



**VCU**

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

Graduate School | Graduate School  
Mentorship Program

## Mentor Spotlight: Brandon Lind

Brandon is a Ph.D. student in VCU Life Sciences. This is his third year participating as a mentor in the Graduate School Mentorship Program. Read more about his experience below.

### What is the most



**important thing a mentor needs to know when beginning their relationship with their mentee?**

Interpersonal skills will only go so far for a mentor. While the mentor needs to be approachable, they need to know

how to problem solve above all else. Mentors should be able to give advice to their mentees regardless of commonality of interests. For instance, mentors should be able to identify solutions fitting to their mentee from situations they have experienced within their own careers.

While each career track is different, there are many similarities in the way in which a person goes about learning about their career, identifying methods for success and implementing advice to attain their goals.

**How do you define success and how does this definition help you in the mentoring process?**

The definition of success is itself very nebulous, and depending on the context can incorporate aspects from colloquial definitions as well as those specific to the circumstance at hand. In

any case, success should parallel personal goals and achievement benchmarks. In this way, success is individualistic. Approaching 'success' in this manner has helped me tailor my goals for each specific scenario and for each specific mentee as well. For the case of mentoring students, it leaves room to incorporate the interests of the mentee while still maintaining rigor in the evaluation of 'success'.

**From your surveys and mid-semester check-in, you seem to have really made a connection with your mentee from last year. Have you had a mentor? How has that helped you to be a good mentor?**

One of the main reasons Nate and I connected so well was because of the commonality of career goals, as well as the similarities in our personalities, which are pretty well representative of individuals in science. This allowed for specificity in language, without the worry for misinterpretation. I haven't had a formal mentor, but many of my undergraduate professors have helped me in similar ways I've helped Nate through conversation and experiential learning.

**What kind of mentor do you want to be?**

I try to be a mentor that doesn't necessarily give the mentee a comprehensive 'to-do list' to attain their goals. While I can be of assistance to their accomplishments, I reiterate to my mentees that they are the only person limiting their own success; no one will do the heavy lifting for them. In this regard the mentee must be self-motivated, well organized, pragmatic, and perseverant. They must constantly remind themselves of their goals, what it will take to achieve them, and the diligence that must be maintained throughout the process of career advancement.