Early Career Mentoring

My experiences at
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

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Why I Needed a Mentor

- I had
  - minimal teaching experience
  - no experience obtaining research funding
  - no committee experience
  - no advising experience
  - a weak grasp of “how things worked” in academia
How I Found a Mentor

• My “ideal” mentor:
  – Recently tenured and in my department (ECE)
  – Good teacher and advisor
  – Pragmatic
  – Good sense of humor

• WPI Center for Educational Development, Technology, and Assessment (CEDTA)
  – Voluntary mentoring program for new faculty
  – Mentor+mentee teams formed based on preferences
Some Experiences as a Mentee

• Weekly lunches + ad-hoc meetings as needed

• General discussion topics:
  – “What do I need to do to get tenure?”
  – “What is different about WPI?”
  – Prioritization and time management
  – Keeping things in perspective
  – “Finding the bathroom”

• Introductions to other faculty
  – finding additional mentors and other opinions
  – social networking

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Some Specific Mentoring Topics

• Teaching/Advising
  – Undergraduate project advising
  – General teaching strategies (workload, office hours, ...)
  – Writing better exams
  – Grading strategies
  – Working through difficult advising situations
  – Interpreting course feedback

• Funding
  – Providing copies of successful grant proposals
  – Reviewing my grant proposals
  – Dealing with rejection