

Working with Graduate Student Research Partners

This document distills insights from two workshops on Working with Students, held on December 3 and 7, 2015. Many thanks to our panelists: Miranda Brown, Paul Conway, Elaine Gazda, Matthew Solomon, Michael Solomon, and Arthur Verhoogt.

Best practices:

- Identify student's strengths and skills; define the student's contribution to them.
- Tailor research responsibilities and publications to the student's needs and interests; identify ways for the student to develop expertise.
- Group interviews of potential student collaborators can give a sense of how individuals will work together.
- Meet regularly with students (or student teams) to discuss research direction and progress.
- Use group meetings to share results with entire research team.
- Inform student's primary advisor(s) of project expectations and outcomes.
- The time between prelims and prospectus (often 4th year) may be a good time for students to participate in collaborative work.
- Agree on shared publication credit from the beginning.
- Research collaborations can evolve out of graduate seminars.

Advantages of collaboration for students:

- New opportunities for publication and networking.
- Expanded mentoring support.
- Broader thinking about skills sets.
- Ability to speak outside of a specialized area.
- Co-authored essays give students the opportunity to understand the difference between a seminar paper and a published essay; a publication is a credential for the student (and the faculty mentor).

Advantages of collaboration with students for faculty:

- Offers an opportunity for training graduate students in professionalization and/or in their area of specialization; may be especially valuable for faculty who have few opportunities to teach graduate seminars.
- The research results are different—more richly contextualized, more finely argued, or differently situated.
- Students can offer unique specialized knowledge and skills to a research question.
- Students bring different perspectives to the research.

Challenges:

- The faculty member may have to complete work if the student's skills and expertise are not well matched to the project or if the student's priorities do not match the faculty mentor's.
- Primary advisors may resist students' participation in collaboration with other faculty.
- How faculty members work together is as important as the relationship with the graduate student; team members should coordinate advising and mentoring of student research partners.