

2017

Student Teaching Excellence Committee Mentorship Guidelines

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1. WHAT IS MENTORING?

Mentoring is a process in which an experienced individual assists another person develop his or her goals and skills through a series of time-limited, one-on-one conversations and other learning activities. As a mentor, you will have the opportunity to share your wisdom and experiences, evolve your own thinking, develop a new relationship, and deepen your skills as a leader.

2. KEY MENTORING SKILLS

There are four key skills discussed in this guideline, most of which you will have used in your own life. We have focused on listening actively, trust building, determining goals and building capacity, and encouraging partners.

I. LISTENING ACTIVELY

Listening actively is the most basic skill you will use throughout your relationship. Active listening not only establishes rapport but creates a positive, accepting environment that permits open communication. By listening actively, you will ascertain your protégé's interests and needs. Examples include the following:

- Show interest in what the protégé is saying, and reflect back important aspects of what he or she has said to show that you've understood;
- Use body language (such as making eye contact) that shows you are paying attention to what he or she is saying; and
- If you are talking to him or her by phone, reduce background noise and limit interruptions. Your protégé will feel that he or she has your undivided attention. When utilizing e-mail, answer within 24 hours if possible, and be sure your message is responsive to his or her original message.
- Reserve discussing your own experiences or giving advice until after your protégé has had a chance to thoroughly explain his or her issue, question, or concern.

II. BUILDING TRUST

Trust is built over time. You will increase trust by keeping your conversations and other communications with your protégé confidential, honoring your scheduled meetings and calls, consistently showing interest and support, and by being honest with your protégé.

III. DETERMINING GOALS AND BUILDING CAPACITY

As a role model, you should have your own career and personal goals and share these, when appropriate, with your protégé. It is also likely that he or she will ask you how you set and

achieved your own goals. In addition, you can help your protégé identify and achieve his or her career and personal goals.

You will develop your protégé's capacity for learning and achieving his or her goals by doing the following:

- Assisting him or her with finding resources such as people, books, articles, tools and web-based information;
- Imparting knowledge and skills by explaining, giving useful examples, demonstrating processes, and asking thought-provoking questions;
- Helping him or her gain broader perspectives of his or her responsibilities and organization; and
- Discussing actions you've taken in your career and explaining your rationale.

IV. ENCOURAGING PARTNERS

According to Dr. Phillips-Jones' research, giving encouragement is the mentoring skill most valued by protégés. There are many ways to encourage your protégé.

Try some of these:

- Comment favorably on his or her accomplishments;
- Communicate your belief in his or her capacity to grow personally and professionally and reach his or her goals; and
- Respond to his or her frustrations and challenges with words of support, understanding, encouragement and praise. (Just knowing that someone else has been there can be tremendously helpful.)
- You can also inspire your protégé to excel. Examples include the following:
- Share your personal vision or those of other leaders;
- Describe experiences, mistakes, and successes you or others have encountered on the road to achieving your goals;
- Talk with him or her about people and events that have inspired and motivated you; and
- Introduce him or her to your colleagues who can be additional useful contacts or inspiring models.

Reflecting on your mentoring practice, noting use of the key mentoring skills, observing progress made in the relationship, and requesting feedback from your protégé are excellent ways to assess whether you are employing these skills.

3. STAGES OF FORMAL MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Like most relationships, mentoring relationships progress through stages. Your formal mentoring relationship will likely reflect four developmental stages with each stage forming an inherent part of the next:

- I. Finding Pairs and Building Relationships
- II. Exchanging Information and Setting Goals
- III. Working Towards Goals/Deepening the Engagement
- IV. Transitioning to Informal Mentorship

There is no strict formula for determining the length of each stage. With only 8 months, we anticipated the first two stages be completed by November.

STAGE I: FINDING PAIRS AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

During this phase, you will get to know each other and begin to establish trust. Here are a few items you should address in your first meeting:

- Discuss backgrounds, experiences, interests and expectations
- Establish a schedule for communication and meet ups.
- Book your next meeting with the intention of discussing your goals for this partnership (please refer to appendix II)
- Set boundaries (i.e., mode of communication; purpose of mentor, etc.)

STAGE II: EXCHANGING INFORMATION AND SETTING GOALS

During Stage II, you will exchange more information and set goals. Your relationship and trust will deepen. As the mentoring relationship unfolds, be attentive to practicing active listening and consistently expressing encouragement.

- Helping Your Protégé Set Goals:
- Meetings from this point out might look like this:
- Goals for the year according to appendix II
- Unexpected barriers to these goals and potential trouble shooting
- A constant revising schedule to meet these goals (refer to appendix I for assistance)
- Unexpected elements that have come up since starting the program that were not included in their goals for the year

By exchanging information, you will gain insight into the goals your protégé hopes to achieve through the mentoring relationship. Mentors have provided their protégés with input and support on a great variety of issues and challenges. Goals are helpful because they help the protégé see beyond the day-to-day demands of his or her position and help him or her gain clarity on how to

get the most out of the mentoring relationship. Coach your protégé to refer back to his or her goals periodically as a way of re- focusing on goals and measuring progress. Referring to the goals regularly is also a good way for you to know if you are helping him or her achieve them.

STAGE III: WORKING TOWARDS GOALS/DEEPENING THE ENGAGEMENT

During Stage III, which is typically the longest, you will help your protégé work towards achieving his or her goals through conversations, sharing written materials, trying various learning and development activities, and introducing him or her to other colleagues. This is a rich phase marked by openness and trust, meaningful discussion, and application of new insights and approaches. Your protégé needs your ongoing encouragement at this stage. You may also feel comfortable enough to challenge him or her to think in new ways or approach a problem differently, however your role is not to solve the problem entirely but rather to assist and guide your protégé. Ensuring this does not conflict with either individuals work, school, or life schedules.

Here are a few issues that may arise and potential ways to repair them

A. TIME CONSTRAINTS

Solution: Think small rather than large, especially in the beginning. Avoid promising more time than you can deliver. Check with your protégé to be certain you are both comfortable with the time you are spending and with the learning that is occurring.

B. BUILDING TRUST

Solution: Other mentors have successfully used several strategies, such as the following: Listen very carefully, and remember what your protégé has said in the past. Demonstrate your credibility. Keep your promises and commitments -- if any need to be changed, let your protégé know immediately and reschedule or renegotiate them. Admit some errors made and lessons learned. Avoid talking negatively about others. Above all, keep the confidences your protégé shares with you.

C. NOT HAVING ALL THE ANSWERS

Solution: Explain your role as “learning facilitator” early in your relationship. Tell your protégé that you will not have all the answers, and you are looking forward to learning together as well as seeking help from others who are more expert on different topics.

D. SENSITIVE TO DIFFERENCES

*Solution: In addition to discovering all your similarities, work carefully to identify the differences between you and your protégé. For example, how do the specifics of his or her position differ from the role(s) you've played? What is occurring now for him or her that you did not face? If you are of different generations/ages, genders, races, cultural groups, or professional backgrounds, what different experiences have you both had? Assume a learning mode, and invite discussion about all of these topics. As Stephen Covey reminds us in *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, "Seek first to understand."*

STAGE IV: ENDING THE FORMAL MENTORING RELATIONSHIP AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Adjournment brings closure to the journey. Your final discussion should be dedicated to the following:

- Reflecting on accomplishments, challenges, and progress towards goals;
- What will your protégé remember most about the relationship?
- What challenges lie ahead for him or her?
- Exploring other types of support he or she may still need;
- Discussing whether the relationship will continue informally and how you will implement that; and
- Expressing thanks and best wishes!

APPENDIX I : MENTORING BEST PRACTICES

- Think of yourself as a “learning facilitator” rather than the person with all the answers. Help your protégé find people and other resources that go beyond your experience and wisdom on a topic.
- Emphasize questions over advice giving. Use probes that help your protégé think more broadly and deeply. If he or she talks only about facts, ask about feelings. If he or she focuses on feelings, ask him or her to review the facts. If he or she seems stuck in an immediate crisis, help him or her see the big picture.
- When requested, share your own experiences, lessons learned, and advice. Emphasize how your experiences could be different from his or her experiences and are merely examples. Limit your urge to solve the problem for him or her.
- Resist the temptation to control the relationship and steer its outcomes; your protégé is responsible for his or her own growth.
- Help your protégé see alternative interpretations and approaches.
- Build your protégé’s confidence through supportive feedback.
- Encourage, inspire, and challenge your protégé to achieve his or her goals.
- Help your protégé reflect on successful strategies he or she has used in the past that could apply to new challenges.
- Reflect on your mentoring practice. Request feedback.
- Enjoy the privilege of mentoring. Know that your efforts will likely have a significant impact on your protégé’s development as well as your own.

APPENDIX II: MENTORING GOAL FORM

MENTORING GOAL FORM* (To be completed by the protégé.)

Name: _____ Date: _____

What do you want to achieve through engaging in the mentoring relationship? Complete this form and discuss your goals with your mentor. Examine your goals periodically, and discuss progress made.

Goal #1:

Benefits to You:

Benefits to Your Program/Organization/Community:

Potential Barriers to Success:

Resources/Support Needed to Achieve Goal:

How Progress Will Be Measured:

Goal #2:

Benefits to You:

Benefits to Your Program/Organization/Community:

Potential Barriers to Success:

Resources/Support Needed to Achieve Goal:

How Progress Will Be Measured:

Goal #3:

Benefits to You:

Benefits to Your Program/Organization/Community:

Potential Barriers to Success:

Resources/Support Needed to Achieve Goal:

How Progress Will Be Measured: