Choosing Your Advisor

Andrew Wood and Nadezhda Voronova
CS 697: Graduate Initiation
2/05/2020
So you want a PhD

Lifecycle of a PhD student:

1) Find a research topic you are interested in
2) Pass your qualifiers: “worthy” of your admittance to the program
3) Form a committee
4) Pass your candidacy exam: outline of dissertation
5) Defend dissertation: earn your PhD
6) Graduate!

-Cannot to this alone:

- Find (a) mentor(s) among faculty, they will help you!
Role of the Advisor (P.I.)

-Advisor(s) are role models
-Share common interests
-Develop your research skills
-Write letters of recommendation, help you network
-Guide you through grad school
-Teach you the “ins-and-outs” of your field
-Funding!
Presentation Overview

When finding an advisor: two pipeline must occur in parallel

- Search for advisor
  - Weighing internal preferences
  - Asking questions
- Make decision
  - happy
  - unhappy
Mental: Choosing An Advisor

- They’re people too.

- Imagine you got to choose your parent, what would you look for?

- How involved in your research your advisor should be?
Mental: Choosing An Advisor

-Your advisor does not need to do exactly what you want to do.

-You are not “pigeonholed” into doing what your advisor does once you graduate.

  -Caveat: Pigeonholed into the field, but not the specific topic.

-You can have multiple advisors (if you choose)!
Physical: “Interviewing” Advisors

- Are they clear about their expectations?
- Supervision Style
- Personality. Ask them questions about themselves!
Physical: Talk to current Grad Students

- Current grad students have experience with their advisor(s)
- Can provide extra insight. Worst case: an extra opinion
- Bonus: interacting with your future labmates!
Making a Decision

- Highly personal decision

- Typically comes down to “style alignment” vs “research interest alignment”

- Which one will you go with?
An Ideal Relationship

- Both you and your advisor(s) communicate appropriately
- You are satisfied with your research
- Your advisor is happy with your progress
- You have a plan for your PhD (IMPORTANT)
Maintaining Your Relationship

- Communication is KEY
- Keep your advisor in the loop!
- Learn each other’s styles, build trust
- Meetings at least twice a month (rule of thumb)
- Keep records of your meetings
So you aren’t happy with your decision

- Again, communication is key
- Your advisor wants the best for you, they can help!
- What are you unhappy with?
  - Research topic?
  - Job prospects?
  - Personal reasons?
- Worst comes to worst: you can leave
Things to remember

- This is just a job

- Chances are, you and your advisor want the same things and will react similarly.

  - Put yourself in their shoes. If you were the advisor and someone was not happy, how would you react?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bachelor program</th>
<th>Master program</th>
<th>PhD program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+ Research area</td>
<td>+ Relationship in general</td>
<td>+ Relationship in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Relationship in general</td>
<td>+ Recommendations</td>
<td>+ Open communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Recommendations</td>
<td>+ Open communication</td>
<td>+ Research Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Open communication</td>
<td>+ Mentorship</td>
<td>- Mentorship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Mentorship</td>
<td>- Research area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## My Experiences: Nadya

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bachelor program</th>
<th>Master program</th>
<th>PhD program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+ Mentorship</td>
<td>+ Relationship in general</td>
<td>+ Relationship in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Research area</td>
<td>+ Recommendations</td>
<td>+ Recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Relationship in general</td>
<td>+ Open communication</td>
<td>+ Open communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Recommendations</td>
<td>+ Research area</td>
<td>+ Mentorship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Open communication</td>
<td>- Mentorship</td>
<td>? Research area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>