STAGES OF MENTORING

Your mentoring partnership should be marked by three distinct stages. In the beginning, you and your student will get to know one another, set goals for the partnership, and agree on expectations. The middle stage is an on-going process. You and your student will revise goals, create action plans, take action, and reflect on outcomes. It is a period of sustained growth and relationship development. At the end, the partnership should be evaluated and redefined if necessary, and accomplishments should be celebrated.

The Beginning

In your first meeting, you should complete a Mentoring Partnership Agreement form that establishes goals, ground rules, and expectations for both parties. This agreement will be the foundation for your partnership.

Tips to get to know your student:

- Discuss your personal backgrounds and professional history
- Share any previous experience with mentoring and lessons learned
- Share why you have agreed to be a mentor and your goals for the partnership
- Talk about your student’s goals and what he or she wants out of the partnership

Potential areas of focus for goal setting:

- Develop professional expertise in a specific area of focus.
- Work on a specific academic goal such as a research project or grant proposal.
- Develop leadership abilities and communication skills.
- Explore personal interests and abilities.
- Learn how to handle school-life-work balance.
- Explore future career paths and opportunities.
- Practice resume and cover letter writing or improve interview skills.

Questions to establish clearly defined expectations:

- How often will you meet, where, and how?
- Who will be responsible for making the arrangements for the meetings?
- What will be your “ground rules” for how the time will be spent and how you will communicate?
- Who will run the meetings? Will he or she be responsible for creating an agenda?
- What does confidentiality mean to you and what does it mean to your mentee?
- What topics are off-limits?
- How will you respect one another’s time?
STAGES OF MENTORING continued

The Middle

This stage will focus on discussing how to achieve the goals that have been outlined in the agreement. Not only will you examine these goals in more depth, but you will also assist your mentee with developing an action plan for achieving them.

An example of an effective goal statement is “Identify programs this semester and gather information so that I get an internship next year.” Action steps for this goal may include:

1. Schedule a meeting to speak with the CSE career services office to discuss opportunities.
2. Research programs and eligibility criteria in order to identify at least 2 programs of interest.
3. Identify 2-3 students who have attended programs of interest and arrange to speak with them about their experience.

Tips for creating effective goal statements using the SMART goal model:

- **Be Specific**—the goal statement should be concrete and action-oriented. What specifically, is the student trying to accomplish? Ask: what do you mean by that? Are there ways to restate the goal to remove any misunderstanding? Does the goal start with an action verb?
- **Measurable**—how will the student know when he or she has achieved the goal? How will your student track and measure progress? How is success defined?
- **Achievable**—the goal should require work, but be attainable. Is the goal too big or too small?
- **Realistic**—does the student have the ability and commitment to reach the goal? What additional resources of time, money, or capability will be needed to reach the goal? Does the goal set up your student for failure?
- **Timely**—there should be a specific time-frame for achieving the goal which will hold your student accountable.

The End

This final stage is a time to reflect on the lessons learned, wisdom gained, and progress made by both you and your student. What were the greatest challenges? What lessons were learned? What would you do differently? How will you use new knowledge and skills moving forward? It is also important to acknowledge the successes and accomplishments achieved over the course of your mentoring partnership. Additionally, it is a time to redefine the partnership with your student and set new ground rules and boundaries of your future interaction. Some mentoring relationships continue long after the formal program ends, but others do not. Do what makes sense for you and your student.

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