

# Guidance in Lab Research

Establishing a good working relationship with your mentor(s)



*A mentor is a person with superior rank or authority and influence in his or her field who commits time, emotional support, and intellectual strength to encourage growth and development in an understudy.*



# Who are your mentors?

- Sponsoring professor
- Grad students or Postdoctoral fellows
- Other undergraduates (peer mentors)

Take advantage of them all!





# Your sponsoring professor

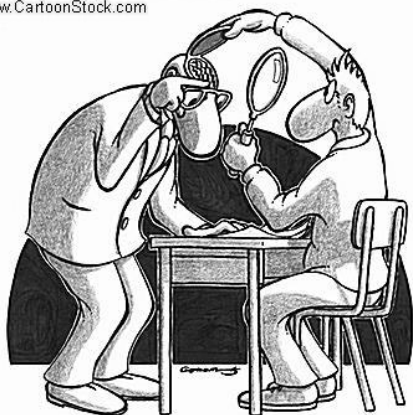
- Be respectful of their time, but make sure they make time for you
- Come prepared for presentations and one-on-one meetings
- Have a discussion about expectations early on
- Ask for help when you need it!

# Schedule regular one-on-one meetings



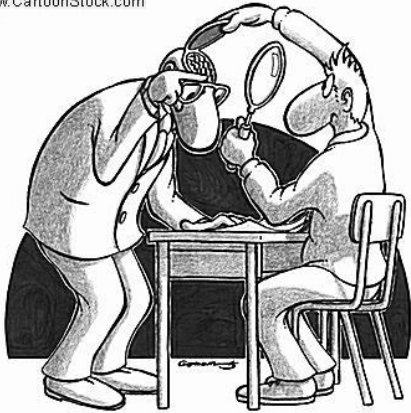
**"Well, a pop-up doctoral dissertation is certainly an original idea..."**

*[www.gradresources.org/articles/cartoon2.gif](http://www.gradresources.org/articles/cartoon2.gif)*



# One-on-one meetings: How to prepare?

- Bring your data and notebook
- Bring specific comments and questions
- Be forward-thinking
- Accept constructive criticism... and ask for it!
- Ask for additional reading... and do it!
- Make short and long-term “deadlines” together



# My mentor has no time/ does not want to meet-- what now?

- Send the professor a well-written, 1-2 p. progress summary every month to:
- Stay on the professor's radar
- Interest the professor enough that s/he will grant a meeting
- Have something to show others to solicit guidance
- Achieve clarity on the problem by writing about it

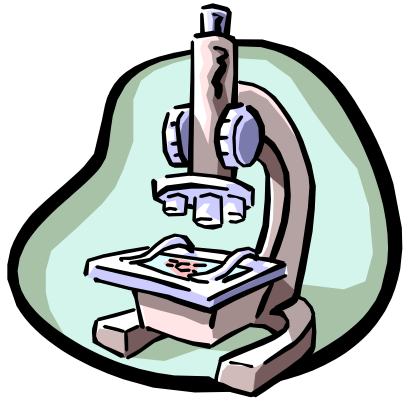


# Establish good relationships with other lab members

- They are great resources for everyday issues: protocols, reagents, equipment...
- They are great sounding boards for ideas that you're not quite ready to mention to the prof
- The lab could become your “extended family”

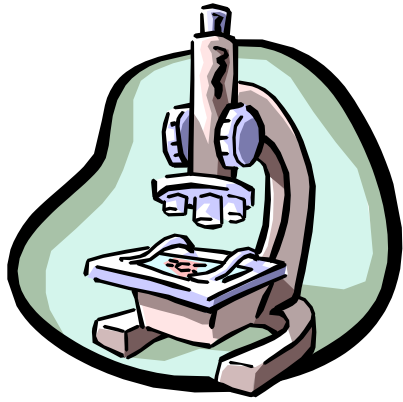
Earn their respect by being a good lab citizen!





# Getting the most out of your research experience

- Schedule regular meetings with your mentors
- Attend lab meetings... and participate!
- Present your work at lab meeting regularly
- Keep a detailed lab notebook
- Write progress reports and ask for review
- Become an expert in your field



# Getting the most out of your research experience

- Take every opportunity to explain your work to others, both formally and informally
- Make an attainable, but ambitious, final “goal”
- Don’ t get discouraged! It is common for progress to come in “fits and starts”
- Be flexible and adapt to unexpected results - don’ t expect to adhere to a rigid plan