

CEE Graduate Student Mentorship and Managing Conflict

What is this Guide?

Brief document describing potential suggestions and resources to mitigate conflicts and/or address conflicts when they arise. This is a recent effort to provide a set of additional resources to assist graduate students and faculty, as part of a mentoring pilot program.

There are already a number of mentoring resources available and we have tried to facilitate them in this document.

General Mentoring Resources

Graduate Studies offers a range of Mentor Resources, tools, professional development, and support that is helpful for both Graduate Students and Faculty. We highly recommend you review and use the resources compiled by Graduate Studies.

[UC Davis Graduate Council Mentoring Guidelines](#)

[Graduate Studies Mentor Resources](#)

[Graduate Studies Mentee Resources](#)

Potential Conflicts

Conflict with mentors can happen at any time during your academic career. The aim of this resource guide (and future website) is to help our students understand the people they can talk to and resources they can use when conflict arises. Below, we outline a typical progression of elevating the conflict management to various levels. However, please note that the student has the right to decide who they feel comfortable talking to, and may choose to escalate their concerns with the department and other campus resources at their discretion.

Confidentiality: Please also note there are some offices on campus that are confidential, and other offices/people who are mandated to report certain issues, including but not limited to: child and elder abuse, certain crimes on and around campus, sexual harassment and sexual violence, and threats to self and others. If you have any questions about which resources are confidential, please see the list below and feel free to ask the Graduate Program Coordinator for clarification.

What to do when conflict arises?

Be Proactive and remember that every Mentor/Mentee relationship can be very different.

- Many conflicts stem from **miscommunication**. We encourage students and faculty to start their mentorship relationship with an intentional conversation about communication style, preferences, and expectations.

- There can be a number of factors that could generate a misalignment between preferences and expectations. Examples include, but are not limited to: publication authorship, work location, project deadlines, reporting and manuscript writing assignments, project roles and assignments, funded research and dissertation work, field work and travel, time off, meeting schedules, lab/group dynamics, and others.
- Check out the Graduate Studies Mentee Resources for tools on how to set expectations for your mentor/mentee relationship.

When Conflict Starts?

- Address the issue early. Misunderstandings or misalignment of expectations can be minor at first, and grow into larger issues if left unaddressed. If you feel comfortable, we highly encourage open and honest dialogue between the mentee and the mentor.
- Seek resources to help you have a direct and non-defensive conversation with your mentor. There are people on campus who can help you with problem solving, practice having hard conversations, think about how to move forward, help you find additional resources, and guide you in how to take formal actions if needed.
- Please see below for a list of people and resources in the department and campus wide who can help you. The Grad Studies Mentee Resources page also has some helpful online tools if you want to start processing this yourself prior to talking to others.

Finding additional support, and escalating the issue:

- Depending on individual concerns and comfort level, students may want to seek additional support from the department, or other campuses offices and resources. Please see the list of department and campus resources below.
- We encourage students to utilize the people in the Civil and Environmental Engineering department as their first step in finding support. Your first point of contact in the department may depend on what relationships you have already established, and your level of trust and comfort with those individuals. That said, there are amazing resources on campus, and you can utilize those at any time.
- Remember that different people will give different advice based on their own background and experiences. You may want to seek advice from more than one person or campus resource before taking action.

Confront the issue:

- With the support of your newly discovered support network, consider the outcomes that you hope to see, and start formulating a plan on how to make that happen.
- Think about practicing the conversation first, and know that individuals have different styles of communications, and different points of view of the same situation. Try to stay open to hearing the other side(s) of the story.

Seek resolution:

- Depending on the conflict, there could be several outcomes. We have had many students find a resolution and go on to have a successful and rewarding relationship with their mentor after a

conflict. We have also had students find a new major advisor in our department. These are probably the most common outcomes for our students when we see major conflict arise.

- We also have graduate students who have decided to graduate with a different degree objective than originally intended and/or transfer from UC Davis to another institution. While these outcomes are quite rare, please know that the CEE department is interested in helping you succeed, and supporting whatever decision is right for you.
- Follow up with your support network and various campus resources as necessary.

People and Resources to help you through Mentor/Mentee Conflict

Civil and Environmental Engineering Department

- Lauren Worrell/ Rufa Pazyuk, Graduate Program Coordinator
- GPC Rep/Area Advisor (please see [our website](#) for current area advisors)
- Miguel Jaller, Graduate Advisor
- Faculty, staff, or students from the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee (please see the [DEI page](#) for membership)
- Another faculty member you are comfortable talking to
- Christopher Cappa, Department Chair

Graduate Studies (See [Directory](#))

- Wallace Woods, Senior Academic Advisor for Civil and Environmental Engineering
- Elizabeth Sturdy, Director of Advising and Mentoring
- Bai-Yin Chen, CAPS Psychologist
- Devin Horton, Graduate Diversity Officer: Science, Technology, Engineering and Math
- Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, Associate Dean for Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Scholars

Confidential Campus Resources include:

- [Counseling Services](#)
- [Ombuds Office](#)
- [Center for Advocacy Resources and Education \(CARE\)](#)
- [The Lesbian, Gay Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual Resource Center \(LGBTQIA+ Resource Center\)](#)
- [The Women's Resources and Research Center \(WRRRC\)](#)

Additional Campus Offices that can be a resource:

- [Sexual Violence Prevention and Response](#)
- [Office of Student Support and Judicial Affairs - Student Rights and Grievances](#)