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E-MENTORING THE ONLINE DOCTORAL STUDENT FROM THE DISSERTATION PROSPECTUS THROUGH DISSERTATION COMPLETION

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ABSTRACT

Faculty who mentor online doctoral candidates face many of the same challenges and opportunities as those mentoring doctoral candidates in traditional, face-to-face modalities. The main difference is that E-Mentoring is based on interacting in the online space rather than interacting face-to-face, which may present challenges for both the candidate and the mentor. The concept of mentoring, which originated from Greek mythology, defined a close relationship between the mentor and the student. In Ancient India, the word Guru from the Sanskrit language stood to symbolize a caring mentor and expert teacher. Structured E-Mentor programs are formalized programs which provide training, coaching, advice, and structure to increase engagement through the online dissertation phase of doctoral education. Doctoral Mentoring relationships are an intrinsically a deeply human process. Mentoring involves the nurturing of a novice or a less experienced person (protégé) by a seasoned and experienced person acting as the mentor in providing guidance, support, and dissemination of required knowledge for a given area of expertise.

Doctoral mentors play a large role in guiding the doctoral candidate through the dissertation process from identifying their topic through conducting the research study. E-Mentoring doctoral candidates in online doctoral programs entails many of the same opportunities and challenges as serving candidates in programs that are offered in a traditional, face-to-face modality. The difference is E-Mentor interaction takes place 100% of the time from anywhere. The E-Mentor chair/candidate relationship begins as soon as the doctoral candidate completes doctoral content courses and begins the dissertation process. This article focuses on E-Mentor the online doctoral student throughout the dissertation process and the techniques that chairs and committee members can frame, and guide their candidates as they travel through their doctoral dissertation journey.

Introduction

What is Mentoring?

The concept of mentoring has been around for thousands of years, coming to us from Homer's *Odyssey*. Mentor was the teacher of Telemachus, the son of Odysseus. But Mentor was more than a teacher. He was all things to all people-half-god and half-human, half-male and half-female. Mentor represented the union of both goal and path. As the Mentor represented the yin and the yang of life, so also mentors must pull and push their mentees. Mentoring requires strength in two different but complementary behaviors. First, mentors must lead by guiding interaction with their mentees. Mentors invest themselves in their mentees and uplift them. Secondly, Mentors must support mentees. Mentors push their mentees to become their best by encouraging development in areas of expressed need in their inventory ((Peterson, 1993).

Evolving from a historical perspective, the concept and process of mentoring have been and is a vital tool for development of human potential (Hernandez, 2001). Mentoring is utilized in practically all fields of human endeavor: sports, higher education, organizational management, youth development, and the doctoral dissertation process. There are two types of mentoring: Natural mentoring occurs through normal relationships of "friendship, collegiality, teaching, coaching, and counseling. In contrast, planned mentoring occurs through structured programs in which mentors and participants are selected and matched through formal processes" (Hayashi & O'Donnell, n.d., p. 1).

Kram (1983) describes the phases of the mentoring relationship that provides an influence on protégés. Kram's phases include:

- ▶ an initiation phase, during which the time the relationship is started;

- ▶ a cultivation phase, during which time the range of functions provided expands to a maximum;
- ▶ a separation phase, during which time the established nature is substantially altered changes in the organizational context and/or by psychosocial changes within one/or both individuals; and
- ▶ a redefinition phase, during which time the relationship evolves a new form that is significantly different from the past, or the relationship ends entirely. (Kram, 1983, p. 614).

E-Mentoring Evolves

The demand for Internet-based teaching and learning programs continues to grow as more and more online programs are being offered, especially at the graduate level. A significant transformation in higher education has evolved as the adult student attempts to remain competitive in a rapidly changing world. The transformation of teaching and learning and the creation of learning communities has opened the door for the expansion of the E-Mentor and the graduate doctoral learner. Internet-based virtual learning has created new ways of mentoring the doctoral learner in which exchanges between the student and Chair become significant and critical to dissertation success. E-Mentoring has evolved since the beginning of the Internet. Different techniques may be used by E-Mentors according to the situation and the mindset of the doctoral candidate, and the techniques used in modern organizations can be found in ancient education systems, from the Socratic technique of harvesting to the accompaniment method of learning used in the apprenticeship of itinerant cathedral builders during the Middle Ages (Aubrey & Cohen (1995).

There are many definitions of E-Mentoring depending on the context/ Single, and Muller defines E-Mentoring as:

A relationship that is established between a more senior individual (mentor) and a lesser skilled or experienced individual (protégé), primarily using electronic communications, that is intended to develop and grow the skills, knowledge, confidence, and cultural understanding of the protégé to help him or her succeed, *while also assisting in the development of the mentor.* (Single & Muller, 2001, p. 108).

There are other names for E-Mentoring such as telementoring, cybermentoring, and virtual mentoring. The Internet capitalizes on the strength of the E-Mentor to provide effective feedback strategies throughout the

process. Online mentoring is occasionally compared unfavorably with face to face mentoring. Online mentoring limits the ability to pick up on visual or social clues, makes immediate feedback difficult and can often be seen as impersonal (Black, 2012). However, E-Mentoring can make participants more willing to offer honest feedback. E-Mentors often use video tools such as s FaceTime, Google Hangout, Skype, and video chat through Facebook.

Blum and Muirhead (2005) have strived to address vital issues associated with mentoring online doctoral students in their e-book *Conquering the mountain: Framework for successful chair advising of online dissertation students*. The purpose of this book is to give online distance education faculty who are dissertation advisors an explicit framework for enabling distance education doctoral student to complete a dissertation without ever coming face-to-face. Online doctoral programs are growing rapidly, and distance educators and administrators are seeking relevant educational paradigms and instructional strategies for their degree programs. The authors share their experiences working with doctoral students in a virtual environment and the paper will highlight a small portion of the insights on mentoring strategies from the e-book.

Students pursuing the doctorate face the same challenges as the long distance marathon runner. Training for the dissertation process is not unlike training for a marathon. It requires intense preparation, dedication, and skill. In many ways, conducting doctoral research and writing the dissertation is like running a marathon, enduring hills and valleys, mountains, rivers and frantic road blocks along the way. It is a long and weary race but in the end will lead to the final race in the doctoral journey; defending and publishing the dissertation (Black, 2012).

As noted in *The Dissertation Marathon (2012)* the main contrast between running a marathon and writing a dissertation is that **they both require an extreme amount of energy**. In both situations, the marathon runner and dissertation writer can't go all out at the beginning because they might not have the strength to make it through at the end. Marathon runners and dissertation writers must take every step carefully and slowly because **every step, no matter how slow, will bring the finish line closer**. Like a marathon, writing the dissertation requires **perseverance**. This is why it is essential to condition the body and mind to endure. Working on the dissertation a little at a time conditions the body and mind to persevere even if it becomes tired and not in the mood. The candidate may get frustrated while writing each chapter but as the light at the end of the tunnel becomes brighter, the candidate will become refreshed and want to continue.

Role of the E-Mentor Dissertation Chair

Mentoring in Europe has existed since at least Ancient Greek times (Parsloe, E.; Wray, M. J., 2000). Since the 1970s mentoring has spread in the United States educational environments. E-Mentoring became popular in the 2000s as internet and online teaching, and learning tools became the norm in online education.

The role of the E-Mentor Is centered on a commitment to advancing the doctoral candidate's doctoral journey through personal engagement that facilitates sharing guidance, experience, and expertise. Like any relationship, the relationship between the E-Mentor and the doctoral candidate evolves throughout the dissertation process, with its share of changes and adjustments. Today's doctoral candidates come from diverse backgrounds and cultures, adding layers of complexity to the relationship. Although backgrounds and cultures may confound the relationship, a strong E-mentor/Doctoral Candidate relationship will overcome any diversity. Eventually, each E-Mentoring relationship will conform to the doctoral candidate's diversity keeping in mind the candidate's goals, needs, and learning style. What the E-Mentor and doctoral candidate share – a commitment to the doctoral candidate's scholarly goals and desire to succeed.

Matching the E-Mentor to the doctoral candidate most of the time is based on a search of faculty background and experience may be used to facilitate the beginning of the dissertation mentoring relationship. This mentee-driven selection process increases the speed in which matches are created and reduces the amount of administrative time required to manage the program (Odiorne, 1985). The quality of matches increases as well with self-match programs (Allen, T.D., Eby, L.T., Lentz, E, 2006.) because the greater the involvement of the doctoral candidate in the selection of their E-Mentor, the better the outcome of the mentorship. There are a variety of online mentoring technology programs available to the university that can be utilized to facilitate this E-Mentor – Doctoral Candidate matching process.

Selecting an E-Mentor is one of the most important decisions that a doctoral candidate will make during their doctoral journey. It may look like an easy and straight forward task, but there are often complications and issues that may come up during the process. Like dating and marriage, the key to selecting an E-Mentor is, to be honest and straight forward letting the potential mentor/chair know your expectations early in the process. When selecting an E-Mentor and dissertation committee, the most important thing that everyone must understand is that this is your dissertation, not theirs. Of course, like a marriage, disagreements and changes may come up, but both

the candidate and E-Mentor must understand the most important person on the dissertation team is the candidate (Black, 2012). This relationship may be thought as a marriage, where trust and communication become the main goal of the relationship. The E-Mentor guides the marathon, helping the candidate to the finish line.

A key development in E-Mentoring, the online doctoral candidate, Is the large pool of qualified faculty today. Today's mentor brings invigorating experiences and perspectives to the doctoral dissertation process, but they also face many challenges. These challenges have necessitated a sophisticated change to the role of the E-Mentor heightening the vital role of the E-Mentor to prepare the next generation of scholars beyond the dissertation. Today the title *Dissertation Chair* is often interchanged with the title *Mentor or E-Mentor*. Consider this multi-faceted definition of mentor/chair:

1. Faculty must exhibit *genuineness*
2. Faculty must be *knowledgeable*
3. Faculty must create a *climate of trust*
4. Faculty must create a *climate of connectedness*
5. Faculty must be wiling to *exhibit, demonstrate, and model personal and professional ethic* (Fedy nich and Bain (2011).

In the online teaching and learning world, the E-Mentoring doctoral dissertation chair is challenged by these dynamics to ensure the doctoral candidates success.

E-Mentoring doctoral candidates throughout their dissertation journey without traditional face-to-face interaction is not an easy task. Online teaching and education complicate the dissertation process because the E-Mentor is not physically attached to the student for easy student consultation and teamwork at critical timelines throughout the process. The entire dissertation process for many doctoral candidates appears similar to a mountain looming in the distance, inescapable, magnificent, but impossible to scale (Blum & Muirhead, 2005). Online doctoral students face additional challenges overcoming the barriers of distance education (Blum, 1999). Working in a distance education virtual medium requires more explicit objective setting than face-to-face teams (Helms and Raiszadeh , 2002)

E-Mentoring Through the Dissertation Process

The doctoral degree is the highest advanced degree in most fields of study. While the type of doctoral degree and the topic of the doctoral dissertation may differ, all

doctoral candidates conduct a research study and write a doctoral dissertation to complete their doctoral program. Conducting research and writing a dissertation is not easy, that is why a strong E-Mentoring/Doctoral Candidate relationship is key. Through the guidance, motivation, and specific feedback, the doctoral candidate will be successful. E-Mentors stress to the doctoral candidate to always have a positive mental attitude and keep an eye on their goal; to become a *Dr.*

E-mentors do not have an online explicit list to help online students succeed through the dissertation process despite argument that “professors can learn advising skills by following some systematic advising processes” (Davis, 2004, para 2). It is up to the E-Mentor and the doctoral candidate to form a roadmap to complete all the milestones in the dissertation journey. This roadmap sets the stage to travel through the dissertation process with a focus on completing the doctoral candidate’s dissertation. Sample roadmap instructions may look like this:

Complete the top portion of this project plan with your committee information. Then, review the activities and responsibilities below. These are the activities that must be accomplished to complete your dissertation, along with who is responsible for each activity. Insert realistic due dates for each activity, based on your personal schedule. Remember, You need to complete all activities and win the dean’s approval within five years of the date you began the program. Return this completed form to your Mentor for review, comments, and revisions. When you and your mentor have completed this project plan–contract, both should sign it.

Now that the roadmap is complete and agreed to by the E-Mentor and doctoral candidate the fun begins...

The Dissertation Prospectus

The early stages of the E-Mentor/Doctoral candidate’s journey together focus on completing the doctoral dissertation prospectus. The prospectus, or the concept document, as some universities refer to it, begins the process of definition and clarification of a research project. When complete, the prospectus should identify the problems the proposed research study is designed to address and describe the importance and value of the proposed research.

The prospectus is developed for several reasons. First, the prospectus brings together and summarizes in an initial formal statement the learner’s thoughts about their dissertation. This is helpful since it begins the process of putting into writing the ideas that will guide the

dissertation. Second, the prospectus is used as the starting point for the dissertation journey in which the doctoral candidate begins detailed, serious work on their formal proposal and dissertation. Third, the prospectus provides a clear statement of the doctoral candidates dissertation’s purpose, problem, hypotheses or propositions, design, and method. The prospectus or concept document is an exploration of:

The **Researchable Problem Statement** describing the general positioning of the research in terms of a general problem or observation that needs to be studied. The problem statement should include specific aspects of interest in the research, and very brief descriptions of method, design, population of interest, and sampling strategy.

The **Purpose Statement**, a highly refined short paragraph of several sentences clearly explaining and justifying the proposed study, defining the method and why it is appropriate, stating the design and why it is appropriate, identifying the key variables, the specific population of interest, and the location of the intended research. The structure of a proposal is closely tied to the purpose of the proposal (Grady, M. & Hoffman, S. S., 2007). A proposal’s purpose is to explain and justify a proposed study to an audience of non-experts on the topic (Maxwell, 2005). The majority of committee reviewers reject proposals not because they disagree with what is presented, but because they do not understand the student’s intent (Locke, Spiriduso, & Silverman, 2000). Reviewers tend not to accept unclear ideas. Emphasize clarity, coherence, and connectivity among ideas throughout the document are the necessary components to write a successful proposal. (Grady & Hoffman, chapter 10 in Mullen, 2007).

The purpose statement is elaborated in the **Significance, Nature Of The Study, and Research Questions**. This discussion extends into an exploration of the deep congruence or coherence which exists in the past research between the question under study and the foundational conceptual and/or theoretical literature. Part of this discussion should identify important issues, perspectives, and controversies in the field.

The development of the concept or prospectus document is one of the more critical aspects to launching a clearly defined research project. Different institutions offer slightly different rationales for prospectus development. Gaining clarity about the expectations specific to the University is of paramount importance for a new doctoral candidate. Simply stated, the prospectus is a statement of intention. The prospectus is made up of three components; the problem statement, the research question, and the plan for the literature review. In order to complete an effective literature review including the specifics needed, considerable clarity about intent and

direction will be required. A discussion of these specifics between each doctoral candidate and their E-Mentor will aid in accomplishing this important and challenging work.

Doctoral candidates and the E-Mentor will work together to complete the prospectus. The doctoral candidate should aim to have an approved Prospectus within a specified period established by their university. Throughout the process the E-Mentor will provide feedback on working drafts and prospectus development. Once the prospectus is approved by the E-Mentor the doctoral candidate’s committee will review and evaluate the Prospectus. Once again, each university establishes the guidelines for completing and evaluating the prospectus.

The Dissertation Proposal

Now that the prospectus is complete and approved the E-Mentor guides the doctoral candidate into the dissertation proposal process. The first step is to agree on an original and researchable dissertation study problem aligning it to the dissertation topic that was approved by the E-Mentor. Coming up with the problem requires considerable interaction between the doctoral candidate and E-Mentor. Both agree that the problem statement is the most critical element of the candidate’s doctoral dissertation. According to Simon (2011) the problem statement is the heart of a doctoral dissertation and where you need to begin. The problem statement explains the rationale for the research, validates its importance, determines the research design, and ensures reliability. After reading the problem statement, the reader will know *why* you are doing this study and be convinced of its importance. In their article, *Strategies To Win: Six-Steps For Creating Problem Statements In Doctoral Research* (2005) Drs. Kimberly Blum and Amy Preiss from the University of Phoenix, School of Advanced Studies stress:

Writing a problem statement can be compared to a professional racecar driver strategically reducing speed before going around a steep turn. Slowing down increases the driver’s ability to control the car and defeat drivers who accelerated too quickly and lost control of the car. Slowing down initially enables the driver to win the race. Students writing a problem statement should implement a similar strategy. Students should take time to consider what constitutes a viable problem before writing the problem statement. Doctoral learners should slow down, consider the problem to explore and devise a strategic plan. If students invest this time initially, they will experience less difficulty in completing the remaining parts of the proposal. (Blum, K. & Preiss, A. (2005).

Creating problem statements can be challenging and time consuming for both the candidate and E-Mentor but because the problem statement drives the purpose of the study, the choice of research design, and the resulting conclusions, agreeing on an effective problem statement is critical to the success of the doctoral candidates’ dissertation (Burner, 2014).

Once the problem statement is set, the candidate is now ready to focus on the purpose of the study. The purpose statement is the study intent, which is the objective the study is designed to achieve. The process of developing the purpose statement provides an opportunity for the doctoral candidate and E-Mentor to reflect on the overall scope and focus of the dissertation project and anticipate issues that may arise. The purpose statement must be reflective of and aligned with the problem statement. The purpose statement defines the reason for the research or the research goals. The purpose statement begins by identifying the research methodology and design followed by how the variables will be analyzed. The purpose statement is succinct and to the point directly aligned with the problem. It’s key that the E-Mentor ensures that the purpose statement aligns directly to the dissertation topic and problem statement.

Once the problem and purpose statements meet the E-Mentor’s approval the doctoral candidate focuses on the research questions and hypotheses. A well-stated research question drives the investigation and implementation of the study. Dissertation research defines the questions that the results of the study will be used to answer and should be phrased in a way that will produce observable and measurable answers. Research questions guide the inquiry of the research by narrowing and focusing the purpose statement. They define the questions that the results of the study will be used to answer and should be phrased in a way that will produce observable and measurable answers. Typically, a problem statement will have one or two research questions associated with it. In quantitative studies, these research questions are most often descriptive, correlational, or experimental. In qualitative studies, the research questions are generally broad in nature. To be effective, a research question must be manageable and contain appropriate restriction, qualification, and delineation. The doctoral candidate and E-Mentor will work together to establish the best research questions for the candidate’s dissertation. The formulation of research questions must be aligned with the selection of the research method and design that will be used to generate the data for the study.

Now that the foundation of the doctoral student’s dissertation has been established the doctoral candidate and E-Mentor begin to discuss and interact on the re-

maining elements of chapter. Once the E-Mentor reviews and approves Chapter 1 the doctoral candidate may move on to Chapter 2, the Literature Review. The literature review serves an important purpose in the dissertation. It supports the importance and timeliness of the dissertation topic and problem. The literature review is extensive in a dissertation proposal, and it is often the largest section.

According to Cooper (1988), a literature review uses as its database reports of primary or original scholarship, and does not report new primary scholarship itself. The primary reports used in the literature may be verbal, but in the vast majority of cases reports are written documents. The types of scholarship may be empirical, theoretical, critical/analytic, or methodological in nature. Second a literature review seeks to describe, summarize, evaluate, clarify and/or integrate the content of primary reports. The doctoral candidate will synthesize the literature as the E-Mentor reviews each synthesis of the candidates' literature feedback will be provided to guide the student to completing an effective and supportive literature review.

Now that the E-Mentor has approved chapter 1 and 2, the candidate many now move on at a steady pace focusing on how the study will be conducted. Chapter 3 includes a discussion of the research methodology for the study. The chapter begins with a detailed discussion of the appropriateness of the method, the design, and how the chosen method and design will help accomplish the study goals. Following a discussion of the study population, chapter 3 includes a discussion of the processes for collecting and analyzing data. The chapter concludes with a discussion of instrumentation, instrumentation reliability, and issues associated with the internal and external validity of the study. Chapter 3 often brings the doctoral candidate considerable confusion. The E-Mentor will work with the candidate providing guidance and feedback on each element of chapter with both the candidate and an E-Mentor agreeing on each element.

With the dissertation proposal complete, the candidate is at the Half-Way Point... The next step is to add the front matter and back matter and submit to the dissertation for a quality review. Front matter may include:

- ▶ Title page
- ▶ Copyright page
- ▶ Signature Page
- ▶ Abstract (Heading only for proposal, complete for dissertation)
- ▶ Dedication (Heading only for proposal, complete for dissertation)

- ▶ Acknowledgements (Heading only for proposal, complete for dissertation)
- ▶ Table of Contents (with dot leaders, and page numbers)
- ▶ List of Tables (if more than 1 table included)
- ▶ List of Figures (if more than 1 figure is included)

Back matter is optional but almost always is used when additional material is needed to support the dissertation.

At this point the E-Mentor and doctoral candidate may take a breath and take a short break as the candidate's dissertation committee completes their evaluation. The candidate's dissertation committee will provide feedback on issues in the proposal. The E-Mentor will work with the doctoral candidate to complete the changes recommended by the committee. Once the entire dissertation committee approves the dissertation proposal, the student then can move on to completing and gaining approval of their proposal by the Institutional Review Board to insure that the study is ethical and will not violate any of the subject's or university's rights. With both dissertation committee and IRB approval the doctoral candidate may proceed at a rapid pace toward completing their dissertation journey.

The Final Dissertation

Pacing is key at this stage of the dissertation process (Black, 2012). In most cases the E-Mentor is not involved with the doctoral candidates' data collection, but will need to insure there is open communication throughout data collection so that the E-Mentor may advise on data analysis. Now that the doctoral candidate has completed data collection and analysis the next steps are for the E-Mentor to establish the guidelines for writing chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 is fairly easy to write since it basically reports the results of the study without an explanation of what they mean. The purpose of Chapter 4 is to report, in appropriate detail, the results produced by the completion of the systematic and careful application of the analytical research techniques to the data. No statement should be made in the chapter that is not directly supported by the results of the data analysis.

In a brief introduction, the researcher will state the key features of and reasons for the data collection and data analysis techniques employed. In the body of the chapter, the writer reports the results and findings generated by the analyses of data without editorial comment. This chapter includes solely the analysis of data, the testing of hypotheses, and/or the careful dissection of research ques-

tions, introducing no interpretation of findings. The results of testing each statistical hypothesis must be clearly presented and without editorial comment. Significance of results and findings must be stated clearly, with appropriate qualifications and constraints. Tables and graphs can be used and are illustrative of the verbal presentation of data. Graphical representations do not take the place of a narrative, but they clarify the verbal presentation. The chapter ends with a summary of the key points covered in the chapter and transitions smoothly to chapter 5. Once Chapter 4 is complete the E-Mentor will evaluate the Chapter and provide detail feedback to be sure Chapter 4 meets the doctoral dissertation template.

As the E-Mentor approves Chapter 4 the doctoral candidate may now move closer to the finish line. Chapter 5 concludes the research study, providing insightful conclusions into the implications of the inquiry for various constituents and the recommendations, supported and justified, emerging from the analyses and findings. This chapter includes the candidate's conclusions and recommendations. Following an introduction to the chapter the conclusions are presented based on the literature review and the analysis of data. The candidate will introduce discussions that highlight the importance, significance, and meaning of the inquiry to constituents such as managers, employers, employees, researchers, communities, government agencies, business leaders, and others.

The candidate should clearly indicate how the conducted study is significant, substantial, and contributory to the related body of knowledge. This section should also describe the extent to which scholars and/or practitioners will be able to incorporate the study into their behavior. The conclusions should answer the questions: So what? and Who cares?

At this point that doctoral candidate and E-mentor will discuss and establish recommendations based on the results of the study. Once agreement is established the doctoral candidate can write the recommendations of the study and how the results of the study should be addressed in a positive way focusing on constituencies and the broader society. The ethical dimensions of the research are discussed and suggestions for further research are described and supported. The candidate will end the dissertation by summarizing chapter 5 in a brief paragraph.

Front matter is now updated by adding the abstract, dedication, acknowledgements and updating the table of contents. Back matter is added to support the findings and conclusions. The dissertation is now sent to the dissertation committee for final approval.

Approaching the doctoral candidate's dissertation journey finish line the doctoral candidate meets the dis-

sertation defense. Most universities require a formal defense of the dissertation before the E-Mentor and committee sign a candidate's dissertation. In order to defend his or her dissertation successfully, the candidate must demonstrate competence in describing, discussing, and supporting all aspects of the study to the committee and, potentially, to a broad academic audience. The oral defense is conducted very differently at many institutions. Some are in person, some via Internet video, and others via teleconference. The candidate is responsible for presenting the methods and findings of the dissertation study, typically in a Microsoft PowerPoint slideshow or some other graphical format. Depending on the method used, advanced copies of the defense materials should be provided to the dissertation committee. The candidate should be prepared to respond to all committee questions concerning the dissertation during and following the presentation. Candidates must demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of their study and the context in which it exists in order to complete the defense successfully. Failure to demonstrate this level of understanding may result in additional work required by the E-Mentor, potentially extending the time required to complete the dissertation. A successful defense will end with a signed dissertation and moving on to graduation. It is now time for the E-Mentor and doctoral candidate to celebrate achieving this substantial milestone in the doctoral journey.

Finishing the Doctoral Journey

As the E-Mentor and doctoral candidate reach the top of the dissertation mountain, both may now take a sigh of relief. The doctoral candidate can now remove the title "candidate" indicating that the final title is now **Dr.** Crossing the doctoral dissertation finish line, smiles indicate success. This is a time for celebration, virtual hugs, and exchanging pictures. For the doctoral graduate the trophy includes the doctoral diploma, doctoral regalia and the doctoral hood. With the E-Mentor, faculty and staff sitting and cheering in the audience at commencement the President of the university confers the doctorate degree. As the new **Dr.** crosses the stage, the E-Mentor will be there to "hood" the new graduate with a colorful doctoral hood representing completion of the doctorate. An academic hood is the doctoral trophy, worn draped around the neck and over the shoulders, displayed down the back. The hood's length signifies the doctoral degree level; with the institution's colors in the lining and a velvet trim in a standardized color that signifies the scholar's field.

On to Rewards

As the new Dr. descends from the mountain peak, it is time to say “so long” but not “good-bye” to the E-Mentor. At this point the E-Mentor and new Dr. may face a sense of loss, but this is normal. The doctoral journey is an overpowering presence that consumes time and attention every step of the way. There is no greater gift for an E-Mentor than the satisfaction of seeing his mentee graduate and move on to extended professional opportunities but the relationship has not ended. E-Mentor and doctoral graduates continue collaboration beyond graduation. Collaborating on research, writing articles, and co-presenting at conferences adds not only to the graduate’s career but adds additional satisfaction for the E-Mentor. It is a good feeling to see your graduate prosper and move ahead in their career. It is now time for the E-Mentor to begin the next doctoral journey with a new doctoral candidate reflecting on their recent doctoral relationship... The doctoral journey is now over and the E-Mentor and new **Dr.** may now bask in their accomplishments.

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