

Guidelines for Selecting a Mentor

1. Select a mentor with whom you feel comfortable. There is a difference between an advisor and a mentor. Your advisor informs you which course(s) to select, the requirements for graduate school, etc. A mentor gets more involved in issues that are specific to you. Thus, it is important that you and your mentor feel comfortable working with each other.
2. Know the professor's work. Invest time gaining a sense of their research interests and methodological preferences.
3. If possible (but not required), enroll in the professor's course, or choose a faculty with whom you have previously taken a course.
4. Don't limit your options based upon race, gender or age. Differences can sometimes be very beneficial.
5. Remember, when you are trying to find a mentor, you need to sell yourself to them. They need to know why they should invest their time and resources on you.
6. Be aware of her/his time commitments. Try and select a mentor that is involved with other activities but not so involved that they don't have time for you.
7. Be considerate of their time. Be on time for meetings. If you are unable to make a scheduled appointment, call in advance to cancel, apologize and reschedule.
8. Know what the professor's expectations are up-front. Heavy workload? Quality work? Adequate meeting time? Knowing these details will become important as your research progresses.
9. Find out what other students think about working with the professor.
10. Clearly explain what it is you want the mentor to do. Some professors will not be informed about the McNair Scholars program. It is critical that you take the opportunity to educate them on the program and its benefits.
11. Only submit rough drafts that have been carefully proofread. Make an effort to have someone edit your work.
12. Take yourself seriously. Consider yourself a potential colleague rather than a bright student.
13. Accept critiques of your work in a professional manner.
14. Update your mentor about your progress. Take charge of your education!
15. Follow your mentor's advice. If they recommend readings, articles, or conferences, make sure you follow through with her/his *suggestions*.