

# Keys to Being a Successful Mentor

## Partnering

A partnership is a relationship, frequently between two people, in which each has equal status and a certain independence, but also implicit or formal obligations to the other.

Mentoring is often thought of as a partnership largely because there are obligations, implicit or otherwise, that each party takes on. One key to a successful mentee/mentor relationship is to be aware of your obligations and take them seriously.

What obligations might you take on as a mentee? What challenges might arise for you in relation to these obligations? How can you partner with your mentor to meet your obligations to him or her?

## Giving Assistance

Because mentoring is most often a voluntary activity on the part of the mentor, it is important that you think carefully and intentionally about what type of assistance that you are willing to provide.

**What you can reasonably expect from a mentoring relationship is:**

- A sense that you are helping someone achieve their goals and that you are making a difference in another person's life.
- An occasional "thank you" or acknowledgement of the assistance you are providing.
- An enjoyable relationship.

**There are a number of things you can do to help to identify and meet your mentee's needs.**

- Help them to define what they need and want from the relationship.
- Help to clearly define objectives.
- Help to identify problems they believe might be obstacles to them in reaching their objectives.
- Give thought to and be able to articulate how you think you can be of assistance.
- Think about how they might reach their objectives with or without you.
- Challenge your mentees, but don't be mean or petty.
- Treat your mentorship relationship with care; don't abuse it by asking for or offering inappropriate favors or information, and don't treat your mentee poorly.

## **Determining Their Needs**

.There are a number of ways to determine your mentee's needs.

- Review their academic performance; were there areas in which they felt they needed more development and support?
- Talk about their academic and career aspirations for the next three to five years. What skills do they have already? What skills/experiences do you need to develop to be qualified for these positions?
- Help them to list three basic needs that they have in their lives (e.g., less stress, more responsibility, more challenge, more respect).
- Talk about what they currently enjoy in their lives (job, school, or otherwise). What's missing?

Any one of these questions can help them to define their needs, which in turn can help them to appropriately utilize you as a mentor