucsd.edu 858-534-1694.

*Please note that only fee-paying students, who have not waived UCSD health insurance (SHIP) are eligible to visit CAPS. If you have any questions about eligibility, please contact the Grad Office.

Scripps issues – If students are struggling academically and/or personally and could use some support, there are a few different options within the Department. The majority of problems in this category are related to the student's relationship with their advisor or lab group. You can choose to address problems like this by bringing them to the attention of the Grad Office or informally by talking with our Scripps ombudsmen. Dr. Paul Jensen and Dr. Jennifer MacKinnon may offer informal solutions and advice or they may suggest that a problem requires the attention of the Grad Office. Consultation with the Grad Office will not always end with any formal action taken, but it should not be considered strictly confidential—the Department Chairs and the staff work together to support our students, so we do share information within the office. However, we do consult with students and engage them in the information-sharing process so they are aware of what steps will be taken (if any).

Resources for Graduate Students

The following is a list of resources on the UCSD campus that are available to graduate students. This is definitely not an exhaustive list, so please let us know if you want to add stuff for future revisions. We'll break the list into a few categories: Campus Communities, Personal and Professional Development, Health and Wellness, and Scripps Resources.

Campus Communities

International Center (http://icenter.ucsd.edu)

-Immigration advising (by appointment and walk-ins)

-International community support: workshops, networking, social events

-Friday International Café – great food every Friday from a different part of the world!

Cross-Cultural Center (http://ccc.ucsd.edu)

-Training and workshops

-Art, social, and educational programming

Women's Center (http://women.ucsd.edu)

-Workshops, events, support groups, and speakers

LGBT Resource Center (http://lgbt.ucsd.edu)

-Student groups (QuEST), peer support groups, LGBT education

Personal and Professional Development

Career Services Center (http://career.ucsd.edu)

-Programs, workshops, and individual advising

-Academic careers: understanding the academic search process, building credentials, preparing for academic interviews

-"The Versatile PhD" – careers beyond academia for PhDs

Teaching and Learning Commons (https://commons.ucsd.edu/)

-Workshops and training for TAs and college teaching skills

Center for Student Involvement: Communication and Leadership (https://students.ucsd.edu/student-life/involvement/communication-leadership/index.html)

-Workshops on communication skills: public speaking, conflict resolution, networking, cross-cultural communication, etc.

UCSD Extension (http://extension.ucsd.edu)

-Grad Division offers free course vouchers at the beginning of every quarter. Unfortunately, this program is on hiatus for fall 2019.

Health and Wellness

Counseling and Psychological Services (http://caps.ucsd.edu)

-Free, confidential psychological counseling and crisis services

-Consultation services

-Support groups, workshops, forums on mental health and well-being

-Anonymous online mental health assessment

The Zone (http://zone.ucsd.edu)

-Stress relief, fitness, therapy dogs every Thursday!

Triton Food Pantry (http://basicneeds.ucsd.edu/triton-food-pantry/index.html)

- At the food pantry, a variety of dried goods, canned goods, and fresh produce are available to students.

UCSD Basic Needs (http://basicneeds.ucsd.edu/programs/index.html)

-Emergency loans, Emergency housing, and referral services

UCSD Recreation (http://recreation.ucsd.edu)

-30 intramural sports, fitness classes, lots of other types of classes (like ukulele)

-RIMAC, two pools, climbing center

Scripps Resources

Student Guide: https://scripps.ucsd.edu/education/current/guide

-Exhaustive guide on all things Scripps

-Good place for new students to become familiar with resources, policies, and procedures

The Department Office: Gilbert Bretado gbretado@ucsd.edu

-University policies

-Questions about courses and academics

-Qualifying and defending

-Conflict with advisors, instructors, labs

Scripps Ombudsmen: Paul Jensen (pjensen@ucsd.edu) and Jennifer MacKinnon (jmackinnon@ucsd.edu)

-Help navigating the academic side of Scripps

-Conflict with advisors, instructors, labs

Student Mentor Leadership Team:

COAP- Noel Gutierrez Brizuela and Lauren Kim

GEO- Nicolas Blanc and Margaret Morris

OBP- Alaina Smith, Srishti Dasarathy, and Stephanie Summer

Contact the entire leadership team @ peermentorleadership-g@ucsd.edu

Words of Wisdom

Below is some of the advice, submitted by previous mentors to our incoming graduate students. Please take a few minutes and reflect on the words of your fellow mentors. Pay attention to reoccurring themes and topics. Try to imagine, how as a new student, what potential questions you might have or challenges you might face when trying to adhere to the advice.

- ➢ Give yourself and others a break - we're all doing the best that we can do at that moment. Doing better requires support and motivation - it doesn't just happen.
- ➢ Ask any question you have, there are a lot of great people around you at SIO to help.
- ➢ It's important to take time to enjoy life outside of school. Work is important, and it should be viewed as such, but so is the rest of your life outside of SIO.
- ➢ Don't let anyone tell you aren't doing enough/working hard enough if you aren't working all hours you are awake. Work life balance is crucial, and that should be respected.
- ➢ Try not to compare oneself to others in terms of progress. There's not one correct way to do graduate school.
- ➢ Find something that you love to do outside of SIO - it will help keep you balanced and focused during and beyond your first year.
- ➢ Communicate with your adviser regularly.
- ➢ Talk to the people around you -- other students, staff, faculty -- you never know what cool person you'll meet, how you'll end up helping each other, or what rich collaborations you might form.
- ➢ Find a good rhythm and stick with it. It's a marathon, not a sprint.
- ➢ Read and digest as many papers as you can.
- ➢ Avoid comparing your achievements to those of your peers.
- ➢ Explore early on: the area, research at SIO, etc.
- ➢ This too shall pass, don't let a bad day or week ruin your outlook.
- ➢ Seek out projects that make you happy/inspired
- ➢ It's important to work very hard, and also to have balance. Learn to surf if you don't already know how.
- ➢ Being engaged in class and with the community goes a long way.
- ➢ Follow your intuition when finding an advisor.

- ➢ Be yourself.
- ➢ Work to make friends both at SIO and outside academia in San Diego to help you keep perspective.
- ➢ Care about your research, not your GPA.
- ➢ Pet a dog.