



RACKHAM GRADUATE SCHOOL

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

QUICK TIPS FOR PROMISING PRACTICES: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Offer a “boot camp” intensive session of training prior to the start of the fall term for incoming students who have changed fields or have not used the academic skills they need for some time.

Provide a for-credit professionalization seminar for first-year students to introduce them to the norms of the discipline and expectations of the graduate program within the context of their particular field of study.

Require that incoming students take a for-credit seminar that focuses on the complexities of responsible conduct of research and professional ethics as they pertain to the discipline and the challenges students will face.

Integrate issues of academic integrity whenever possible in courses. Provide students the opportunity to ask questions about university policy, federal regulations, and professional standards as they apply to specific aspects of lab work and coursework.

Organize a regular brown bag series at which faculty introduce students to particular facets of graduate education and preparation for the career trajectory. The goal is to demystify the stages of study and research in order to better prepare them for program requirements.

Offer workshops for skill development that focus on single topics such as crafting conference proposals, the nature of science writing, how to find an advisor, the process of critical reading, and writing the prospectus. Take advantage of the many staff and faculty at U-M who routinely provide such workshops and ask them to tailor sessions to your program needs.

Include within required courses a linked sequence of skill development that will guide their studies and training. For example, the first course introduces students to research possibilities with department faculty, the next facilitates directed research and requires an oral presentation, the third involves writing an NSF grant.

Provide GSI training tailored to your discipline, the demographics of your graduate students, and the nature of your undergraduate student needs. Tape mock classroom presentations and ask the undergraduate audience to participate in the critique. Create a training handbook for later reference.

Host an alumni conference at which graduates of your program can profile careers and current students can explore potential options.

Help your students establish networks for later research and employment opportunities. Make certain to introduce them to colleagues at conferences, to visiting speakers, and to alumni who may have shared interests.

Incorporate grant-writing experience into a course. Require that students complete a proposal for NSF or other relevant grant funds. Include class discussions about how and why Responsible Conduct of Research and mentoring training are part of many proposals.

Sponsor a student-run seminar series that provides the opportunity for experience with research presentations as well as constructive critique. Invite students from related disciplines to participate.

Provide a seminar series for those students on training grants that insures they cover expected training topics and allows them to explore related issues.

Encourage students to take part in community outreach and service teaching so that they gain experience in understanding how skills they are learning can be applied.

Offer workshops that explore related or alternate careers that require the skills and knowledge your students are acquiring in the graduate program. Discuss the range of current job opportunities that require their writing and research skills.

Host a jobseekers group which serves as a venue for each stage of the effort—from learning how to write a resume/c.v. to an overview of the posting and interview processes. Tape mock interviews and have faculty review these along with other draft application materials.

Invite advanced students to workshops on publishing and the nature of the tenure process.

Sponsor a Doctoral Program Day in your department that provides the advanced students a venue in which they can practice oral presentations and meet alumni.

Provide advanced students with the opportunity to design and offer their own courses in their area of nascent expertise.

For more information about the resources available through the Rackham Graduate School, contact Paula Wishart, Academic Program Officer for Professional Development, at 647-2644 or pwishart@umich.edu.