Developing student and supervisor relationship

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Linking through research topic

Supervisor \[\xrightarrow{\text{Research Topic}}\] Student
The key three phases

1. Supervisor to Student: Listening mode
2. Supervisor to Student: Constructive dialogue
3. Supervisor to Student: Giving surprises
What do you want to do?
Why do you want to do it?
How will you do it?
How will it relate with rest of the world?
What will it be good for?
Selecting a supervisor

- Whom do you want to be your supervisor?
- Why do you want him/her?
- How will he/she make you realise your goals?
- Where does he/she stands in the research community?
- What benefits will you get from him/her?
Whom do you want to be your supervisor/advisor?

- should have at least a PhD degree in the field
- willing to seriously commit --- means not leaving the university next semester!
- Recommended by your graduate chair/Head of Deptt./Faculty Dean
- ....
Why do you want him/her?

- Two kinds of supervisors:
  - giving you a topic to work on
  - asking you to find a topic
  - pros and cons of the above

- Supervision approaches
  - compliance of university rules (Manager)
  - creative/imaginative/inspiring (Leader)
  - perhaps bit of both is needed

- Open vs close door policy
- genius vs obnoxious personalities
- honest and elegant nature
- ......
How will he/she be useful in your mission?

- ensuring that you develop sound answers to all of the five questions, regarding your research topic
- provide you technical advise as well as emotional support
- provide/arrange financial support/scholarship etc
- defend your work to others in the community
- help you to develop strategies for timely completion on the one hand, and ensuring that your thesis is being built upon solid foundation
- giving you right advise for publishing papers in quality journals/conferences; writing thesis
- ....
Where does he/she stand in the community?

- Active researcher in the field, and regularly attending / organising major conferences etc...
- Have published at major venues
- Knows a lot of top class researchers in the world (good network)
- Have produced successful graduates in the past
- Have examined PhD theses
- ....
What benefits you will get from him/her?

- financial support for conference travel, etc
- high quality research, a world class thesis
- becoming part of his/her network of researchers
- support for future career/jobs/post
docs/commercialisation of the research etc
- ....
Supervisor’s expectations

- seeking bright students who have serious commitment to do research
- want to build his/her academic family; feel pride
- of course, producing more papers, winning grants etc..
- good supervisors wish to see their PhD graduates as good research leaders
- balance between the quality, quantity and time ...
- seeking students who are good team workers, but can also work individually
- ...
Interacting with supervisors

- Supervisors are busy people
- They may have many students, and many other tasks to do; schedule regular meetings ... may consider reminding them!
- Treat them like CPUs, more jobs you submit, more output you will get from them
- Don’t wait for them to come to your office, and asking you about the progress; be proactive!
- Often your senior fellow PhD grads are extremely useful
- ...
Supervisor and Student relationship

- It is similar to what we expect between a parent and child (academic family)
- Supervisors see students’ success as theirs
- Two way street: initially students learn form supervisor, but then later supervisors learn from students
- Good relationship mostly turns into a life-time friendship; after graduation, indeed the supervisors and students are in the same boat!
- ...

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Supervisor and Student: conflicts

- It is normal to have often conflicting situations
- Keep clean communications
- Keep up at the front: differences and agreements
- Ignore petty matters, which might have no ill-intentions
- If differences can not be resolved, talk to the second supervisor
- Divorce between supervisor and student is better than not having good/productive relationships
- If there are some ethical/moral issues involved, don’t hesitate to consult the appropriate authority in your organisation
- ...
Conclusion

- Student and supervisor relationship is extremely important to the success of doctoral programs
- You don’t get things for what you know; you don’t get things for whom you know; But you get things for what you know and whom you know!
- You should make a choice of your supervisor based on what you want to do; and how your supervisor can really make a difference in your efforts.
- Keep your goals high, but remain realistic.
- ....
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Questions?

Meeting of the Minds...

He’s totally on to me. He knows I’ve done nothing this week!

I can see it in his disapproving eyes. He thinks I’m worthless!

Uh, so... uh...

Hmmm.

I see.

Interesting.

Hmm, squash game with Prof. Jones today, that old bugger.

Which reminds me, gotta pick up the dry cleaning.

And what’s this guy’s name again?

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