

Responsibilities of Faculty Advisors of Graduate Students in ENVS

Environmental Studies (ENVS) faculty come from a diversity of academic disciplines and traditions, which lead to different styles of graduate student advising. In addition, many mentors for our graduate students are not officially rostered in the program or may not regularly attend ENVS functions. While ENVS faculty often function independently and work to support their own research groups, there is the need for a common, well-defined set of responsibilities for all faculty advisors in the program, so that collectively, they function as a unified community. Such an approach demonstrates respect for the graduate students, as well as for faculty colleagues. This document provides an outline of the responsibilities taken on by all advisors of ENVS graduate students.

What constitutes the commitment of taking a M.S. or Ph.D. student?

Taking a graduate student is generally a commitment to be the student's mentor for their entire graduate career and beyond, providing intellectual, logistical, and, possibly, financial support. However, there are many circumstances under which it is appropriate for a student to switch advisors. If it becomes apparent that a student you have accepted should work with someone else, you are committed to continue to be supportive of the student during any transition to a new advisor, and to help facilitate the transfer. The new advisor must be willing and able to mentor the student, and both the old advisor and new advisor should make this arrangement known to the Graduate Committee. If you advocate that ENVS accept a graduate student to work with you, you are making this commitment.

Specific Responsibilities:

1. *Represent Environmental Studies favorably in interactions with prospective students* – Faculty are the link between prospective graduate students and the ENVS program. It is the responsibility of faculty to respond to prospective students when they inquire about the mentorship, even if it is just to let them know that they are not taking new students.
2. *Consider advancing inclusive excellence of the unit through engagement with underrepresented students:* All prospective and admitted graduate students should be assessed fairly. Increasing diversity among graduate students in the unit will necessitate faculty awareness of how implicit biases, cultural norms, and reliance on non-inclusive evaluative standards (such as GRE scores, elite undergraduate institutions of study, etc.) may unfairly disadvantage students from underrepresented backgrounds to secure an advisor.
3. *Communicate with the student after admission* – This may include providing explanations of how funding works or the academic aspects of being at CU and within the ENVS program. This also involves interacting with and hosting the student if they come for the visit day. If it is an international student, it is important to provide additional guidance to the student on issues such as housing, and graduate student and university norms. International graduate students require two-years of financial support for visa purposes and it is up to the advisor to secure this initial support.
4. *Convene the student's first-semester guidance committee* – You should work with the student to identify a guidance committee and help to schedule the meeting. You should review the

student's academic record and research interests so you can give good advice on a coursework plan. You should work with the student to prepare a statement of past experience, research interests and proposed courses prior to the meeting. This statement should be sent to the guidance committee prior to the meeting.

5. *Work with the student to understand funding possibilities and to succeed in gaining funding* - This responsibility can include obtaining funding for the student yourself, helping them to understand and apply for independent funding or to seek teaching assistantships for the student within or outside of ENVS. A key responsibility of the advisor is to work with the student to refine and edit their funding applications so as to increase their chances of success.
6. *Interact regularly with a student* - You should advise the student to help them succeed in their coursework and to advance their research. This requirement is especially critical for MS students, who have much less time to formulate and then complete their research. While advising styles differ, advisors need to be willing to meet with their students and communicate with them regularly in person meetings, via email, etc.
7. *Provide timely feedback on the student's work* - When students are nearing completion of their graduate careers, they typically require considerable help in editing and analyzing their findings/work—especially when completing their first papers. An advisor must be timely in provide help to finishing students with these tasks, so as to not jeopardize a student's success as he/she transitions out of graduate school.
8. *Support Job Placement* - Just as important at the end of a student's tenure is to give prompt help with job applications and in providing letters of recommendation, as well as aid in identifying possible jobs.

Faculty Leaves/Sabbaticals

It is the responsibility of the faculty member to ensure that their graduate students are receiving the help they need when they are away from campus. Faculty who are away from campus for a sabbatical, fellowship, or other leave are required to notify the Graduate Committee and to submit a student mentorship plan during their absence. The student in question will also be asked to agree to this mentorship plan.

Guidance to Graduate Students

If a student feels that his/her advisor is failing to fulfill the specific responsibilities listed above, the student should consider approaching the advisor directly to discuss these concerns. If this does not solve the problem, or if the student feels uncomfortable doing this, the Director of Graduate Studies and members of the Graduate Committee are available to discuss options with the student. This meeting can be kept confidential, at the student's request. That is, part of the responsibilities of the Graduate Committee is to be available to provide support and advice and to work with the student to determine if it is appropriate for the Committee to help facilitate a resolution with the advisor. Students may also reach out to the ENVS Director to discuss any concerns. There are also several resources available to students who prefer to engage someone outside of ENVS:

<https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/campus-resources>

Approved by Faculty 11/6/2017