

STATEMENT OF ADVISING PHILOSOPHY

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As a graduate¹ advisor, I approach every advising relationship as opportunity for me to learn *about, with, and from* my advisees. I strive to be *respectful, accessible, responsive, constructively critical, and reflective*. I commit to the following with each of my advisees.

Embrace diversity. As someone who grew up in rural China, studied in Beijing, received PhD training in the most multicultural city Toronto, and now works in the midwestern U.S., I believe in the power of education and recognize many realities of the “educational debt” (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Every one of us is unique and has a special trajectory of growth. As an advisor, I attempt to listen to my advisees, understand their experiences, learn about their goals, and support their success. Being different makes us collectively stronger.

Develop expertise. Pursuing an advanced degree (PhD, Master’s) means developing expertise in a specialized area. I challenge my advisees to surpass themselves, to recognize the frontiers of relevant fields, and to contribute to the knowledge base. I also strive to encourage my advisees to cross disciplinary boundaries, develop appreciation of different scholarly paradigms, and hone skills in collaboration and communication. Being an expert nowadays is not only about knowing a lot, but also knowing where to look, how to connect dots, and how to work with people.

Nurture responsibility. I stress the importance of autonomy and responsibility of my advisees as they pursue their academic goals. I won’t choose the thesis topic for them. I won’t require them to align their research interests with mine. I won’t chase them just to keep them on track. Rather, I expect my advisee to be proactive, diligent in planning, and sometimes strategically adventurous. I see my role as an advisor is to help them navigate the academic system. In return, I learn from them about their discoveries.

Invest in relations. I value “strong ties” and believe in the power of “weak ties”. I invite students to reading groups, research meetings, happy hours, etc. I also try my best to connect advisees with people I know at conferences or on social media. For someone in academia, having one advisor is not enough. Having ten sounds about right. My goal is to help my advisees find them.

Respect boundaries. While I do care about each advisee as a “whole person”, I respect boundaries and do not offer unsolicited advice about their personal lives.

Have fun. As an academic, I find research, teaching, and advising stimulating and fun. I often share the littlest fun things with colleagues, ranging from interesting papers, PhD Comics, to geeky academic workflows. I learn about all sorts of fun things from my advisees as well. Research may not be your hobby, but I do hope you find elements of your research journey enjoyable.

This statement is a living document. I expect my advisees to help me improve and enrich it.

¹I advise undergraduate students as well and the same principles apply.