

MENTOR HANDBOOK



As a mentor, you will invest your time, energy and expertise to nurture the growth of another person. You are the special person who helps others reach their potential. Whatever your style, it is your care that really matters.

Mentoring is a rewarding and all-encompassing way to encourage personal growth. It is a process in which the mentor and mentee work together to discover, sharpen, and develop the mentee’s abilities and encourage the mentee to acquire and increase knowledge and skills.

The following guidelines will help you get the most out of your mentoring relationship.

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GETTING ACQUAINTED

“Fit and chemistry must be considered when pairing the mentor and the protégé. If the two don’t get along, it matters little what each can offer the other in terms of knowledge and skills.”

— Michael Zey, *Building a Successful Formal Mentor Program*

An important part of getting acquainted is determining compatibility. In order to establish the mentoring relationship and setting goals, your mentee should schedule one or two sessions to get to know you. If you sense poor chemistry and worry that it might get in the way of productive mentoring discussions, bring your concern to your mentee and alert an administrator. It is better to discover an imperfect match early. To begin getting to know each other, online messaging is an unintimidating, flexible approach. Many people find it easier to open up to someone new in writing.

To break the ice, try sharing a little about yourself:

- Provide your CV and ask one from your mentee
- Jobs, hobbies, and extracurricular activities
- Research, projects, or career-related accomplishments
- Ways of balancing work with your personal life
- Your favorite class in college, favorite book, favorite movie, etc.

As you get to know each other better, your mentee is encouraged to voice concerns regarding their goals. In some cases, you may need to take the initiative to help your mentee express these uncertainties. If your mentee lacks the lexicon to discuss certain issues with you, they may try to paraphrase. Be sure to take the time and care to understand what your mentee is trying to say.

MEANS TO COMMUNICATE

Communication is a two-way process that includes just about any type of interaction with another person. Effective and regular communication is imperative in the mentoring process. The better people can express themselves, the more the relationship will deepen.

There are various ways in which you can communicate with your mentee. These include:

- Online Communication:
 - Email and text messaging
 - Audio or video conversations using Zoom or other conference call systems
- Meeting in-person

Effective Online Communication

In person or on the phone, you can use voice modulation, facial expressions, and hand gestures to convey meaning. Because those cues are absent in writing, written communication is a skill and an art. The following tips will help prevent miscommunication:

- Use a meaningful subject line—This ensures that the recipient recognizes the importance of your message and doesn't delete it accidentally. The subject line should also serve as a summary, providing a clear idea of the topic you want to discuss.
- Take time to write clear and concise messages—If you receive messages that are unclear or not fully understood, be sure to ask for clarification. Provide an opportunity to restate, elaborate or reconsider the intended message.
- Investigate assumptions—To uncover assumptions and prevent misinterpretations, state your understanding of your mentee's message or ask for clarification.
- Communicate about communication—It is very important to inform your mentee of your schedule well in advance in order to prevent the unnecessary frustration of a communication breakdown.

Suggested In-Person Activities

- Meet for lunch and get to know each other over goal-oriented topics such as favorite classes, career path, and hobbies.
- Introduce your colleagues, especially anyone who may be of professional interest to your mentee.

SETTING SHORT- AND LONG-TERM GOALS

We encourage mentees to take charge of setting pace and direction, and to explore with you how you can help them attain goals. It is important to set concrete and attainable goals with your mentee.

- Decide on the number of goals you believe can be accomplished within the context of a new relationship and the time you can devote to it.
- Define anticipated challenges such as availability of advancement opportunities, need to further formal education, time required to develop a new skill or competency.
- Refer to your matched profiles for common points of interest/expertise that may help you formulate your goals.
- Hold your mentee accountable for developing and recording goals by summarizing completed sessions after each meeting.
- Develop metrics or an alternative measurement tool in order to assess progress and adjust effort.
- Create a reward system to recognize an effective relationship and discuss how accomplished goals could manifest (improved performance, promotion, new credential, accepted abstract or program, USCAP committee appointment, award recipient, ambassadorship, etc.).
- Agree, up front, to respect task deadlines in order to reach your goals.

If your mentee has difficulty expressing goals, you can help by asking the following questions:

- What are your goals for this mentoring relationship? (e.g., competency development, career advancement, leadership skills development, gain knowledge in a particular topic area, etc.).
- How will you know if you reached these goals? (e.g., improved performance, promoted, attained a new credential, etc.)
- What challenges can you anticipate? (e.g., availability of advancement opportunities, need to further formal education, time needed to develop a new skill or competency).

Additionally, take a moment to reflect on your own personal goals that will help you to get more out of the mentoring experience.

- Beyond the rewards of helping to shape another's growth, is there anything you wish to develop?
- Do you want to become a better mentor, communicator, listener, or leader?
- Are you seeking greater self-awareness and fresh perspectives?

IDEAL TRAITS OF AN EFFECTIVE MENTOR

- **Inspire** by talking about yourself. By setting an example, you may be able to motivate your mentee towards future paths that are beyond their original dreams.
- **Challenge** your mentee to create their vision by finding their own passion, aspiration, motivation, and understanding the importance in what they aspire to do. Help your mentee create a future vision.
- **Be engaged and engaging.** Demonstrate interest, helpful intent, and involvement. Learn and remember personal information about your mentee. Active listening fosters trust and connection in the mentoring relationship. Show interest in the thoughts your mentee shares with you and let your mentee feel that they have been clearly heard, understood, and accepted. Be yourself and allow your mentee to do the same.
- **Empathize** by sharing similar experiences. Mentors are not expected to be superheroes, they are people who have already been through what their mentees now face. Your experiences are powerful and sharing them with your mentee will help them feel empowered to embrace their own challenges.
- **Provide corrective feedback** in an encouraging manner. Offering constructive criticism proves to be motivating and encouraging. A positive tone can help your mentee accept and apply feedback readily.
- **Be open** to feedback and improvement. Consistently evaluate the effectiveness of your mentoring and adjust your style as needed.
- **Speak of your mentee in positive or neutral ways.** Your mentee needs to trust that your discussions are confidential, and that the mentoring relationship is mutually supportive. Don't be critical of other colleagues to your mentee.
- **Offer your undivided attention** and make sure you have time. Be available and keep your appointments.
- **Focus on strengths and potentials** rather than limitations by offering different modes of growth and communication
- **Keeping frequent contact** with your mentee makes all the difference. Be sure to follow-up frequently.
- **Hold your mentee accountable** for commitments and goals.

NETWORKING TIPS

In your professional, and personal life, you network all the time by meeting, connecting, and keeping in touch with others. Quality relationships enrich your life and empower you to achieve your goals. Your mentee also understands the benefits of a strong network by being interested in your personal experience and approach. As a mentor, you are in the position to help your mentee to develop, maintain and strengthen their network:

- Let your mentee know how networking has helped you to advance your career, from landing a job to finding new clients.
- Share ideas about how to better communicate by making sure to build on your mentee's comfort level with networking. Examples include smiling, eye contact, active listening, body language, complimenting, and finding common interests over which to connect.
- Share your techniques for starting conversations, such as an opening line when meeting people or a list of get-to-know-you questions.
- Share your thoughts on unethical networking practices. For example, you can tell your mentee why it is never a good practice to contact long-forgotten connections only when you need something like a job referral.
- Share a few contacts that may help your mentee find their passion and reach their goals.

DON'T LOSE SIGHT OF YOUR GOALS

There might be times in your mentoring relationship when progress might stagnate, and you need to re-energize. At such times, try the following:

- Revisit the goals that you have set for your mentoring partnership and for yourself. Look back at the mentoring process and evaluate:
 - methods that were effective
 - goals that have been reached
 - areas where improvements need to be made
- Enthusiasm can help you and your mentee move forward
- Consider extending the mentoring period
- Learning never stops. Regularly reaffirming goals and commitment leads to a more successful partnership.

TIPS FOR A GOOD CLOSURE-A TRANSITION PERIOD

As the mentoring partnership nears completion, your mentee may wonder whether their takeaways will be useful to transition to future endeavors. There may be loose ends to tie and some fears about moving on. It's important to discuss your mentee's transition to post-mentoring endeavors. You may be in a position to help your mentee better prepare for what lies ahead and reduce any anxiety about the changes that await around the corner. Your advice could help your mentee realize their full potential. When mentoring partnerships end, some do with goals accomplished. Some do not, for several reasons. However, even unproductive mentoring relationships can benefit from good closure.

A successful exit strategy includes five steps:

1. Processing conclusions—Process the learning that took place while working towards goals.
2. Integrating what was learned—Discuss how to apply and take learning to the next level.
3. Celebrating success—Plan a mutually satisfying way to celebrate achievement and new beginnings.
4. Redefining the relationship—Talk with your mentee about whether the relationship is to continue, and what it will look like. You could potentially become a colleague, a friend, or something else.
5. Moving on—Both partners let go and identify ways of keeping in touch, if appropriate and mutually desired.

PROVIDE REGULAR FEEDBACK

In order to continuously improve the mentoring process, it is important to provide regular feedback on your mentoring experience and your mentoring relationship to the program administrators. Please complete any surveys you receive and address any questions or concerns as soon as they arise by emailing to mentoring@uscap.org.