

Ideas for Mentors

The primary resource of successful mentors is their knowledge of the norms, values and procedures of their institutions. This knowledge is essential to new faculty, but there are also personal characteristics which contribute to effective mentoring. These include the ability to:

- Value the mentee as a person
- Develop mutual trust and respect
- Maintain confidentiality
- Listen both to what is being said and how it is being said
- Provide constructive feedback
- Help the mentee solve his or her own problem, rather than giving direction
- Focus on the mentee's development, and resist the urge to produce a clone

Successful mentors:

- Avoid confrontation and do not prevent mentees from taking reasonable risks in meeting their objectives
- Recognize and evaluate what they can offer a mentee (keeping in mind that no single mentor can fulfill every mentoring function) and look for additional resources or mentors that might help the mentee with specific questions
- Negotiate the parameters and responsibilities of the relationship: what kinds of topics to talk about; how often and under what circumstances meetings take place; what the mentee expects from the relationship; what the mentor expects of the mentee. These expectations can be renegotiated but should be established early to avoid misunderstandings
- Give praise when warranted. Praise is most useful when accompanied by descriptive statements about why something was done well. Just “good job!” does not give the mentee enough information to be able to replicate the behavior
- Give criticism when warranted, using descriptive statements about behavior rather than judgmental statements and always with specific suggestions for improvement
- Point mentees to any available institutional support for career development
- Work pro-actively to maintain the relationship—this may include email or phone contact or dropping by the mentee’s office between formal meetings
- Share knowledge of informal rules for advancement and skills for showcasing the mentee’s work

- Give perspective on long-term career planning: advise on balancing teaching, research and service, and setting professional priorities
- Get help when they need it—find ways to talk with other faculty without compromising the confidentiality of their relationship with the mentee

Adapted from:

- University of Manitoba, University Teaching Services
http://www.umanitoba.ca/academic_support/uts/services/mentoring/success.php
- The Faculty Mentoring Program for Women, University of Texas at El Paso