Mentoring a SOARS Student by Rebecca Haacker-Santos

Mentoring a SOARS protégé is a great opportunity for Postdocs!

SOARS provides an opportunity to practice mentoring.

Interested mentors should contact SOARS immediately.

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Many scientific careers eventually involve guiding the research of others - either leading a group of scientists or guiding graduate students. But it can be hard to get practice doing either of those things ahead of time. Russ Schumacher, former ASP postdoc and current professor, summed it up this way “Although I had informally mentored younger graduate students while in graduate school, that isn't the same as being responsible for designing a research project, helping a student learn about how research is conducted, and so on.”

SOARS, which invites diverse undergraduate students to NCAR to do research with NCAR scientists, provides an opportunity for postdocs to practice mentoring.

“I would highly recommend mentoring a SOARS protégé for any postdocs who are considering faculty positions (and the experience is probably helpful for those interested in working at NCAR or a research lab as well),” Russ says. Being a mentor for Graylen Boone, who just graduated from North Carolina State University, he adds “gave me reason to start thinking about how I might want to mentor my future graduate students and what sorts of projects they could work on.”

One thing that may work particularly well is inviting a more experienced scientist as a co-scientific mentor, which is how Russ approached it by teaming up with Chris Davis. “We had a good arrangement where I was the primary mentor, but when I needed help (or my protégé and I just wanted an additional perspective on things),
there was someone else to call on. Another benefit is that the protégé is exposed to both a younger scientist, who tends to have more available time and youthful enthusiasm for research, as well as the expertise and perspective of an established scientist.” “You'll also learn a lot from the SOARS protégés! They get such great training as they go through the summer, not only in scientific research, but also in career planning, communication, graduate school preparation, and much more, that you're bound to learn something you didn't know before, or to think about something in a new way. Having attended the AMS annual meeting recently, it was great to see the many SOARS protégés that I met during my summer as a mentor as they grow in their careers and as people.”

If you are interested in mentoring, or just want to learn more, please contact the SOARS program. SOARS is dedicated to broadening participation in the atmospheric and related sciences. Each year, 20 to 25 students spend their summers at UCAR collaborating with their mentors to conduct original research.

SOARS welcomes prospective mentors from any division or scientific institution, and encourages participation from all levels. You do not need to be nominated or have previous experience as a mentor, just be available and approachable, willing to work with students, able to communicate, and have a desire to learn through mentoring.

Program duration: May 31 - August 5th. Mentor training: mid-May.

- Science mentor: helps protégés contribute to a current research project and provides instruction and coaching to the protégé during the research project.
- Scientific writing mentor: coaches protégés in written and oral communication.
- Computing mentor: helps the protégé learn the computing skills necessary to complete their project. Mentoring includes providing one-on-one tutoring, recommending resources and helping debug or troubleshooting code.

To learn more and to sign up as a mentor, download a Mentor Information Form from our website http://www.soars.ucar.edu/inside/mentor_FAQ.php

For more information, contact Laura Allen at ext. 8622, lallen@ucar.edu, or visit www.soars.edu.

Clark Evans on SOARS

My experience as a research mentor in the SOARS program was both a rewarding and humbling one. It was rewarding in the sense that I could see my student grow in her knowledge of hurricanes and severe storms as well as her skill in writing and communicating that information, the combination of which led to her having an enhanced confidence in her abilities. However, it was humbling from the standpoint in that it showed me that mentoring and advising students is a lot harder than it may seem on the outside. Beyond the science, it requires an ability to understand how the student learns best and patience through many trials and errors. That said, working through the humbling experiences was very rewarding for me personally and will hopefully bear fruit as a professor in the years ahead.
Having an account closed suddenly on a supercomputer that one heavily relies on is nothing fun. I carried out most of my simulation work on Pleiades, a NASA supercomputer, during my PhD studies and the first year of my post-doc. With a wonderful and professional support team, Pleiades had always been my favorite computing resource and I stored most of my data and up-to-date version of codes on their machine. However, due to the Wolf Amendment prohibiting Chinese collaboration, my account was closed suddenly without any notice. As a result, I had to start my work from the beginning on other supercomputing resources. Thanks to help from my colleagues, I was able to continue my work without worrying about supercomputing resources. However, after that experience, I always remember to keep an up-to-date copy of my work on my local machine.