

Students' Perspectives on Graduate Student Mentoring

W. Hall¹, J. Phelps², J. Brinkman², C. Roach³, C. Connolly³, S. Nakata⁴, S. Liva¹



Background: Mentoring is presented as a rewarding transformational relationship (Fletcher, 2007) to enhance graduate students' outcomes but little is known about graduate students' perspectives.

Aim: To explore graduate students' perspectives on mentoring to inform and improve mentoring as part of teaching and learning at UBC.

Method: Using a descriptive interpretive design (in process) to conduct 15 focus groups (FG) and analyze data using inductive content analysis.



Sample: 5 FG with 29 graduate students (14 PhD, 14 masters, 1 unclassified). 16 students in sciences and applied sciences, 14 in arts and education.

Preliminary Findings:

Ideal mentors are: flexible, supportive, experienced and genuinely interested in students' academic and career success.

"mentorship, is something that can kind of make or break your experience in graduate school, and being a mentor is not, simply just say "yes do this" or "don't do that". It is also trying to develop how you think, so you can think for yourselves. It's a fostering for your careers."

Mentorship is not: Taking a hands off approach by regarding students as a means to an end.

"being the indentured worker servant who has their passport taken away and isn't allowed to get it back until the process is done. That's pretty much has been my experience as a graduate student."

No mentoring: contributes to student failure and illness.

"some people had a 50 percent drop out rate because they weren't getting the support they needed. They just felt lost and would drift away and just eventually stop coming."

"it was like a full two day black hole, don't know what to do. It nearly slipped me into depression...from my opinion it was a lack of mentorship that brought me down"

Mentoring impediments: Structural features that are viewed as ignoring unacceptable behavior.

"I think some supervisors, especially tenured faculty feel they are empowered by the university to do anything they would like, and there is no oversight on their behavior"

