Adam Winsler – Mentoring Statement

Mentoring undergraduate students and bringing them into the culture of scholarship is one of great joys of my job. Seeing the enthusiasm, ideas, and energy in the students, and helping them turn these resources into publishable products is very rewarding day to day. Also, it is very exciting and fun for me to see my former undergraduate mentees at professional conferences, and seeing them complete graduate school and enter the profession.

My mentoring philosophy is guided by the Neo-Vygotskian concepts of scaffolding, guided participation, and apprenticeship. Guided participation and apprenticeship refer to the idea that students learn best when they are engaged in the authentic practices of the culture they are entering, and when their participation in such activities is carefully guided by an experienced mentor. Scaffolding refers to a particular pattern of assistance given by the mentor in which the mentor: a) carefully modifies the task demands on the student so that the task is at an appropriately challenging yet attainable level for the student, b) sensitively and dynamically withdraws his or her assistance during joint activities as the student is able to adopt more individual responsibility for carrying out the particular task, and c) gradually transfers more and more responsibility from the mentor to the student as the student becomes more competent and a more fully participating member of the culture of scholarship.

I create a culture of scholarship in my research lab by having weekly lab group meetings consisting of PhD students, MA students, and undergraduates all working together and helping each other, sharing and presenting their ideas and getting feedback, engaging jointly in scholarly discussion, and critically reading and reviewing studies. I also typically meet individually each week with my students where we do data analysis together and go over my feedback on their writing.

We work very hard on writing. Students turn in multiple drafts of their research reports (typically 6-10 drafts of honor’s theses, for example), each with detailed feedback that I provide. I find that with sufficient mentorship and careful scaffolding, all students are capable of writing scholarship worthy of publication.

As one can see from the attached documentation, I have been very successful at mentoring undergraduate students to complete research projects that are of sufficient quality not only to present the work at peer-reviewed professional conferences but also to publish in good quality peer-reviewed empirical journals. One principle that I operate under is that all projects going on in my lab (regardless of whether the student is an undergrad or graduate student) need to be of publication quality, and we just keep doing the hard work that is needed to get it there.

I am honored to be considered for this award, and very excited to see the excellent initiatives going on at OSCAR to help undergraduates engage in more research and scholarship broadly defined. Thank you for all of your fine work. Please let me know how else I can help OSCAR and Students as Scholars here at Mason.

Best,

Adam Winsler