

## Faculty Mentoring in Higher Education Settings

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This document describes the meaning and origin of mentoring. It talks about the need for faculty mentoring and the benefits of mentoring to a mentor, a mentee and a higher education institute. It delves into the concept of a mentoring contract or mentoring partnership agreement. The 'For Mentors' section of the document has suggestions on what a mentor should do, how to give feedback to mentors and points to resources with 'ideas for mentoring activities'. The 'For Mentees' section of the document elaborates upon the issues which must be addressed through a mentoring relationship and gives pointers on how to make the most of the mentoring relationship, how to prepare for a mentoring session, how to seek feedback and how to close a mentoring relationship.

This document is meant for faculty mentors and mentees seeking guidance on how to excel at the mentoring relationship and navigate its various twists and turns.

### What is Mentoring?

Mentoring implies a supportive relationship designed to guide the integration of new members into an organization and to enhance their ability to add value to the organization. It is described as a 'reciprocal, supportive, and creative partnership of equals'<sup>1</sup>. In mentoring relationships, the mentor is usually, but not always, senior and more experienced. There can be 'reverse mentoring' situations where the mentor is a junior team member or younger employee who shares and guides senior employees on digital skills, culture changes and so on<sup>2</sup>.

It is widely quoted that 'mentoring' originated from the character of 'Mentor' in Homer's *Odyssey*, an epic poem from Ancient Greece. Odysseus, the king of Ithaca, a small city-state in Ancient Greece, left his son Telemachus in the care of his trusted companion, Mentor, before leaving for the Trojan war. Odysseus returned after two decades to find that Mentor had acted as a surrogate parent, a trusted advisor, an educator and guide to his son Telemachus<sup>3</sup>.

Mentoring is different from coaching. While mentoring is more 'development driven' with a focus on overall career development of the mentee, coaching is more 'performance driven' with a focus on improving on-the-job performance of the learner.

Mentoring is important for career progression and success. Famous mentoring relationships range from the historical - Socrates and Plato and Plato and Aristotle, to the more recent - Warren Buffet and Bill Gates and Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg<sup>4</sup>.

### Faculty Mentoring in Higher Education Settings

Mentoring in higher education can help faculty grow and develop. Mentoring programs can help smooth the transition of faculty into new roles. Mentors guide, advise and coach colleagues in their development<sup>5</sup>. Mentoring has been shown to enhance research productivity, teaching effectiveness and increase faculty retention, recruitment, productivity and satisfaction, as well as to decrease faculty attrition<sup>6</sup>.

The goals of mentoring<sup>7</sup> are to:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://provost.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/content/MentoringBestPractices.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://hbr.org/2019/10/why-reverse-mentoring-works-and-how-to-do-it-right>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00001500.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.pushfar.com/article/15-famous-mentoring-relationships/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/bitstream/handle/1808/11661/A%20Model%20for%20Mentoring%20University%20Faculty%20in%20Educational%20Forum2.pdf?sequence=1>

<sup>6</sup> <https://provost.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/content/MentoringBestPractices.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://umdearborn.edu/faculty-staff/faculty-senate/faculty-mentoring-0>

- help newer or less experienced faculty members acclimate to formal and informal norms of the department, college, and university
- foster effective research skills and publishing strategies
- encourage faculty members to refine and expand teaching strategies
- foster development of a productive balance between research, teaching, and service
- guide faculty members in progression toward promotion and tenure

### Need of Mentoring

Faculty mentoring is desirable due to the following reasons:

- new faculty may be good researchers but may be unequipped for the classroom<sup>8</sup>.
- senior faculty may assume that new faculty members have been thoroughly mentored in graduate school and it is best to get them settled in and then leave them alone to sink or swim. However, while this works for some, a few are left struggling<sup>9</sup>.
- faculty need support in view of increasing demand and expectations for teaching, research and service<sup>10</sup>
- mentoring mid-career faculty may help in forestalling the 'post-tenure slump' and accelerate their way back to higher morale and productivity<sup>11</sup>

### Benefits of Mentoring to a Mentor

Mentoring is beneficial to the mentor in the following ways<sup>12</sup>:

- satisfaction from contributing to the development of a colleague
- exposure to new research techniques and topics, and different teaching styles and strategies
- mentees can be a source of renewed energy and enthusiasm
- reinvigoration of teaching and research programs
- improvement in your visibility in your field or department

Moreover, by working with a mentee, the mentor has the opportunity to gain a new talented colleague- one with whom the mentor can collaborate in future<sup>13</sup>.

### Benefits of Mentoring to a Mentee<sup>14</sup>

Mentoring offers a plethora of benefits to the mentee, some of which are listed below:

- quicker acclimation to the work
- improved teaching
- improved research skills and productivity
- better informed choices regarding service activities
- increased social contact with colleagues

Having a mentor can mean the difference between success and failure. A mentor's guidance, advice and advocacy can help a mentee navigate academia, empower them and undertake exciting challenges<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.academicimpressions.com/blog/improve-faculty-mentoring-higher-education/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2013/08/12/essay-how-be-good-faculty-mentor-junior-professors>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.academicimpressions.com/blog/improve-faculty-mentoring-higher-education/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.academicimpressions.com/blog/improve-faculty-mentoring-higher-education/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://umdearborn.edu/faculty-staff/faculty-senate/faculty-mentoring-0>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.icre.pitt.edu/documents/Mentoring%20handbook.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <https://umdearborn.edu/faculty-staff/faculty-senate/faculty-mentoring-0>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.icre.pitt.edu/documents/Mentoring%20handbook.pdf>

**Benefits of Mentoring to an Educational Institute<sup>16</sup>**

- A faculty mentoring program helps in retaining and developing faculty who are better able to navigate promotion processes and take on additional tasks
- A structured and well-developed mentoring program is seen as a strategic institutional investment, and a competitive advantage in recruitment and retention

**Mentoring contract or Mentoring partnership agreement**

Once the expectations of the mentor and the mentee from the mentoring relationship have been clarified, a contract or agreement must be developed to codify these expectations<sup>17</sup>. A written agreement can provide a framework to track progress, to assess the success of the mentoring relationship, and to define your expectations if there are problems<sup>18</sup>.

To best use the time for a productive mentoring relationship, a regular meeting schedule should be created, clear shared expectations for the relationship, including time commitment must be established and clear communication protocols and expectations must be instituted<sup>19</sup>.

Mentoring is a two-way activity. It is important for both mentor and mentee to identify their own strengths, weaknesses, and biases, assess and build communication skills, including the ability to give full attention and engage in good listening skills, clarify mutual expectations for the relationship and discuss and set up confidentiality expectations<sup>20</sup>.

A mentoring contract is common in corporate settings. It defines the nitty gritty of the mentor-mentee relationship. In academic settings, a mentoring contract could be more like an honor contract or a 'mentoring partnership agreement' which helps both parties set expectations and understand acceptable behaviors.

Click [here](#) to access a sample mentoring agreement. Another sample mentoring partnership agreement is below:

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.academicimpressions.com/blog/improve-faculty-mentoring-higher-education/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.icre.pitt.edu/documents/Mentoring%20handbook.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.umassmed.edu/ofa/development/mentoring/mentees/agreement/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://umdearborn.edu/faculty-staff/faculty-senate/faculty-mentoring-0>

<sup>20</sup> <https://umdearborn.edu/faculty-staff/faculty-senate/faculty-mentoring-0>



### Mentoring Partnership Agreement

As a mentor and mentee in the IIMB Faculty Mentoring Program, we agree to abide by the following set of guidelines:

1. Commit to making the time to meet on a regular basis, no less than quarterly.
2. Keep the content of our conversations confidential.
3. Practice active listening.
4. Provide each other with honest, direct and respectful feedback.
5. Others:

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Mentor

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Mentee

-----  
Date

Source: <http://pondside.uchicago.edu/~feder/Faculty-Mentoring-Program-Toolkit.pdf>

## For Mentors

A mentor provides coaching, guidance, moral support, evaluative feedback, introductions, information and advice. As a mentor, encourage and demonstrate confidence in your mentee, be willing to invest ample time in them, provide accessibility and exposure for your mentee within your own professional circles and be liberal with feedback. Other things<sup>21</sup> that you should do are:

- Listen to your mentee and help them come up with solutions.
- Advise the mentee on how to manage the pressures and crises of professional life.
- Sit-in the mentee's class and observe. Suggest strategies for more effective teaching.
- Propose effective ways of interacting with students and colleagues.
- Read and critique research proposals and papers.
- Encourage the submission of papers for presentation at professional conferences.
- Advise on tenure and promotion requirements and processes, i.e.,
  - Help mentees set appropriate short and long term professional goals and advise them of the specific expectations for promotion in their academic track.
  - Suggest strategies for showcasing new work, flag opportunities to obtain institutional support (such as travel funds, release time, or access to equipment); help a mentee steer clear of political pitfalls.

There are several activities you can do with the mentee such as attending an on-campus event, taking a tour of the campus, visiting museums and so on. Please click [here](#) for accessing 'Ideas for Mentoring Activities'.

Click [here](#) to access a five-part essay series on 'How to be a Great Mentor' by Kerry Ann Rockquemore, an author and speaker in the field of faculty development and leadership. These essays are on how to be a good faculty mentor to junior professors, how to make new arrivals in an academic department feel welcome, coaching style of mentoring, an essay calling for senior faculty to embrace new style of mentoring and an essay on starting off a mentoring relationship.

## Giving Feedback<sup>22</sup>

Prompt and frequent feedback is critical to a mentoring relationship. Feedback allows you to acknowledge your mentee's strength and to motivate the mentee to work on areas of weaknesses.

To ensure that you give constructive and effective feedback, you must establish an atmosphere of mutual trust and regard. It is easier to give and accept feedback when both the parties trust each other and are aware of the mutual goal.

While giving feedback, acknowledge the accomplishments and successes of the mentee along with areas in which they need to improve.

Provide simple, specific and actionable feedback. Overarching statements like 'your work is sloppy', would not help the mentee as they would not know what to work on. Focus on a small number of areas in which you want to see improvement and advise the mentee accordingly.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://health.usf.edu/facultyaffairs/mentorship/mentors>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.icre.pitt.edu/documents/Mentoring%20handbook.pdf>

## For Mentees

Mentoring creates the opportunity for a multifaceted collaboration between yourself and a senior professional with the primary goal of nurturing your professional development. You must respect your mentor's expertise and appreciate their time and interest. You must be flexible, prompt for the meetings and accommodate the mentor's other commitments<sup>23</sup>.

### What issues must be addressed through the mentoring relationship<sup>24</sup>?

- Tenure and promotion policies and procedures.
- Feedback to the mentee on teaching skills.
- Formulation of career goals and timelines.
- Processes and experiences using the institute's policies and benefits.
- Time management methods.
- Strategies for attaining academic leadership positions.
- Knowing when to say no and how to negotiate effectively.
- Prioritizing teaching, publishing, research, and service commitments.
- Internal funding opportunities and resources for external funding support.
- Professional issues related to identity such as gender, race/ethnicity and so on.
- Development of skill sets such as grant proposal writing, academic advising, lab management, or giving talks.

### How to make the most of the mentoring relationship?

Mentors can be an important source of inside information about the organization and about how to succeed there. They can serve as a sounding board to discuss mentees' questions and concerns. They can also help with research, teaching, negotiating requests from administrators, with understanding policies and procedures, and with concerns about reconciling work and family demands<sup>25</sup>.

As a mentee in a mentoring relationship you must agree to respond promptly to your mentor's invitation for a first meeting, provide an account of professional activities and experiences by sharing your *Curriculum Vitae* (CV), agree upon a mutual understanding of confidentiality, establish meeting times and modes (email, phone, in-person) that work for both parties and finally, meet regularly with your mentor<sup>26</sup>.

To make the most of a mentoring relationship, you must maintain contact with mentors, keep mentors apprised of academic progress, ask for help and raise concerns, listen to and seriously consider mentors' advice, and exchange ideas and experiences with mentors<sup>27</sup>.

### How to prepare for a mentoring session?

As a mentee, it is your responsibility to prepare for meetings with your mentor by identifying the guidance and information that you need most. For the first mentoring session try using the 'first meeting checklist' below:

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<sup>23</sup> <https://health.usf.edu/facultyaffairs/mentorship/mentees>

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.brown.edu/research/projects/advance/sites/brown.edu.research.projects.advance/files/uploads/mentoring\\_guide.pdf](https://www.brown.edu/research/projects/advance/sites/brown.edu.research.projects.advance/files/uploads/mentoring_guide.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.provost.pitt.edu/pacwc/mentoring>

<sup>26</sup> [https://www.brown.edu/research/projects/advance/sites/brown.edu.research.projects.advance/files/uploads/mentoring\\_guide.pdf](https://www.brown.edu/research/projects/advance/sites/brown.edu.research.projects.advance/files/uploads/mentoring_guide.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> <https://umdearborn.edu/faculty-staff/faculty-senate/faculty-mentoring-0>

### First Meeting Checklist

#### Get to Know Each Other

- Share information about your professional and personal life
- Learn something new about your mentee/mentor

#### Establish Guidelines

- When and where will we meet?
- How will we schedule meetings?
- How will we communicate between meetings?
- What agenda format will we use?
- Will there be any fixed agenda items to be discussed at every meeting?
- How will we exchange feedback?
- How will we measure success?

#### Partnership Agreement

- Review partnership agreement, modify if desired, sign and exchange
- Review goals for the mentoring relationship

#### Confirm Next Steps

- Schedule date, time and place of future meetings

Source: <http://pondside.uchicago.edu/~feder/Faculty-Mentoring-Program-Toolkit.pdf>

#### What to expect from a formal mentoring session?

Click [here](#) to access 'Mentoring Meeting Checklist' to facilitate effective and efficient meetings.

#### How to seek feedback and act on the inputs provided by the mentor?

Remember that both you and the mentor are working towards a mutual goal. They are invested in your future and want you to improve<sup>28</sup>.

Ask for specific advice on your skill set, ideas, plans, and goals. The more specific you are, the easier it will be for your mentor to respond. Make it easy for your mentor to give you honest, specific feedback and ask for it early in your relationship. If you get some corrective feedback, don't defend yourself. Thank your mentor for being honest with you. Then ask, "What specifically don't you like about \_\_\_\_?" or "What specifically would you recommend?"<sup>29</sup>

If you feel defensive, ask if you can make an appointment later to discuss the feedback, after you have had time to consider it<sup>30</sup>.

You should be open to feedback and willing to listen to advice from your mentor even if you do not completely agree with them. Evaluate the feedback, without emotion. Accept feedback but reserve

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.icre.pitt.edu/documents/Mentoring%20handbook.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> <https://health.usf.edu/facultyaffairs/mentorship/mentees>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.icre.pitt.edu/documents/Mentoring%20handbook.pdf>



judgement on which recommendations you act on. After all, you are in the strongest position to recognize what is in your best interests<sup>31</sup>. Either way, thank your mentor for their time and effort.

If you decide not to use the feedback, let your mentor know and let your mentor know your reasons. Your mentoring relationship is long-term, and you don't want to jeopardize it by alienating your mentor<sup>32</sup>.

### **How to close the mentoring relationship?**

If your mentoring relationship has a defined end point, but you and your mentor see value in continuing an informal mentoring relationship, go for it. However, if you think that you have achieved the goals and objectives which you wanted to achieve through your mentoring relationship even before the preset end date, if any, you must consider closing the mentoring relationship. It is better to leave when the going is good rather than draining the relationship dry to the point of atrophy, resentment or dysfunction<sup>33</sup>.

A mentoring relationship is supposed to bring value to both the parties involved. Do not be hesitant to end the relationship if you have met the development goals, you are unsure of your or the mentor's commitment to the relationship or your priorities have shifted.

Plan a closure meeting. Be clear and open in your communication regarding the mentoring relationship. Acknowledge and appreciate the time and effort which your mentor has put into your development. Take a few moments to reflect on the accomplishments, difficulties, and overall experience<sup>34</sup>.

### **Conclusion**

Mentoring in higher education settings benefits both the mentor and the mentee as well as the institute. Faculty mentoring has proven potential to support faculty in their pursuit of a successful and satisfying career.

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<sup>31</sup> [https://www.brown.edu/research/projects/advance/sites/brown.edu.research.projects.advance/files/uploads/mentoring\\_guide.pdf](https://www.brown.edu/research/projects/advance/sites/brown.edu.research.projects.advance/files/uploads/mentoring_guide.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.icre.pitt.edu/documents/Mentoring%20handbook.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.riversoftware.com/mentee-mentor-advice/is-it-time-to-say-goodbye-to-your-mentor/>

<sup>34</sup> [https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/providing\\_closure\\_when\\_mentoring\\_relationships\\_end](https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/providing_closure_when_mentoring_relationships_end)