

Biostatistics Mentorship Program

Description and Guidelines

Guidelines for mentors & students participating in the Mentor Program of the University of Washington Graduate Program in Biostatistics (MS Capstone)

INTRODUCTION

The University of Washington (UW) Biostatistics MS Capstone degree is an 18-month program that provides rigorous training and a practical, applications-driven foundation in statistics. It is designed for students who wish to enter the job market upon graduation.

To support these students the UW Biostatistics department has developed the UW Biostatistics MS Capstone Mentoring Program. The purpose of this document is to describe this program and to provide current and prospective mentors, as well as participating students, with a set of mutual expectations and guidelines regarding the mentoring program. These guidelines are meant to be helpful to both persons in the mentoring relationship and are designed to help provide the best possible outcome for both mentors and students. However, the guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive or to restrict in any way the potential of this relationship.

In the following sections, we describe the program goals, eligibility criteria and expectations for mentors and students, and we provide a list of sample activities for mentor/student interaction.

Program Goals

Effective mentoring is an important determinant of success as individuals transition from the role of student to professional statistician. Mentees benefit from career advice, professional connections, networking, and understanding real-world professional challenges. As role models, acquire valuable coaching experience and gain professional and personal satisfaction from a sense of giving back to their profession.

Specific goals of this program include

- To develop a bridge between the academic and professional practice worlds for students
- To provide professional guidance to students
- To provide a professional role model for students
- To develop individual relationships between students and practicing professionals that will enhance the professional networks of both
- To provide interested students with mentors during their graduate school experience, with the hope of establishing relationships that may last beyond graduate school
- To build positive mentor/student(s) relationships that offer mutual learning experiences with respect to cutting edge research, data and statistical industry standards, and opportunities to challenge and support one another in critical thinking and interests
- To provide mentors and students with mutually valuable contacts through the networking dynamics of the program
- To provide guidance and career direction

Eligibility

This program is open to first-year and second-year MS Biostatistics Capstone students, who wish to participate and are willing to fulfill the expectations of the program. The Mentor Program Committee will actively seek volunteers from alumni and others in data driven industries to serve as mentors.

Desired Characteristics of Mentors

- Genuine interest in helping and building a personal relationship with a student
- Committed to continuing education and staying up to date in the mentor's field/area of expertise
- Personal insight, empathy, and listening skills
- Willingness to share concepts and information, trusting that the student will honor confidences and the private, special nature of certain exchanges
- Availability of, and willingness to commit, time to share with students
- Collectively, represent diversity in the population and practice environment (e.g., with respect to ethnicity, gender, industry roles)

Duration

- It is expected that the mentoring relationship will continue for the duration of the student's tenure in the MS Capstone program
 - The relationship may be extended for a longer time frame by mutual agreement of the mentor and mentee.
- Mentors or students can withdraw from the program at any time by notifying the Director of the Biostatistics Capstone Program.

EXPECTATIONS

Both mentors and students are expected to abide by the American Statistical Association (ASA) ethical guidelines for statistical practice (<https://www.amstat.org/asa/files/pdfs/EthicalGuidelines.pdf>) and Code of Conduct (<https://www.amstat.org/ASA/Meetings/Meeting-Conduct-Policy.aspx>).

Expectations of Students

- Initiate meeting with mentor at least once per month
- Take responsibility for structuring a preliminary list of what is discussed at those meetings
- At the beginning of the relationship, communicate clearly and negotiate with the mentor your goals for your time together
- Invest time in learning about the mentor's organization and professional role(s) and responsibilities
- Honor any commitments made to the mentor and respect the basic privacy and confidentiality inherent in the communication that occurs within the relationship; actively request information and counsel from the mentor periodically and communicate with the mentor as to how the advice or information might have been used
- Accept that the relationship is temporary (although the relationship may be extended for a longer time frame by mutual agreement of the mentor and mentee)
- Express your appreciation for the mentor's time, information, counsel, and sharing of opportunities with you

Expectations of Mentors

- Make a special effort to be available to your student at least once per month, away from the distractions of your work, if at all possible
- Share up front with your student your specific expectations for the relationship
- Invest time in learning about the aspirations, attributes, and preferences of your student
- Periodically identify special learning opportunities for your student in your organization or in professional networks
- Assist the student in developing his or her personal network of professional contacts
- Honor any commitments to and confidences of your student
- Provide honest, caring, regular, and diplomatic feedback to your student

Sample Activities for Mentoring

These suggestions are intended to prompt individual thinking, not to prescribe specific activities or to limit the creativity and imagination of mentors and students in fashioning other innovative activities. We strongly encourage both mentors and students to investigate/create new possibilities for their relationship. This creativity will energize the connection between you.

Sample activities may include

- Develop a mutual professional reading list and discuss a few articles at a time, emphasizing their practical application and relevance to the mentor's and student's professional experience
- Exchange and discuss ideas relevant to each other's professional and academic roles, particularly upcoming, concrete challenges
- Attend professional seminars or meetings together (possibly in the mentor's organization), sharing ideas on the insights gained from those experiences
- Discuss career and internship options (Please note that mentors are not expected to provide "placement service.")
- Share a meal or social function together for the benefit of time together and to "bond" in the relationship
- Exchange and discuss a statement or list of future personal and professional goals
- Discuss class projects and consider whether (and if so, how) the mentor's organization might represent a useful "real-world laboratory" for specific projects
- Meet with other individuals from the mentor's organization or a broader network of professional colleagues
- Attend a civic, social, or business organization meeting together and discuss the experience

Questions or concerns should be directed to Biostatistics Capstone Program staff:

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