

WHAT MAKES A GOOD MENTOR?

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At the University of Iowa, 1 in 3 undergraduate students participates in research. Research opportunities provide experience with asking questions, thinking deeper, and exploring new fields. Behind the test tubes, pipettes, and archive papers, there is a mentor who provides the foundation for a student's success. Here we asked some undergraduate students about what they believe makes a good research mentor based on their own experiences with UIowa Faculty.

IN ONE SENTENCE...

“To me, a good mentor is someone who is understanding and helps students learn from and move past their mistakes” - **Saul Ocampo Landa**

“A good mentor is someone who can teach you to be independent” - **Ashley Preston**

“A good mentor is someone who goes out of their way to answer questions and makes a conscious effort to get to know their students in the lab” - **Anvay Pradhan**

“For me, a good research mentor is someone who is very passionate and engaged in their work” - **Megan Dao**

“A good mentor is someone who inspires their mentees to do more than they ever imagined possible” - **Sydney Clarkin**

“A good mentor always provides open channels of communication and always gives thoughtful responses to any questions raised” - **Ryan Staub**

“A good research mentor helps you grow and guides you to achieve your career goals” - **Abinaya Paravasthuresh**

“A good mentor is somebody who listens to you and helps you learn how to become a critical thinker” - **Thomas Duong**

“Regardless of your field of study, a good mentor will encourage asking questions and provide opportunities for finding their answers” - **Radha Velamuri**

“A good research mentor is someone who cares about you not only as a researcher but also as a student and as a person” - **Nicole Hobson**

“A good mentor is someone who challenges you to ask hard questions and empowers you to answer them” - **Anna Correa**

STUDENT INTERVIEW – RIELLE JONES-TEKSE

What are some traits of a good mentor?

A: “The most important trait would have to be that they are encouraging so that when I’m feeling down, lost, or confused, they are there to really believe in me and push me in the right direction with my research.”

Why is it important for students to have a good mentor?

A: “It’s important for students to have good mentors because mentors can really show you the ins and outs of your field. When you feel comfortable and you have confidence in what you’re doing, that helps you land anything from grad school to jobs to just making good connections - confidence is really key and mentors are the key to gaining confidence.”

How has your mentor helped you reach your goals in research?

A: “My mentor has helped me reach my goals in so many ways. From learning about the publication process, to figuring out how to do archival research (including reading old legal documents and the old Venetian dialect) to helping me get into grad school with a great writing sample. Also by contacting professionals in the field and contacting potential grad school advisors. There are so many things that I have learned and I’ve been helped in so many ways. I can say with confidence that every undergraduate should try to pursue research and try to find a mentor if they can.”

STAFF INTERVIEW – DR. MARCO HEFTI

As a mentor, what are your opinions on mentoring?

A: “The most important characteristic of a good mentor and a good mentoring relationship is that the mentor lets their student or mentee explore and develop into the person and the career that they want to have. It realizes that it is a collaborative relationship with a mentoring student and working together to get where that person wants to be. It’s not a case of a mentor driving the student where they think that person should be. On the other hand, it’s also a situation where the mentor shouldn’t be too hands-on or micromanaging it. It lets students or mentees develop and explore on their own and realize their ability to be independent, but in a safe environment where they know that if things fail or don’t work they have a backup, they have help. They have someone they can go to - I think that’s the key thing for mentoring - it’s important for both the mentor and the mentee to realize that.”

Additional questions regarding research experiences or mentoring can be directed towards ICRU: <https://icru.research.uiowa.edu/contact>

