

**Communication Qualities of Graduate Advisors from the Point of View of Graduate Students in Departments of Agricultural Leadership, Education, Extension, and Communications**

Mark Russell, University of Arkansas  
2301 South University Ave  
Little Rock, AR 72204

Bart Gill, Western Illinois University  
School of Agriculture  
Knoblauch Hall 145 / 1 University Circle  
Macomb, IL 61455 USA

John Rayfield, Texas A & M  
240 Agriculture and Life Sciences Building – AGLS  
Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications  
Texas A & M University  
2116 TAMU  
College Station, TX 77843-2116

Quantitative Research

RPA 5 of the National Research Agenda: Efficient and Effective Agricultural Education Programs

# **Communication Qualities of Graduate Advisors from the Point of View of Graduate Students in Departments of Agricultural Leadership, Education, Extension, and Communications**

## **Abstract**

*The connection between an advisor and advisee is dependent on many factors. According to the mentoring-empowered model, the advisor plays the roles of: teacher, sponsor and socializer, counselor, role model, and encourager. Based on the mentoring-empowered model, an open line of communication needs to be present, a sense of trust must exist, openness between the advisor and the graduate student is crucial, the graduate student needs to feel accepted, and graduate student growth needs to be at the forefront of many conversations. This study examined attributes of graduate advisors as it sought to determine both high and low qualities of graduate advisors. Accordingly, there are various thoughts on what graduate students perceive as a high-quality advisor versus a low-quality advisor. Among many traits, graduate students state that high-quality advisors will be readily available to assist them and are honest with them. Additionally, the results revealed that high-quality advisors are knowledgeable about their field. Likewise, a low-quality advisor is one who is difficult to reach, expresses little or no encouragement to the graduate student, and who possesses little knowledge about his or her field.*

## **Introduction**

In a 1998 study by Harvard University faculty (Powell), lack of communication was identified as a recurring theme among graduate students and advisors who participated in a roundtable discussion examining relationships and communication trends between the two. In the same study, many of the graduate students did not know the director of graduate studies in their department and many faculty members were unaware of important developments among the graduate student community (Powell, 1998). While instances such as may be rare, it demonstrates the lack of communication that can potentially exist among faculty and graduate students in a particular graduate program.

There are many other potential problems that can stem from lack of communication and result in the majority of the friction between graduate students and their advisors (Repak, n.d.). Further, when little or no dialogue exists between a graduate student and their advisor, problems will likely occur. In most graduate programs, there is little or no emphasis placed on open communication between faculty and graduate students by administration. To add to the problem, most students tend to avoid breaking down communication barriers between themselves and graduate advisors when relationships turn sour or are not as open as they originally may have been (Repak, n.d.). To remedy this issue, many universities have a set of guidelines advisors and graduate students should adhere to when entering the graduate student/advisor relationship. For example, the University of Delaware, College of Engineering Graduate Student Handbook describes in detail how the graduate student and advisor should communicate. More specifically, the administration suggests graduate students should be proactive in communicating with their advisor. Also, graduate students should be open to trying other communication modes and expect things to not work the first time.

In a 2006 study (Knox, Schlosser, Pruitt, & Hill) examining graduate advising relationships from the advisor perspective, the authors found positive relationships between advisors and graduate students were characterized by open communication. This was depicted by an advisor who felt he or she was comfortable enough with the graduate student to work through any situations in which the graduate student was upset. Graduate students in agricultural leadership, education, extension, and communications departments believe their "...advisors possess a student-oriented attitude and are open and willing to converse with [them] about academic endeavors as well as personal problems" (Gill, Russell, & Rayfield., 2012, p. 12). Knox et al., (2006) also found difficult advising relationships were characterized by poor communication and open communication was present in good advising relationships. In one particular instance regarding poor communication, an advisor reported his or her advisee refused to keep her informed regarding actions concerning his or her dissertation. According to Gill et al., (2012) graduate students in departments of agricultural leadership, education, extension, and communications are satisfied with the relationship they have with their advisor.

Historically, the advising relationship between advisor and graduate student has been known as a private affair. In particular, De Welde and Laursen (2008) describe the relationship between graduate student and advisor by citing George Walker, director of the Carnegie Initiative, "Only the American bedroom has more privacy associated with it than the relationship between the faculty member and the Ph.D. student" (p. 39). While this comment may be extreme in some senses, the comment highlights how advising is commonly understood as a private affair among the graduate student and the advisor. During the literature review process numerous factors surfaced as areas of concern or emphasis when referring to communication between a graduate student and their advisor. Communication competence (Ruben & Martin, 1992; Wrench & Punyanunt, 2004), encouragement (De Welde & Laursen, 2008; Williams, 2000), career advice (De Welde & Laursen, 2008; Schlosser, Knox, Moskovitz, & Hill, 2003), mentoring (De Welde & Laursen, 2008; Repak, n.d.), and support and guidance (De Welde & Laursen, 2008; Schlosser & Moskovitz, 2003) are factors that surfaced in previous graduate student/advisor relationship studies. These five factors will serve as the structure for the literature review.

### **Communication Competence**

The ways in which the graduate student and advisor understand the meaning and the deciding factors of the communication process are vital to the advising relationship. The competence of such communication can determine the success or failure of said relationship. Communication competence is a series of specific behaviors: self-disclosure, empathy, social relaxation, assertiveness, interaction management, altercentrism, expressiveness, supportiveness, immediacy, and environmental control (Ruben & Martin, 1992). In a 1993 study examining levels of communication competence among advisors and graduate students conducted by Ruben et al., the researchers found individuals who did not believe in their own communicative abilities had a lower interpersonal communication score, which in turn, created lower ratings of satisfaction with interpersonal reactions (Wrench & Punyanunt, 2004). The results of Wrench and Punyanunt's (2004) study showed the necessity of competent communication between advisors and advisees makes sense. The authors go on to state if an advisor is incompetent in his or her attempts at communicating with the advisee, the advisee would not get as much out of the relationship as he or she could with an advisor who is competent in his or her communication skills.

## **Encouragement**

Encouragement can also heavily influence the success of the time spent in graduate school for a student. An emerging characteristic of De Welde and Laursen's (2008) study, which sought to identify the *ideal advisor*, was an advisor who was encouraging to his or her graduate students. In fact, students on the receiving end of encouragement reported feeling a greater connection to their particular discipline and reported greater motivation to complete graduate school in a timely manner. These same graduate students were also more confident in discussing ideas with their peers and faculty and made greater contributions to the knowledge in their fields. In his 2000 dissertation studying demandingness and responsiveness of advisors as determinants of graduate students, Williams found high responsiveness was important to the graduate student's experience. Supportive behaviors such as being attentive and interested in the student's progress appeared to be imperative to the overall success of a graduate student. According to Gill et al., (2012) graduate advisors in departments of agricultural leadership, education, extension, and communications met with their graduate students on a regular basis and during scheduled meetings at least once a week.

On the other hand, without adequate amounts of responsiveness, students appeared to feel overwhelmed by the process and in some cases students had the feeling of not being wanted. Moreover, many students in the study also felt neglected when they perceived their advisors to be too busy to give them adequate attention. Williams (2000) goes on to recommend advisors should be "available and responsive to their students' needs, while remaining flexible so as to accommodate different levels of independence in individual students" (p. 97).

Having the opportunity to participate in professional development events also has a positive effect on the graduate career. More specifically, encouragement to participate in professional conferences and introductions to people at conferences typically occur in the satisfied advising relationship and not in the unsatisfied ones. In a study done by Gill et al., (2012), graduate advisors within the Agriculture Education profession encourage graduate student involvement in both student organizations and professional organizations. These advisor attributes are likely to communicate the advisor's interest in the student's career. For unsatisfied students, whose advisors tended to not encourage conference participation, the advisor may have been perceived as not caring about the student's career (Schlosser et al., 2003).

## **Career Advice**

One of the greatest types of communication between an advisor and an advisee comes in the way of career advice from the graduate advisor. De Welde and Laursen's (2008) study found the best advisors were aware of when their students were ready to receive career advice. The advisors also tailored their advice to the particular student's career goals and integrate their students into his/her professional networks. In doing so, this allows the student to consider other options for careers. It also opens the door for students to become acquainted with influential scholars and identify other funding opportunities that may not have previously been considered by the graduate student. Further, the *ideal type* of advisor reflects a set of traits that will help their students confidently make the transition into the professional world. Schlosser et al., (2003) found a significant difference between satisfied and unsatisfied graduate students when discussing the overall satisfaction of the career advice and guidance they received from their

advisor. When looking at career guidance in the relationship, satisfied students typically received such guidance, whereas graduate students who were unsatisfied typically did not receive the same career advice. Thus, the absence of career advice was an important loss for the students; proven by some of the participants' remarks in the study. As a result, researchers subsequently found that the lack of career guidance appears to have contributed to students' dissatisfaction with the advising relationship.

### **Mentoring**

Repak (n.d.) defined a mentor as, "a person with superior rank or authority and influence in his or her field who commits time, emotional support, and intellectual strength to encourage growth and development in an understudy" (p. 5). Further, mentoring should be part of the ideal interaction between the graduate student and the advisor. The mentor/graduate advisor should pass his expertise he has acquired on to the mentee/graduate student, while at the same time lending moral support and providing wise career advisement (Repak, n.d.). Further dissecting the mentoring element of advising, an advisor is also considered a mentor when he or she has met expressive and socio-emotional needs (offering personal support and reliable communication). Advisors who are good mentors see the student as a whole person and know them on a personal level. In doing so, advisors can use a mix of direct teaching methods along with independent learning as they respond to their graduate student's individual needs (De Welde & Laursen, 2008).

The graduate council at UC Berkeley states the mentoring portion of the graduate student and advisor relationship should be built on commitment from the advisor. In addition, the advisor should provide the graduate student with access to "professional, collegial, and supportive guidance throughout their enrollment in the graduate program." Wrench and Punyanunt cite Hill, Bahniuk, Dobbs, & Rouner, (1989) in their 2004 article examining the interpersonal variables in the graduate student and advisor relationship. Hill et al. (1989) found that graduate advisors with positive mentoring characteristics had a huge impact on their graduate students. Further, those graduate students who were mentored reported higher levels of perceived support when compared to graduate students who were not mentored. Clark et al., (2000) found the more a graduate student felt mentored by his or her advisor, the more satisfied the graduate student was with his or her doctoral program (Wrench & Punyanunt, 2004). In the same study by Wrench and Punyanunt (2004), the authors cite the Coran-Hillix, Genshiemer, Coran Hillix, & Davidson,, (2000) study that analyzed the academic production rates of those graduate students with mentors versus those who did not have mentors. The authors found that graduate students who had strong mentor relationships with their advisor "...had more publications, more conference papers, more first-authored papers, and were more productive after graduate school when compared to those graduate students who did not have a mentor during her or his program" (p. 226).

### **Support and Guidance**

Not only are encouragement, career advice, and mentoring key elements to the success or failure of the advising relationship; support and guidance are as well. Much like a parent, an advisor that provides high amounts of support and guidance can also offer active intervention on a needed basis. Supportive advisors also keep tabs on student progress and do not just assume a student is doing fine (De Welde & Laursen, 2008). Williams (2000) cited a study by Schaefer and Schaefer

(1993) that examined communication patterns between doctoral students and advisors in a clinical psychology program. Specifically, researchers asked students to respond to questions focused on determining what type of behaviors, by faculty, indicate a caring attitude towards the students. The researchers found one of the most common behaviors included: respecting them as a person. Graduate students "...valued casual conversations with their professors that were not necessarily academic in nature, because it showed them that their professors were interested in them as people, not just students" (p.35). Schlosser and Moskowitz (2003) stated researchers found frequent contact was likely to have allowed satisfied students to feel supported and guided by their advisors, thus creating an environment where the graduate student feels their needs are met. Frequent meetings do not guarantee a positive advisor/advisee relationship, however regular contact between the two was the norm for satisfied students in Schlosser and Moskowitz's study.

The review of literature is an important element of any study. It is important to place emphasis on all levels of literature when researching areas graduate student and advisor relationships. Researchers utilized several outlets for information pertaining to this study. To summarize, researchers utilized past research pertaining to the major characteristics found in related studies to develop the major areas of emphasis for this particular study. Repak (n.d.) states graduate students and advisors should work to create an open, non-threatening environment to cultivate potential relationships. Researchers have found complications can be prevented by starting open communication early in the relationship (Repak, n.d.). To encourage and facilitate this open communication between the advisor and graduate student, expectations should be defined early in the relationship. Graduate students should also understand the pressures that faculty face and be sensitive to the professor's limitations (Repak, n.d).

**Conceptual Framework**

The mentoring-empowered model (see Figure 1.1), as proposed by Selke and Wong (1993) served as the conceptual framework for this study. The mentoring-empowered model outlines potential roles advisors may play. According to Selke and Wong (1993), the five roles a successful advisor may play are: teacher, encourager, role model, counselor, and sponsor-socializer. Five factors necessary when defining the roles advisors play are located along the outer edge of the model. For an advisor to successfully serve in the roles outlined in the model, the five factors must be present between advisor and graduate students: Communication, Trust, Openness, Acceptance, and Growth.

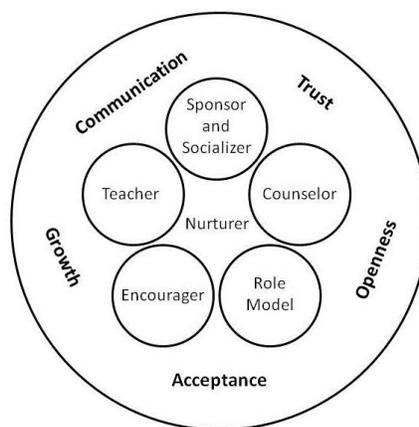


Figure 1.1. Mentoring-Empowered Model (Selke & Wong, 1993)

The mentoring-empowered model was chosen as the conceptual model for this study as it displays communication as a factor that affects the effectiveness of a graduate advisor. According to the mentoring-empowered model for an advisor to effectively serve in the various roles outlined, the factors serving as a connection between those roles need to be examined. For this particular study, the researchers focused on the communication component within the model, as it was identified as a key factor in the quality of a graduate student and advisor relationship. The mentoring-empowered model “focuses upon the psychological and developmental needs inherent to adult graduate students” (p.2) and therefore relates closely to the purpose of this study.

### **Purpose and Objectives**

This study addressed research priority area five of the National Research Agenda: Efficient and Effective Agricultural Education Programs. Further, researchers sought to determine the following objectives:

1. To identify high-quality characteristics of a graduate advisor in agricultural education, communications, extension, and leadership.
2. To identify low-quality characteristics of a graduate advisor in agricultural education, communications, extension, and leadership.

### **Methods**

Purposive sampling was used, in the case of this research, to seek out participants with very specific qualities: graduate students currently enrolled in a program of agricultural leadership, education, extension, or communications at either the master’s or the doctoral level. While there is no hard and fast rule for determining sample size in qualitative research (Patton, 1990), it is important to note that 244 participant responses were analyzed in this study. In the case of this study, data collection used graduate students’ definitions of high- and low-quality advisors, provided to the researcher as part of a larger study. These responses, by 244 graduate students, enrolled in programs of agricultural leadership, education, extension, and communications representing all regions of nation were the primary sources of data for the study.

Overall, this is a true “basic” qualitative study (Merriam, 2009). Keeping that in mind, the researchers’ most important goal was to gain a detailed definition of high- and low-quality advisors. This idea is rooted in constructivist epistemology (Merriam, 2009). Data collected were unitized and categorized. Units are referred to as the “...smallest piece of information about something that can stand by itself, that is it must be interpretable in the absence of any additional information other than a broad understanding of the context in which the inquiry is carried out” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 345). The constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) was employed to categorize the data obtained from the interviews and the content analysis of the lesson plans. The constant comparative method allowed the researcher to repeatedly compare the responses with previous responses in an attempt to discover new relationships (Dye et al., 2000). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), “the essential tasks of categorizing are to bring together into provisional categories [units] that apparently relate to the same content...” (p. 347). The categories of data were sorted into emergent themes. Emergent theme titles were developed distinguishing each theme from the others (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Emergent themes were similar to the five factors identified through the literature review and

therefore those five factors: communication competence (Ruben & Martin, 1992; Wrench & Punyanunt, 2004), encouragement (De Welde & Laursen, 2008; Williams, 2000), career advice (De Welde & Laursen, 2008; Schlosser et al., 2003), mentoring (De Welde & Laursen, 2008; Repak, n.d.), and support and guidance (De Welde & Laursen, 2008; Schlosser & Moskovitz, 2003) will serve as the categories of data in the results section. Continual revision, modification, and amendment were used until all data was classified into an appropriate theme.

In qualitative inquiry it is important to ask how researchers responded to questions of conformability, transferability, dependability, and credibility. Peer debriefing was utilized to establish credibility, consisting of an outside evaluation of the data analysis process and findings throughout the study, by individuals not directly involved in the research study. Thick description and purposive sampling was used to establish transferability. Keep in mind, purposive sampling allows the researcher to study individuals or contexts that will provide rich and pertinent detail. Dependability was established through an audit trail of codes to transcriptions and methodological journaling was used to establish both dependability and conformability.

### **Results and Discussion**

At the onset of the study, participants were given the option of offering candid and honest answers. Keeping in mind these answers were not mandatory and the surroundings and requirements for each student vary, there were many common themes among the participants who offered answers to two open-ended questions. This group of graduate students consisted of 62.2% females with males comprising 37.8% of the population. Eighty-six percent were white, 3.9 % were Hispanic, 3.1% were African-American, and 2.8% were Asian. Nearly two-thirds (66.5%) of the respondents were between the ages of 22 and 30. Almost half (48.4%) classified themselves as Master of Science students and 19.7 % reported they were Ph.D. seeking students. The remaining 31.9% were enrolled as master of education, master of art, doctor of education or education specialist. A majority (65.7%) described themselves as on-campus students, while 34.3% reported being distance education students. Similarly, 61.8% were classified as full-time students and 38.2% classified themselves as part-time students. Nearly a third (29.9%) reported their focus area to be teacher education, followed by 25.2% reporting Extension Education as their focus. Agricultural Leadership accounted for 15.7% of the respondents and Agricultural Communications majors made up 9.8% of those who responded.

The graduate students in the study were also asked to provide demographic information on their advisors. Approximately one-fourth (27.8%) reported having a female advisor, with 72.2% having a male advisor. The final demographic characteristic reported by graduate students was their advisor's professorial level. Only 21.4% stated their advisor was an assistant professor, 38.1% of the graduate student's advisors were associate professors, and 40.5% of the graduate advisors were at the professor level.

A few of the emergent themes among the responses included: time spent in office, timeliness in returning phone calls and replying to emails as well as having an advisor who is encouraging and friendly. Many graduate students also noted having an advisor who was well respected in their field among other positive qualities. Following a thorough analysis of the data it was apparent that the emergent themes resulting from the data were very similar to the five factors identified in the graduate student/advisor literature: communication competence (Ruben & Martin, 1992;

Wrench & Punyanunt, 2004), encouragement (De Welde & Laursen, 2008; Williams, 2000), career advice (De Welde & Laursen, 2008; Schlosser et al., 2003), mentoring (De Welde & Laursen, 2008; Repak, n.d.), and support and guidance (De Welde & Laursen, 2008; Schlosser & Moskowitz, 2003). Therefore, the data was categorized according to the five factors identified in the literature review.

### **Results of Question 1: What are the Characteristics of a High-quality Advisor?**

According to the graduate students who participated in the study, high-quality advisors should possess a variety of characteristics. Below is description of characteristics as they fall into the categories described in the review of literature.

**Communication competence.** Specifically discussing the communication competence characteristics, the following emergent themes were present: “active listeners,” “always be available to answer questions,” and “be approachable.” However, not only should advisors be available, graduate students prefer promptness in returning phone calls or emails. Case and point, students stated, a high-quality advisor should “get back to your emails and phone calls in a timely fashion,” and provide “prompt answers to questions” from graduate students.

**Encouragement.** When it comes to advisor encouragement and the preferences of graduate students, the common premises and high qualities among the students included advisors who are, “helpful in achieving student goals,” an advisor that is “advocate for student success,” and an one that is willing to “be the cheerleader” for the graduate student. Other emerging themes specifically describing encouragement among advisors included, “availability, support, empathy” towards the graduate student.

**Career advice.** Specifically discussing career advice from the advisor, this graduate student had this to say, an advisor should “provide additional opportunities for research/teaching/presenting/etc.” while the student is enrolled in graduate school. Another graduate student stated a high-quality advisor should also be one who “wants to help students succeed, provide experiences to the students” as well as possess a “sincere desire to help me achieve my goals.” Further, to aid the graduate student in a future career, a high-quality advisor should be one who offers “ongoing quality research opportunities for student to be engaged in” and “provides opportunity to advance in my field of study.”

**Mentoring.** When specifically discussing the mentoring area of a high-quality advisor, a positive characteristic of an advisor is someone who provides “good informative feedback on progress of strengths and weaknesses.” Also according to the graduate students who participated in the study, advisors should also be “motivated, helpful, and offer constructive criticism” to their graduate student. They should encourage “professional development,” “express interest and help the student pursue research in his/her field,” and be “patient, and have a willingness to help”

**Support and guidance.** Exclusively discussing the various styles of support and guidance stated by the students, high-quality characteristics of advisors included these statements concerning their advisors: “are willing to listen to what it is you want to get out of the program and can direct you in reaching goals.” As well, high-quality advisors also included having an

“open door policy” and “an open personality that allows for positive interactions.” Further, one student also stated advisors should “make time” for their graduate students by scheduling “time for one-on-one meetings,” as well as “providing guidance and feedback as often as needed.” Further, an advisor should “prepare the student for the final graduation requirements (Dissertation, Defense, oral & written examinations, etc...)”

### **Results of Question 2: What are the Characteristics of a Low-quality Advisor?**

Similar to question 1, emergent themes are reported as they relate to the literature review. Below is description of characteristics.

**Communication competence.** In discussing communication competence, students stated a low-quality advisor would be one who “is not in their office and available during norm department hours and ignores phone calls and messages.” In addition, a low-quality advisor would also be one who is “disconnected,” “never available,” or a “poor communicator.”

**Encouragement.** Particularly discussing encouragement and how it relates to a low-quality advisor, students described a low-quality advisor this way: “not willing to help,” “does not want to help students get ahead” and, “doesn't allow you to spend enough time on your own research and professional pursuits.” Moreover, a low-quality advisor “does not care about student involvement in research projects,” and is “rude, doesn't make time for you, and is neglective”.

**Career advice.** Career advice relates to a low-quality advisor in a variety of ways. For instance, students stated a low-quality advisor is one who “won't let students make decisions about the degree plan,” “doesn't encourage pursuits beyond coursework,” and “doesn't care about the future of the student (whether they fail/succeed).” In addition, students also stated, a low-quality advisor is “not caring much about professional conferences that his student needs to attend” and “doesn't care about the future of the student.”

**Mentoring.** Concerning mentoring characteristics of a low-quality advisor, students expressed a low-quality advisor is one who “treats you like you are less than them because you do not hold the degree or job title” or is “standoff-ish, unreliable in regards to appointments and scheduling, and never offering his or her opinion on direction.” One student also stated a low-quality advisor is one who “doesn't care about student progress,” “provides little or no information,” “shows a lack of interest in students,” and lastly is “not willing to help student solve problems”

**Support and guidance.** Regarding support and guidance, students described a low-quality advisor as, “An unengaged person who doesn't care about the whole student (academic and personal goals),” one who shows “no guidance,” is “not helpful and often unavailable,” and “allows the student to choose their own path without any guidance.” Further, students also stated a low-quality advisor “doesn't care about students,” is “unwilling to assist your needs,” and shows “no willingness to meet or help.”

### **Conclusions/Recommendations/Implications**

Overall, graduate students seem to appreciate communicating with their advisors frequently and through face to face meetings or email. Even though there are numerous means of communication methods available to graduate students, many graduate students prefer face to face communication with their advisors and appreciate a quick and prompt return of a phone call or email. Graduate students also define a high-quality advisor as one who is encouraging and follows the academic progress of the student closely. Because face to face communication and email are frequently stated as a preferred means of communication with between graduate students and their advisors, graduate students in this study do not strongly follow the trend of the millennial generation and still prefer more conventional and personal means of communicating with their advisor.

Graduate students expect their advisors will be readily available to assist them whenever they need assistance. According to the results of study, a majority of the graduate advisors are available to the graduate students when questions arise and they are flexible and willing to meet with graduate students at their convenience, even if the most convenient time is before or after regular business hours.

The results of this study imply graduate advisors within agricultural leadership, education, extension, and communications are offering several different forms of a graduate program experience. Many advisors within the profession not only possess the desired communication skills, as outlined by the graduate students, but they also display a few of the other factors described by the mentoring-empowered model. By displaying other factors outlined in the mentoring-empowered model, advisors within agricultural leadership, education, extension, and communications possess the characteristics needed to better fulfill the multiple roles of an advisor in accordance with Selke and Wong's (1993) model.

Further studies should be conducted to determine if there is a difference between the ranks of professors and the frequency and means of communication. A qualitative study, involving interviews with graduate students about this topic, should be conducted to add a richer description to the social interactions between the graduate students and their advisors. Additionally, studies should be conducted outside of the agricultural education profession and the results of the studies should be compared to determine if the advisors within agricultural education are communicating as often as, or more often than their counterparts in other departments. One graduate student summarized a high-quality advisor as "kind, caring, and willing to help" and "treats students like a colleague, respects research ideas and interests, and offers verbal encouragement as well as being supportive".

### **References**

- Clark, R. A., Harden, S. L. & Johnson, W. B. (2000). Mentor relationships in clinical psychology doctoral training: Results of a national survey. *Teaching of Psychology, 27*, 262-272.
- Coran-Hillix, T., Genshiemer, L. K., Coran Hillix, W. A., & Davidson, W. S. (1986). Students' views of mentors in psychology graduate training. *Teaching of Psychology, 13*, 123-128.

- De Welde, K. D. & Laursen, S. L. (2008). The “ideal type” of advisor: How advisors help STEM graduate students find their ‘scientific feet.’ *The Open Education Journal*, 1, 49-61.
- Doerfert, D. L. (Ed.) (2011). *National research agenda: American Association for Agricultural Education’s research priority areas for 2011-2015*. Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University, Department of Agricultural Education and Communications.
- Dye, J. F., Schatz, I. M., Rosenberg, B. A., & Coleman, S. T. (2000, January). Constant comparison method: A kaleidoscope of data. *The Qualitative Report*, 4(1/2).
- Erlandson, D. A., Harris, E. L., Skipper, B. L., & Allen, S. D. (1993). *Doing naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Gill, B. E., Russell, M., & Rayfield, J. (2012). *An exploration of graduate student satisfaction with advising in departments of agricultural education, leadership, communications, and extension*. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 53(1), 5-17. doi: 10.5032/jae.2012.01005
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies of qualitative research*. London, UK: Wiedenfeld & Nicholson.
- Hill, S. E. K., Bahniuk, M. H., Dobbs, J., & Rouner, D. (1989). Mentoring and other communication support in academic setting. *Group and Organization Studies*, 14, 355-368.
- Knox, S., Schlosser, L. Z., Pruitt, N. & Hill, C. E. (2006). A qualitative examination of graduate advising relationships: The advisor perspective. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 34(4), 101-131.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Lindner, J. R., Murphy, T. H., & Briers, G. E. (2001). Handling nonresponse in social science research. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 42(4), 43-53. doi: 10.5032/jae.2001.04043
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Powell, A. (1998). Faculty, graduate students explore graduate advising activities. *The Harvard Gazette*. Article 4.23. Retrieved September 9, 2010, from <http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/1998/04.23/FacultyGraduate.html>
- Repak, N. (n.d.). Professor/grad relationships: Maximizing the mentoring potential. *Journal of Grad Resources*. Retrieved September 8, 2010 from [http://www.gradresources.org/articles/prof\\_grad.shtml](http://www.gradresources.org/articles/prof_grad.shtml).

- Ruben, R. B. & Martin, M. M. (1992). Development of a measure of interpersonal communication competence. *Communication Research Reports, 11*, 33-44.
- Ruben, R. B., Martin, M. M., Bruning, S. S., & Powers, D. E. (1993). Test of a self-efficacy model of interpersonal communication competence. *Communication Quarterly, 41*, 210-220.
- Schaefer, C. E., & Schaefer, K. A. (1993). Clinical psychology students' perceptions of an academic climate for caring. *Psychology Reports, 72*. 1223-1227.
- Schlosser, L. Z., Knox, S., Moskovitz, A. R., & Hill, C. E. (2003). A qualitative examination of graduate advising relationships: The advisee perspective. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 50*, 178-188.
- Selke, M. J. & Wong, T. D. (1993). *The mentoring-empowered model: Facilitating communication in graduate advisement*. Paper presented at the Conference of the National Academic Advising Association, Bloomington, MN.
- University of California, Berkeley, Graduate Division. (2006, March). *Best practices for faculty mentoring of graduate students*. Retrieved December 9, 2010, from the Guide to Graduate Policy Web Site: <http://grad.berkeley.edu/policies/guides/appendix-11-best-practices-for-faculty-mentoring-of-graduate-students-approved-by-the-graduate-council-march-6-2006/>
- University of Delaware, College of Engineering. (2010). Graduate student handbook for incoming engineering students. Retrieved December 9, 2010, from: [http://www.engr.udel.edu/resources/current\\_students/grad\\_student\\_booklet/page3.html](http://www.engr.udel.edu/resources/current_students/grad_student_booklet/page3.html).
- Williams, A. (2000). *Demandingness and responsiveness of advisors as determinants of graduate students' experience*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Texas Tech University.
- Wrench, J., & Punyanunt, N. M. (2004). Advisee-advisor communication: An exploratory study examining interpersonal communication variables in the graduate advisee-advisor relationship. *Communication Quarterly, 52*(3), 224-236.