An Introduction to Being Mentored by Dr. Robert Nowak

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FAQs:

• Should mentors be imbued with godlike qualities?

• Can we expect mentors to guide us even from beyond the grave using the Force?

• What else should we look for?
Things to look for in a mentor

• A positive role model
  – “The mentor is often held up as the kind of person the student believes she or he should become.”
  – e.g. Leslie Collins of Duke University and the Rice DSP Group

• Trust

• Good personal and communication skills
  – e.g. Rob Nowak and “What’s the good word?”

• Technical aptitude
  – e.g. Ian Jermny of INRIA

• Accessible
  – e.g. Gary Ybarra of Duke University
Self-Assessment

- What are my objectives in graduate school?
- What type of training do I desire?
- What are my strengths?
- What skills do I need to develop?
- What kinds of research or creative projects do I want to work on?
- What type of career do I want to pursue?
Setting priorities with a mentor

• Frequent discussions of career directions and necessary credentials
  – Publishing vs. reviews, teaching, making code available
  – Discuss possible projects and associated time requirements vs. benefits.

• “What’s next?”
What to avoid in a mentor

The Absent-Minded Professor: no explanation necessary

Dr. Frankenstein: unapproachable

Indiana Jones: inaccessible

De-mentors: suck joy, happiness, and hope — and eventually the soul — from their victims.

Dr. No, Professor Moriarty: evil
Sources

• mentoring.org
• gradschool.about.com
• The UCLA Graduate School Survival Guide
• “How to Get the Mentoring You Want”, the University of Michigan