Selecting a Graduate Mentor

Graduate students should seek answers to the following questions as they select the faculty member with whom they would like to do their graduate training:

- Is the discipline of the faculty member the one I wish to follow in my career?
- Does the area of research of the faculty member excite me?
- How is the area of research of the faculty member important to science (i.e., is it growing, is it relevant to human health or disease, and is there room in it for me to develop my career)?
- Do the experimental questions interest and excite me?
- Are the experimental approaches interesting to me?
- Is there room in the lab for me?
- Is the funding level of the lab sufficient to support my graduate training?
- What is the faculty member’s philosophy about training graduate students (e.g., selection of dissertation project, team vs. individual approaches, emphasis on independent work, authorship, meeting attendance, publications, grant writing skills, etc.)?
- What are the expectations of the faculty member regarding graduate students?
- Has the faculty member trained other graduate students in the past?
- What is the research productivity of past and current graduate students?
- What is the professional progress of past graduate students?
- What are the relationships between the faculty member and his or her current graduate students?
- What are the relationships between others of the research staff and current graduate students in the lab?
- Do I like the people and the atmosphere of the laboratory?