

MENTORING **SPARK**

Quick ideas to light up your doctoral conversations.

► LIFELONG LEARNING



SOLUTIONS FOR STUDENTS

Students who are not used to self-reflection as a tool, to pushing themselves to embrace challenges, or to **taking ownership** of their educational journey, may feel stuck or unsure during their graduate tenure. They may have difficulty seeing themselves as the educator (*instead of the student*) or as the researcher employed by a corporation. So it's time to "flip the script" from being a student to being an actual contributor to learning.

This **Spark** is intended to help students think about their current lifelong learning skills, what they may want to improve, and what lifelong learning may look like post-graduation (*especially in light of the rate of change of many engineering fields*).



LEVEL 1: TAKING STOCK

LEVEL 2: GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

LEVEL 3: FLIPPING THE SCRIPT



FACULTY FYI

Lifelong learning requires people to be self-reflective, think critically, question the status quo, cultivate curiosity (*wondering "what if" and "why not"*), and gain new skills. These tenets are important for successful navigation of an advanced degree. When lifelong learning skills are learned and practiced during pursuit of an advanced degree, it sets the student up for continued lifelong learning and success. Additionally, these tenets support students as they visualize themselves in the future, in their "next and next" positions after graduation.



ACTIONS FOR FACULTY

- Discuss with students the different tenets of lifelong learning and why they are tenets. For example, seeking constructive feedback, attending professional development events/workshops, etc.
- Remind students that graduation is not the end of learning, but in some ways the beginning of learning.
- Consider which, if any, **Spark** in this series should be re-examined with a focus on how it applies to lifelong learning.
- Discuss with students your approach to lifelong learning and what it means to you, how it has helped your career, and other motivating reasons for being a lifelong learner.

Remind students that graduation is not the end of learning...

A RESOURCE FROM:



Use this QR code to access this and other Mentoring Spark tip sheets:



CONTINUED ...



DIGGING DEEPER

- A competency wheel with six to eight tenets for lifelong learning.
- An IDP that provides space for training, and a space for justifying that training in terms of a lifelong learning goal.
- Typical tenets of lifelong learning, such as:
 - Having a growth mindset.
 - Having self-discipline.
 - Being adaptable.
 - Embracing curiosity.
 - Embracing change with new challenges.

*Please visit the **RDI Mentoring Sparks** website for examples and links to these tools and resources!*



EXERCISES FOR STUDENTS

1. Have students individually or as a research group develop or update a competency wheel for lifelong learning post-graduation, and document why each pie slice was chosen.
2. Have students write down areas they plan to continue learning in order to stay current in their field. Next, have students develop goals related to the learning areas (e.g., *certificate in X* or *PMP certification*) and then develop an actionable plan. See the Goals and Project Planning **Sparks** for assistance on this exercise as necessary.
3. Have students review the eight categories included in the **Sparks** series, and consider which of them support development of lifelong learning.
4. Have senior members of the research group mentor newer members to develop a competency wheel and/or IDP – in other words, flip the script!

Lifelong learning requires people to be self-reflective, think critically, question the status quo, curiosity (wondering “what if” and “why not”), and gaining new skills.



ACTIONS FOR FACULTY

- **GOAL Setting:** Agree on a goal for the student related to a lifelong learning step. (*This can be related to an area on the competency wheel, IDP, or other.*)

Reflect upon your own lifelong learning style, and how it could be nurtured.



REFLECTION & NEXT STEPS

- **Student:** Reflect on the growth (if any) that occurred through the process of developing a competency wheel and IDP, and how that relates to lifelong learning skills.
- **Student:** Consider who may be a next or additional mentor after graduation.
- **Faculty:** Reflect upon your own lifelong learning style, and how it could be nurtured.



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