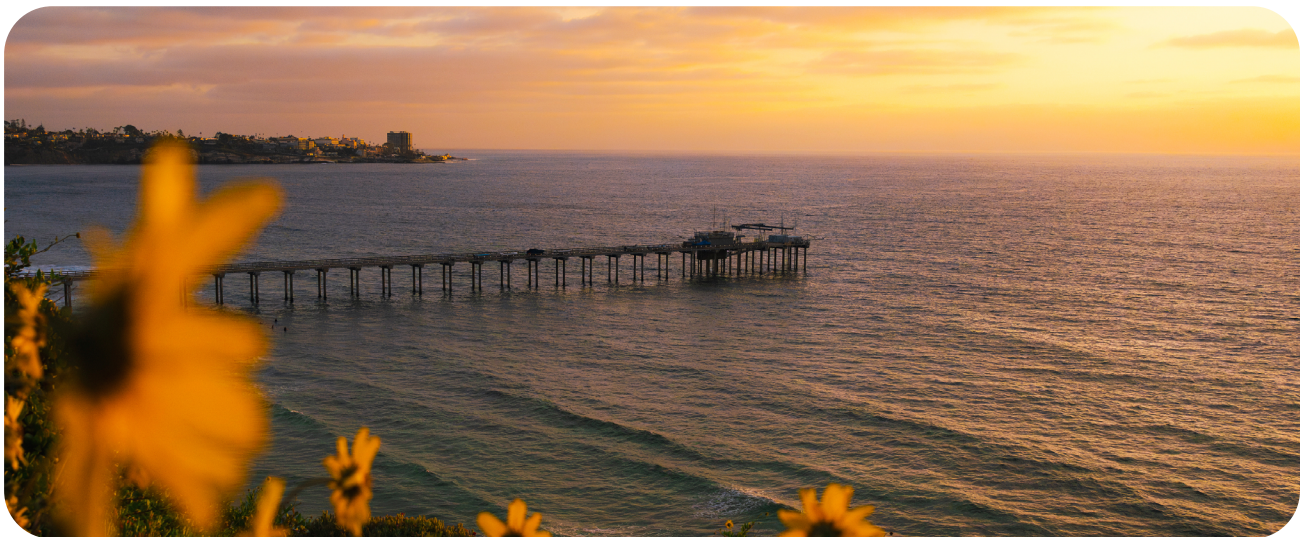


UC San Diego

DIVISION OF GRADUATE EDUCATION
AND POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS

The Mentoring Project

Project Playbook for UC San Diego



Overview

UC San Diego's graduate degree programs have been asked by the Graduate Council and the Division of Graduate Education and Postdoctoral Affairs (GEPA) to create program-specific mentoring guidelines. This playbook is a practical guide for departments and programs at UC San Diego to implement equitable, culturally responsive mentoring practices for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars. It outlines each phase of the process – from forming your stakeholder team to finalizing mentoring standards – based on tested implementation steps and sample resources.

History and Context

The Mentoring Project was launched by GEPA in 2023 to systematically improve the quality of faculty-student and faculty-postdoc mentoring at UC San Diego. It brought together stakeholder teams in five academic departments participating in the pilot project to cocreate mentorship compacts tailored to their specific needs. This playbook provides resources developed throughout the Mentoring Project that are intended to serve as guideposts and inspiration for departments seeking to establish their own mentoring standards. By drawing on best practices and lessons learned from the Mentoring Project, departments can adapt and apply these resources to their own contexts, fostering a culture of mentorship that is inclusive, equitable and supportive of all students.



Much good work is already happening across UC San Diego at all levels (undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral) to support and facilitate high-quality mentorship. The Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA) is eager to promote mentorship; and many graduate and professional student mentors and mentees already participate in discipline-based mentoring programs, such as [Biology Undergraduate and Master's Mentorship Program \(BUMMP\)](#) and [Colors of the Brain](#). Finally, GEPA is engaged in several external endeavors focused on improving mentorship in graduate education, including:

- A multiyear Sloan Foundation grant that created a [University Center of Exemplary Mentoring \(UCEM\)](#) on our campus for small cohorts of students at the School of Physical Sciences and at the Jacobs School of Engineering.
- A multiyear membership in the national [Equity in Graduate Education Consortium](#), building on initial work done to promote adoption of holistic graduate admissions and now focused on supporting faculty-to-faculty equity-minded mentoring workshops.
- A campuswide training opportunity for faculty who will lead future mentoring workshops for fellow faculty based on a [curriculum designed by the Center for the Improvement of Mentored Experiences in Research \(CIMER\)](#).

For those who are creating their own mentoring standards, this playbook serves as a guide for developing cocreated mentoring expectations within departments across campus. It's important to remember that these are "living documents" and will need to be revisited and updated as needed over time.



Phase 1: Pre-Work

Step 1: Assemble the core leadership team

Build a small, cross-role team to guide department efforts in drafting and implementing your mentoring standards.

The first step is to build a core leadership team that includes individuals with the authority, skills, interest and resources to ensure success. A sponsor in charge management, such as a department chair or program director, is essential. This individual must have the positional leadership, power and influence, as well as a robust network, to invite and encourage participation. Alongside the sponsor, we recommend that the core leadership team include at least two members with knowledge of both mentoring relationships and project management skills, such as a faculty member and a graduate student. Having a graduate student or postdoctoral scholar on the leadership team is important to ensure that diverse perspectives are represented on the project. Members of this core leadership team are intellectual thought partners and sounding boards for problem-solving and ideation, and pledge to hold one another accountable for meeting project milestones. We recommend setting a weekly cadence of meetings between the team leads and at least one monthly check-in with the sponsor.

Onboarding materials such as meeting agendas, notes and a team roles document should be prepared. Please note that this is the largest roadblock to launching the project. It is often challenging to assemble teams, particularly since this team entails diverse stakeholders (department chair, faculty, staff members, graduate students and postdoctoral scholars).

WHAT TO DO

- Schedule regular (e.g. weekly, biweekly) team meetings and monthly check-ins with the entire team.
- Define team member roles and expectations.
- Define goals and the desired deliverables.

QUESTIONS

- Who will be on the core leadership team? Who will be the team lead?
- Who will be the sponsor for this effort? Are they already supportive of the goal for your program to develop and implement department mentoring standards? What needs to be done to get the sponsor on board?

Example resources: [Onboarding meeting agenda for Mentoring Project departments, team roles document](#)

Step 2: Draft the initial goals

Create a written plan with clear goals and an initial timeline. Store all files in a shared location.

An initial plan outlining the goals and timelines should be drafted. This document will help map out the process and encourage engagement with and connection to the current research literature. A shared file service such as Google Drive or Microsoft OneDrive should be used to organize the many files and documentation efficiently across the leadership team and to facilitate collaboration. Eventually, this document could even be used as the basis for writing grant and other funding proposals.

WHAT TO DO

- Create a plan that includes:
 - Purpose and desired outcomes.
 - Timeline and major milestones.
 - Alignment with department goals or strategic priorities.

QUESTIONS

- What is your department's culture around mentoring?
- What are your or your department's goals for this work?
- What would you consider to be a success?
- If the strategic plan of your department doesn't include mentoring, how will this project fit within your department's goals?
- How will you communicate project relevance to stakeholders?

Example resources: [The Mentoring Project proposal](#), [mentoring standards goals document](#)

Step 3: Create a timeline

Develop a clear, realistic timeline to guide the work.

Develop a comprehensive timeline to guide completion of developing and implementing mentoring standards. Revisit this timeline regularly to ensure that the team is meeting proposed milestones and staying on track. Be flexible as needed to maintain good relationships.

WHAT TO DO

- Create a timeline that includes:
 - Milestones for drafting, review and finalization.
 - Plans to revisit and adjust the timeline regularly.
 - Buffer for relationship-building and feedback loops.

Example resources: [Mentoring Project Detailed Timeline document](#), [mentoring standards goals document](#)



Phase 2: Mentoring Standards Launch

Step 1: Create an agenda and itinerary for the meeting

Convene all team members.

Organize a launch meeting to socialize the team to the goals and objectives of this work. The timeline for the launch depends on the readiness of department chairs or program directors and teams.

WHAT TO COVER

- Goals and expectations.
- Timeline and roles.
- Overview of mentorship standards.
- Next steps and Q&A.

Example resource: [Launch event agenda](#)

Step 2: Compile necessary communications for the project

Keep the project visible and interactive through regular updates.

Consider sending regular updates and surveys to all constituents in your department to maintain engagement and transparency throughout the duration of the project. We suggest automating emails using CRM tools like MyEmma for consistency and efficiency.

WHAT TO DO

- Consider what communications are necessary throughout the life of the project.
- Set up communication emails and platforms, as necessary.

Step 3: Set up data analyses to measure project success

Decide early how you will measure success.

Think about the best ways to gather data that will measure the impact of the mentoring standards once they have been developed and implemented. Pilot surveys with the project team members to refine them.

Example resources: [Pre/post survey](#), [focus group questions](#)

Phase 3: Mentorship Standards Creation

Step 1: Departments cocreate draft(s) of mentorship standards

Each stakeholder group should gather input on what effective, equitable mentoring looks like. Use this to draft mentoring standards.

Each constituent group should gather input and data to understand their group's needs in the mentoring process. These drafts should be made available a few months in advance for feedback by constituents. Fieldnotes and feedback forms can be used to capture insights and refine the drafts. It is crucial that each constituent group has a voice and gives feedback during this process.

WHAT TO DO

- Host small group discussions for each stakeholder group.
- Collect anonymous feedback.
- Use fieldnotes and discussion summaries to track themes.

Step 2: Finalize the mentorship standards

After sharing and refining drafts, finalize the standards with broad input from all groups.

The mentorship standards should be finalized with input from all constituent groups.

WHAT TO DO

- Host a feedback session or town hall.
- Use structured review forms for feedback.
- Make it clear how feedback was integrated into the final draft.

Example resource: [Sample mentorship compact](#)

Step 3: Ongoing commitment

Mentorship standards should not be static. Build in a process to revisit and revise them annually.

Departmental mentoring standards should be revisited regularly to ensure they remain relevant and effective. New members of the department should be made aware of the mentoring standards upon joining the department.

WHAT TO DO

- Schedule annual standards review meetings.
- Link standards to onboarding for new students, postdoctoral scholars, staff and faculty.
- Integrate mentoring expectations into annual review or reporting processes.



Resources

Mentoring Project Webpage

mentoringproject.ucsd.edu

Example Mentoring Standards from the Mentoring Project's Pilot Departments

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1fF6FrrCo2YmTLorOengC-elgBzEV6ci2>