

Chancellor's Graduate and Professional Student Advisory Board Mentorship Subcommittee Report

Members: Ally Fulton, Dorothy Hoang, Jill Huynh, Sam Pizelo, Breanne Weber

Background and Accomplishments

As evidenced by the consecutive 3-year presence of the CGPSA's mentorship subcommittee and Grad Studies recent hiring of Elizabeth Sturdy, new Director of Mentoring and Advising, graduate student mentoring is a critical issue at UC Davis. Continuing the work of the 2018-2019 subcommittee, the 2019-2020 subcommittee took a step back this year from creating deliverable mentoring materials and focused instead on building a relationship with Elizabeth. At the end of the fall quarter, members met with Elizabeth, Teresa Dillinger, and David Blancha to touch base on Elizabeth's plan for mentoring initiatives and David's progress with the History department on the Grad Maps we started to develop last year. Because the Grad Map rollout timeline for the History Department was pushed back, we made the decision to put our efforts with the Grad Maps on hold and instead collaborate with Elizabeth to engage three primary action items:

1. Research and brainstorm mentoring initiatives and gaps that the subcommittee could propose to Grad Studies mentorship staff;
2. Follow up with the Epidemiology graduate group by checking in with students who used our Grad Map in fall 2019, as well as with faculty, to see how the map is being received and what changes might need to be made to future versions to increase buy-in;
3. Identify departments that could be first-wave adopters of the Grad Maps (i.e. departments that have long handbooks or graduate groups without departmental structure, such as biophysics).

We met with Elizabeth again in early winter quarter 2020 and she laid out her proposed strategies for the coming year. In this meeting we reassessed the subcommittee's involvement in the development and implementation of these strategies and moved toward collecting best practices across UC Davis and other universities' departments and graduate groups. In our spring meeting with Elizabeth, she solicited our input as a committee on the various initiatives being undertaken in the pilot program to begin rollout in the fall quarter of 2020. Based on subcommittee members' research and personal experiences as graduate students in both humanities and STEM departments, we laid out a range of suggestions for the pilot program that included but were not limited to the following:

1. Mentor-matching to take the onus off of graduate students to initiate all their mentoring partnerships on their own accord via structural changes such as drop-in mentoring hours and faculty incentives for mentoring students;
2. Establishing formalized peer mentoring structures;
3. Addressing the effects of economic recessions and pandemics such as COVID-19 on the academic and academic-adjacent job market so students can make informed decisions about future careers;
4. Providing support for the external fellowship application process;

5. Laying out reasons for why specific programs are being chosen to participate in the pilot program.

At the final meeting of the year, Elizabeth also relayed to us that she hoped our subcommittee would be retained as part of the 2020-2021 CGPSA board so we can continue to assist and provide feedback as the pilot program begins its rollout.

Although the Grad Map rollout for the History department was pushed back, the subcommittee decided to move forward with rolling out the Epidemiology PhD Grad Map at the beginning of Fall 2019 in order to test the impact of these maps on students and to determine whether it would be beneficial to continue this project. The Grad Maps were piloted with thirteen first-year students in the Epidemiology Graduate Group. The first-year group consisted of a combination of Masters and PhD students; they were cautioned that the Grad Maps were designed for the PhD track, but that many aspects were still relevant to the Masters track. At the start of Winter 2020, eleven of the thirteen students remained in the program and were all sent a reminder that they had this resource available to them.

At the beginning of Spring 2020, we held a focus group with the Epidemiology students to gather feedback about the Grad Maps. From the focus group, there was a consensus that the *Achieve Your Academic Goals* section of the Grad Map was the most helpful to students. It helped clarify confusion about course requirements that were not consistent in the program's resources. Most students admitted that they did not look beyond the academic section of the Grad Map since they were in their first year and still heavily focused on coursework. There was also a consensus that as they move forward in their graduate career, they will revisit the map and explore other sections as they become relevant, such as the *Build Skills and Experience* section and the *Launch Your Career* section. Two suggestions were offered by the students in the focus group: 1. Include more specifics on campus opportunities to engage with the community; 2. Provide information about travel awards and fellowships.

The subcommittee will discuss the feasibility of incorporating more specifics into the Grad Map while still ensuring that it is generalizable to all students in Epidemiology, whether they are studying human epidemiology topics or animal epidemiology topics. The subcommittee will continue to check in with this cohort periodically to collect more feedback as they continue in their program.

Proposal

1. **Maintain subcommittee status for 2020-2021 to continue collaborating with Elizabeth Sturdy, Director of Mentoring and Advising.** As a subcommittee, we are willing to continue to strengthen our relationship with Graduate Studies and to provide assistance and feedback in whatever capacities are most needed during the pilot program rollout.
2. **Assist with surveys and gather feedback from mentorship pilot program.** Elizabeth mentioned these as possible ways that the subcommittee could put our collective CGPSA hours to use and continue to provide the critical perspective of graduate students across disciplines. She also noted that she would continue to think of ways that our subcommittee could be more

involved in mentoring initiatives across campus.

- 3. Discuss the possibility of establishing a mentorship advisory committee separate from CGPSA as a permanent fixture in Grad Studies to provide feedback to and collaborate with the Director of Mentoring and Advising.** As this subcommittee has existed for three years and is still able to provide a critical perspective on the subject of graduate mentoring at UC Davis, we feel it might be time to determine whether or not a more permanent mentorship advisory committee--perhaps not affiliated with CGPSA--might be possible. This would open the door for additional and more varied committees to form in the CGPSA while maintaining our critical role as liaisons between graduate students at Davis and the Director of Mentoring and Advising.
- 4. Continue working closely with the Epidemiology department and David Blancha on Grad Maps.** We intend to continue checking in and gathering feedback from the students in Epidemiology as they move further along in their respective programs. We will use this information to inform any feedback we can provide to the Grad Maps project with the History department, as well as in regards to other mentorship initiatives on campus.