Climbing the Doctoral Mountain to Success

Ronald Black
Walden University, ronald.black@mail.waldenu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://openriver.winona.edu/jaep

Part of the Adult and Continuing Education Commons, Curriculum and Instruction Commons, Educational Leadership Commons, Online and Distance Education Commons, and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Commons

Recommended Citation

This Opinions from the Field is brought to you for free and open access by OpenRiver. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Journal of Advancing Education Practice by an authorized editor of OpenRiver. For more information, please contact klarson@winona.edu.
Climbing the Doctoral Mountain to Success
Ronald Black, Ed.D.
Professional Doctoral Capstone Mentor/
Contributing Faculty
Walden University

Abstract

All educational journeys lead to successful personal and professional conclusions. Online doctoral students face numerous challenges from cultural, academic, and technological challenges throughout their doctoral journey. The doctoral journey requires the completion of a dissertation, a sign of scholarly achievement and success. With technology, online doctoral students enter a doctoral program looking for motivation to be successful and enhance their online doctoral journey. Mentoring plays a significant role in an online doctoral student’s journey through the doctoral study and research process. The doctoral mentor’s role is to advise and motivate online doctoral students through the dissertation process. Doctoral mentors guide their doctoral mentees as they climb the doctoral mountain to prepare them to become scholars, critical thinkers, effective communicators, and responsible leaders. A doctoral mentor’s collaboration and communication style set the pace for the doctoral student’s successful climb up the doctoral mountain. This paper focuses on the techniques that doctoral mentors and online doctoral students use as they travel up the doctoral mountain summit and graduate.

Keywords: base camp, dissertation, dissertation chair, doctoral journey, doctoral mountain, doctoral wall, finish line, mentor, summit,
Climbing the Doctoral Mountain to Success

Introduction

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. Doctoral students become more exasperated than necessary on their climb up the doctoral mountain because they fail to understand the procedures and practices that form the foundation of the dissertation process (Newton, R and Rudestam, K, 2007). Most students begin doctoral programs fully intending on persisting, or continuing to choose, to complete the doctoral degree (Tinto, 2012). The Council of Graduate Schools produced a study on doctoral degree completion and attrition. The study looked at 49,000 students attending 30 institutions in 54 disciplines comprising 330 programs. Astonishingly, the completion rate ten years after students begin their doctoral program remains low at 56.6%. After years of graduate study, and thousands of dollars spent working towards a doctoral degree, almost half of all students don’t graduate. Conducting research and writing a dissertation is not easy, which is why a strong Mentoring/Doctoral Candidate relationship is key. Through guidance, motivation, and specific feedback, the doctoral candidate will successfully climb the doctoral mountain.

Early in the doctoral study process, students seek out mentors to advise and support them through the dissertation process. The mentor’s strategy is to link the doctoral dissertation process to climbing the doctoral mountain. Working with a doctoral candidate from the base camp to the lower, mid, and top slopes, and then finally the mountain summit requires planning, preparation, negotiation at times, compromises, and celebration. Doctoral mentors play a large role in guiding the doctoral candidate up the doctoral mountain from identifying their topic to completing their research study. The mentor is the mountain climbing guide and the doctoral candidate is the mountain climber exchanging thoughts and strategies at each step of the critical climb up the doctoral mountain. The techniques used throughout the doctoral climb can relate to 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).

The concept of mentoring, which originated from Greek mythology, defined mentoring as a close relationship between the mentor and the student. The term, mentor has been adopted in English as a term meaning someone who imparts wisdom to and shares knowledge with a less experienced colleague. In Ancient India, the word Guru from the Sanskrit language stood to symbolize a caring mentor and expert teacher (Pertz, 2013). Mentors may use different techniques according to the situation and the mindset of the doctoral candidate. Structured mentoring programs are formalized programs that provide training, coaching, advice, and structure to increase engagement through the online dissertation phase of doctoral education. Doctoral mentoring relationships are an intrinsically deep 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.
Many educational studies have suggested that motivation plays a significant role in student success, and their decision to continue their academics through graduation (Baker, 2006). Online learning has several potential benefits, not least of which is the ability to overcome the temporal and spatial restrictions of traditional educational settings (Bates, 2005). Freedom from constraint may also be seen as a defining feature of distance learning, for example, freedom of content, space, medium, access (Paulsen, 1993), and relationship development. Notwithstanding the advantages that online learning offers, a variety of factors have been identified as crucial to the success of online courses (McIsaac & Gunawardena, 1996). Motivation is one such factor (Bekele, 2010). Just as motivation is a key factor in learning and achievement in face-to-face educational contexts (Brophy, 2010), so it is in online learning environments (Jones & Issroff, 2007).

Motivation plays a significant role in a graduate student’s achievement, and in their decision to continue their studies through graduation (Baker, 2006). Doctoral students need to either possess intrinsic motivation or receive motivation from an extrinsic source in order to fulfill their potential (Baker, 2006). The doctoral mentor has a lot to do with their doctoral candidate’s motivational level. Doctoral students begin their program with a certain degree of motivation but quickly find out that other tools are needed to maintain or enhance their motivation. This is where the mentor comes in.

As noted in the article The Dissertation Marathon (2012), Students pursuing a doctorate degree face the same challenges as marathon runners. 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, valleys, mountains, rivers, and frantic roadblocks along the way. It is a long and weary race, but the successful end will lead to the final race in the doctoral journey, defending and publishing the dissertation. 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 to 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 a dissertation requires perseverance. Therefore, 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 doctoral candidate may get frustrated while writing each chapter but as the light at the end of the tunnel becomes brighter, the doctoral candidate will become refreshed and motivated to continue.

Role of the Mentor/Dissertation Chair

The role of the 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 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
mentor/Doctoral Candidate relationship will overcome any diversity. Eventually, each mentoring relationship will conform to the doctoral candidate’s diversity, keeping in mind the doctoral candidate’s goals, needs, and learning style. What the mentor and doctoral candidate share – a commitment to the doctoral candidate’s scholarly goals and desire to succeed.

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 students to complete a dissertation without ever coming face-to-face. Online doctoral programs are growing rapidly. Higher education leaders and administrators are seeking relevant educational paradigms and instructional strategies for their degree programs. Blum and Muirhead share their experiences working with doctoral students in a virtual environment with a highlight on mentoring strategies in their e-book.

Dr. Marilyn Simon, educator, author, and dissertation chair has assisted hundreds of online doctoral students in the successful completion of their doctoral dissertation. Simon shares some helpful hints that chairs should share with dissertation learners to climb the dissertation mountain: (Muirhead, Robinson & Simon 2005, pp. 15-16).

- **Develop thick skin.**
  - Dissertation students are striving for perfection, a lofty and extraordinary aspiration. Dissertations require a great deal of work. This is likely the first time a dissertation student is conducting a doctoral dissertation so you need to understand the process and understand the advice of the dissertation chair; it is likely that dissertation students will do more re-writes than the student can count. Dissertation students must develop the attitude that each critique is good advice, and each feedback received will move the student closer to the top of the dissertation mountain.

- **Keep in constant contact with the mentor or chair.**
  - Dissertation students should develop a working rhythm with the chair and send component parts of major sections of the dissertation proposal work as it becomes available.

- **Manage time wisely.**
  - The key point in time management is recognizing the finite nature of time as a resource; this is both good news and bad news. The bad news, of course, is that time is limited. Time moves at the same rate and there is no way to manipulate the passage of time. The good news is that time is a constant. Time is known and, hence, its stability provides a basis for predicting future outcomes. Good time management includes program planning whereby resources (people, time) are effectively managed. Effective time management includes making time for loved ones and time to de-stress. Daily work is made easier when a model provides a continuing guide for action, various levels of accountability and responsibility, and when essential tasks and sequences of tasks are specified along with a timeline for completion.

- **Develop a dissertation student support system.**
  - Commiserate with someone who is going through the same process, trying to climb an equally high dissertation mountain. Make sure to include family and close
friends in planning and share dissertation difficulties with them. If the dissertation student does not have current friends who would understand, find new friends that have been there or are at the same part of the dissertation mountain.

➢ Consult experts as needed in the dissertation process.
   ⇒ For example, if plans include hiring a dissertation editor ensure the editor has experience working with doctoral-level scholarship. Ask other students who have recently completed a dissertation or the chair for referrals. If your plans include a statistician, make certain that the statistician can explain every step of the process because the dissertation student is responsible for every component of the dissertation and must explain and defend all tests and measurements used in the dissertation.

Students pursuing a doctorate degree face the same challenges as the 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, valleys, mountains, rivers, and frantic roadblocks along the way. It is a long and weary race but the successful end will lead to the final race in the doctoral journey, defending and publishing the dissertation. 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 to 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 a dissertation requires perseverance. Therefore, 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.

Today’s mentor brings an invigorating experience and perspective to the doctoral dissertation process, but they also face many challenges. These challenges have necessitated a sophisticated change to the role of the mentor heightening the vital role of the mentor to prepare the next generation of scholars beyond the dissertation. Today the title Dissertation Chair is often interchanged with the title Dissertation Mentor. Consider this multi-faceted definition of mentor/chair addressed by Fedynich and Bain (2011):

• Faculty must exhibit genuineness.
• Faculty must be knowledgeable.
• Faculty must create a climate of trust.
• Faculty must create a climate of connectedness.
• Faculty must be willing to exhibit, demonstrate, and model personal and professional ethics.
• In the online teaching and learning world the Chai/mentor is challenged by these dynamics to ensure the doctoral candidate’s success.

Matching the mentor to the doctoral candidate most of the time is based on a search of faculty background and experience to facilitate the beginning of the dissertation mentoring
relationship. In some cases, this is done by the university where the Chair/mentor is assigned. In other cases, the student gets to select the Chair/mentor. This mentee-driven selection process increases the speed at 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 because the greater the involvement of the doctoral candidate in the selection of their mentor, the better the outcome of the mentorship. There are a variety of online mentoring technology programs available to doctoral candidates to facilitate the mentor–doctoral candidate matching process.

Selecting a 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 straightforward task but there are often complications and issues that may come up during the process. Like dating and marriage, the key to selecting a mentor is, to be honest, and straightforward forward letting the potential mentor/chair know your expectations early in the process. When selecting a 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 doctoral candidate and mentor must understand the most important person on the dissertation team is the doctoral candidate. This relationship may be thought as a marriage, where trust and communication become the main goal of the relationship. The mentor guides the doctoral candidate throughout the dissertation process, helping the candidate to reach the summit of the doctoral mountain.

The Base Camp

The doctoral mountain base camp is where the doctoral candidate establishes the dissertation roadmap to set the strategy to climb to the summit of the doctoral mountain. This strategy begins with a plan worked out by both the doctoral candidate and mentor. The doctoral dissertation plan will guide the doctoral candidate through each step up the mountain as each dissertation chapter is written, the study is conducted, and the dissertation is submitted for review and graduation. The dissertation plan clearly establishes activities that must be accomplished by the doctoral candidate, the mentor, and committee members for the candidate to actively climb up the slopes to the summit of the doctoral mountain. Throughout the climb, the doctoral dissertation plan will serve as a contract between the doctoral candidate and mentor.

Motivation 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 mentoring/Doctoral Candidate relationship is key. Mentors do not have an online explicit list to help online students succeed through the dissertation process despite the argument that “professors can learn advising skills by following some systematic advising processes” (Davis, 2004, para 2). Through the mentor’s guidance, motivation, and specific feedback, the doctoral candidate will be successful. Mentors point out to the doctoral candidate to always have a positive mental attitude and keep an eye on their goal; to become a Dr.
The early stages of the mentor/Doctoral candidate’s journey up the doctoral mountain 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 thought 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 candidate’s dissertation’s purpose, problem, hypotheses or propositions, design, and method.

**Camp-1 – The Slope of Darkness**

Approaching Camp-1, the Slope of Darkness, the doctoral candidate seems to be frustrated with a darkened motivation to move through the early doctoral dissertation stage. In this early stage of the dissertation process, the mentor needs to be sure to foster motivation with a positive mental attitude strategy. Keller’s (1987) ARCS model offers one way to design motivation into the climb. The acronym stands for:

- **attention** (mentor establishes the doctoral candidate’s attention),
- **relevance** (mentor communicates relevant material that links to the doctoral candidate’s doctoral dissertation goals),
- **confidence** (mentor builds the doctoral candidate’s confidence dissertation mastery begins), and
- **satisfaction** (mentor creates opportunities for the doctoral candidate’s dissertation successes).

This model has been successful in online classroom environments as well as traditional classroom environments (Keller 1987, 1998; Keller & Suzuki, 2003). In essence, the model offers a clear framework to help guide interaction between the mentor and doctoral candidate in this early stage and beyond. Crafting this interaction with an understanding of the ARCS model may help the candidate internalize and apply the mentor’s advice and feedback.

**Camp-2 – The Doctoral Wall**

Now that the prospectus is complete and approved the mentor guides the doctoral candidate on the climb up the doctoral wall. This is the time when the doctoral student and mentor are deep into the task of writing the doctoral dissertation. At this stage, the doctoral student has lots of information to synthesize and develop an original and researchable dissertation study problem aligning it to the dissertation topic that was approved by the mentor. Coming up with the problem requires considerable interaction between the doctoral candidate and the mentor. Both agree that the problem statement is the most critical element of the doctoral candidate’s dissertation. According to Simon (2011), the problem statement is the heart of a doctoral dissertation and where you need to begin. In their article, *Strategies to Win: Six-Steps for Creating Problem Statements in Doctoral Research* (2005) Drs. Kimberly Blum & 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.

Creating problem statements can be challenging and time-consuming for both the candidate and mentor but because the problem statement is the heart of the dissertation and 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 candidate’s dissertation.

Once the problem statement is set, the candidate is now ready to climb to the next stage in the journey, the development of the purpose of the study. The process of developing the purpose statement provides an opportunity for the doctoral candidate and 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. It’s key that the doctoral candidate ensures that the purpose statement aligns directly to the dissertation topic and problem statement.

As soon as the problem and purpose statements meet the mentor’s approval the doctoral candidate focuses on the research questions and hypotheses. Research questions guide the inquiry of the research by narrowing and focusing on 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. The doctoral candidate and 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.

With the foundation of the doctoral student’s dissertation established, the doctoral candidate and mentor begin to discuss and interact on the remaining elements of chapter 1. Once the mentor reviews and approves Chapter 1 the doctoral candidate then move on to Chapter 2, the Literature Review. The literature review serves an important purpose in the dissertation. 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. A literature review seeks to describe, summarize, evaluate, clarify, and/or integrate the content of journal articles, books, and primary reports. The doctoral candidate will synthesize the literature to form their literature review. The mentor reviews each synthesis of the candidate’s literature providing feedback to guide the doctoral candidate to complete a solid and effective literature review. Now that the doctoral candidate and mentor have reconciled chapters 1 and 2, the doctoral candidate may now
move on at a steady pace focusing on how the study will be conducted. Chapter 3 includes a
discussion of the research methodology, design, and the steps to complete the doctoral study.
Chapter 3 often brings the doctoral candidate considerable confusion. The mentor will work with
the candidate providing guidance and feedback on each element of the chapter with both the
candidate a mentor agreeing on each element as the chapter is completed.

At this point, the 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 any possible issues in the dissertation proposal
that need revision. The 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 doctoral candidate then can move on to completing and gaining approval of their
proposal by the Institutional Review Board to ensure that the doctoral study is ethical and will
not violate any of the subject’s or university’s rights. With both the dissertation committee and
IRB approval, the doctoral candidate may proceed at a rapid pace toward conducting their study
and moving on to the final chapters in the dissertation.

Camp-3 – The Final Chapters

Pacing is key at this stage of the doctoral mountain climb. In most cases, the mentor is
not involved with the doctoral candidate’s data collection but will need to insure there is open
communication throughout data collection so that the mentor may advise on data analysis. When
the doctoral candidate has completed data collection and analysis the next step is for the mentor
to share the guidelines for writing chapters 4 and 5 with the doctoral candidate. Chapter 4
includes solely the analysis of data, the testing of hypotheses, and/or the careful dissection of
research questions, introducing no interpretation of findings. The results of testing each statistical
hypothesis must be clearly presented and without editorial comment. The 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 mentor will evaluate the Chapter and provide
detailed feedback to be sure Chapter 4 meets the doctoral dissertation template.

As the mentor approves Chapter 4 the doctoral candidate may now move closer to the
doctoral mountain summit. 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. 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.
Chapter 4 needs to clearly indicate how the conducted study is significant, substantial, and
contributory to the related body of knowledge describing the extent to which scholars and/or
practitioners will be able to incorporate the study into their behavior.
At this stage, the doctoral candidate and 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. In the final stage of Camp-3 the doctoral candidate and mentor can see the summit ahead and look back can see where they have been.

**Camp-4 – The Summit is Near**

At this point in the doctoral journey, the slope becomes steeper, but the objective is visible. The final obstacle is for the doctoral candidate to present their study findings to the doctoral committee and others in the dissertation defense. Most universities require a formal defense of the dissertation before the mentor and committee sign a candidate’s dissertation. 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 a long-standing tradition in academia (Roberts, 2004). 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 research study and the context in which it exists to complete the defense successfully. Now is the time for the mentor and doctoral candidate to climb the doctoral mountain summit.

**Final Camp - The Finish Line**

As the mentor and doctoral candidate reach the doctoral mountain summit, 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. Reaching the doctoral dissertation summit, smiles on the new Dr.’s and mentor’s faces indicate success and a chance to reflect on what has been accomplished. 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 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 mentor will be there to “hood” the new graduate with a colorful doctoral hood representing the completion of the doctorate. An academic hood is a 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.

As the new Dr. and mentor descend the mountain summit it is time to say *So Long but not Goodbye*. At this point, the mentor and new Dr. may face a sense of loss, but this is normal. Climbing the doctoral mountain was an overpowering task that consumed time and attention every step of the way. There is no greater gift for a mentor than the satisfaction is seeing his mentee graduate and move on to extended professional opportunities, but the relationship has not
ended. Mentors 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 mentor. *The doctoral journey is now over, the mentor, and new Dr. may now bask in their accomplishments.*

*You have climbed the mountain…now soar beyond!*

*Mario Fernandez*
References


