Mentoring 101:
6 Things you need to know to get the most out of your mentoring relationship(s)

“...it is important to conduct a careful analysis of what competencies you wish to build and find the best resources for development.”

(de Janasz, Sullivan, and Whiting, p. 86, 2003)

6 things you need to know

Mentoring is an essential part of the graduate experience, it can be as important to learning as the lab or classroom, and you will have more than one mentor!

1. It’s a two way street

2. Know what you need
   a. What areas do you currently need to work on for your career? (Strengths, areas for development)
   b. What are the specific things you need from each of your mentor(s)?
   c. What kind of relationships are most effective for you, and are the mentors you are considering able to fill that role sufficiently?
   d. If you have mentors already, are they meeting your top needs? If not, how can you get those needs met?

3. Do your research
   a. What kinds of things would you want to know about your mentor to decide whether they are a fit?
   b. Who are exemplars in the field here at Tufts or elsewhere?
   c. Who are some internal possibilities?
   d. Look at the faculty member’s CV
   e. Do they have a record of publishing with their graduate students?
   f. Do they use graduate students in their teaching?
   g. What is their greatest area of strength?

4. Agree on expectations
   a. Take time in the first meeting to agree on the relationship expectations
   b. How much time are they willing to spend in meetings?
   c. How do they prefer to communicate in between meetings?
   d. How do you like to get and respond to feedback?
   e. Be an active participant in setting some of your goals where they might provide guidance (short, mid- and long-range goals)
5. Communicate through giving and receiving feedback
   a. Don’t let things build up
   b. Be specific and focused on what you are trying to say
   c. Focus on the behavior, not the person
   d. Takes into account the perspective of your mentor
   e. Use questions
   f. Use “I” statements
   g. Choose timing that sets you up for success

6. Take Initiative
   a. Be organized, prepared, follow up, document
   b. Proactively contact your mentor to schedule meetings
   c. Keep summaries of conversations / meetings and send it after the meeting to confirm your tasks and their commitments
   d. Prepare a summary of what you have accomplished between meetings, and a list of priorities for the current meeting
   e. Follow through on your commitments