

The Importance of Mentorship:

Obtaining & maintaining a relationship with a mentor

WHAT IS A MENTOR?

A mentor is a role model who supports and encourages you through your academic, career, and personal goals and growth. They can act as a guide who can help you think about your future and help you be whoever you want to be. They may have a job that is similar to one you would like to pursue, or they have experienced similar things to what you are experiencing.

WHY SHOULD I HAVE A MENTOR?

- Establish a relationship with someone who has more experience than you.
- Obtain advice and guidance on matters such as professional or personal growth.
- Engage in serious thought and conversation.
- Gain a potential reference.

HOW DO I GET A MENTOR?

1. Step outside of your comfort zone and ask somebody that you admire or acts as a role model for you on campus.
2. Get involved with a professional organization in the field that you are interested in. Some have formal mentoring programs and may be able to match you with somebody who is looking to give back and gain a mentee.
3. Ask somebody who has been instrumental in your life such as a former coach, coworker, or previous employer.
4. Talk with the alumni office to help you connect with an alumnus who would be willing to set aside time to act as your mentor.

HOW DOES MENTORSHIP WORK?

This is up to you and your mentor. In some cases if you are matched through an official organization, there may be guidelines to follow. If you found someone who agreed to be your mentor on campus, you will decide together when you'll meet and under what circumstances. In either case, you'll want to know what you are looking for from your mentor. Let them know what you are hoping to get out of it, how they can help you, and why you asked them in particular. Some mentors meet once a month with their mentees over the phone or in person. Some have frequent emails. It's up to you both to define this.

WHEN DO I KNOW WHETHER OR NOT TO CONTINUE THE RELATIONSHIP WITH MY MENTOR?

You and your mentor may end up being in this relationship your whole career. You also may find out, just like any relationship, that it has run its course. It is nice to check in with your mentor occasionally to let them know how you are doing and how the mentorship is serving you. Is it meeting your expectations? Are you getting out of it what you had hoped in the beginning? Would you like to redefine it?

QUESTIONS YOUR MENTOR MIGHT ASK YOU:

- What have you been spending most of your time on?
- What motivates you?
- What is holding you back?
- What's your toughest class and what have you learned that you will take with you in the long term?
- Who is your favorite professor and why?
- What is your dream job? What do you need to get there?
- Where would you like to be professionally in 5 years? 10? 20?
- Where can I help / where do you need the most help?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR MENTOR:

- How did you find out what you wanted to do?
- What should I be doing now to work towards _____ (fill in with your goal/aspiration/dream)?
- Who else do you know that I should talk to?
- How did you land your current role?
- Can you tell me about a time you had a difficult _____ (fill in with: boss/job/decision/etc.)? How did you handle it?
- What's the most important leadership lesson you've learned and how is it valuable to you?
- Tell me about a recent setback and how you recovered.
- Was there a job you applied for and got, but you weren't 100% qualified?

HELPFUL RESOURCES:

- [Forbes: '10 Killer Questions to Make the Most of Your Mentor Meeting'](#)
- [Beladerly: '25 Questions to Ask a Mentor'](#)
- [Forbes: '3 Reasons All Great Leaders Have Mentors \(And Mentees\)'](#)

