



THE
UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS
AT
CHICAGO

Staff Mentor Program

Introduction

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What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a partnership between colleagues to promote personal and professional development. Mentor pairs are composed of a *mentor* and *mentee*.

The Staff Mentor Program supports mentor pairs in developing effective mentoring relationships.

- The mentor is usually an experienced person who serves as a trusted friend, advisor, and teacher who focuses on the interest and benefit of the mentee.
- The mentee is usually a less-experienced colleague seeking personal and professional development.

Mentees look to their mentor as confidant, advisor, advocate, and role model. Mentors help mentees develop confidence, competence, and guide them to opportunities. Mentors assist mentees as they establish themselves in an organization, and may enhance a mentee’s career through sharing organizational knowledge; communicating and discussing an organization’s focus, initiatives, and changes.

Successful mentees shoulder the responsibility of driving the conversation, identifying goals, and articulating aspirations. Successful mentees are committed to developing personally and professionally. They are willing to sharing openly and honestly with the mentor, and to listen and act on the mentor’s counsel.

A liaison is assigned to promote a successful year for each mentoring pair. Liaisons can help with logistics, and advise on approaches to meetings and communication.

Create a mentorship agreement

The Staff Mentor Program *Communication Plan* form creates a framework to facilitate communication between mentoring partners. This document sets a baseline and marks a clear beginning for the relationship. Use the form to establish a meeting schedule, set ground rules and responsibilities, and discuss communication preferences.

It is important for mentors and mentees to meet regularly. Working out a schedule plan will make it easier to meet often enough for a successful year. Work together to complete the plan.

Discuss ground rules at the beginning; state what your needs and boundaries are, and work to ensure your partner also expresses their needs and boundaries. Both the mentor and mentee should commit to keeping conversations confidential and avoid airing criticisms or concerns about each other to other colleagues. Use the form to record the ground rules you have established.

Throughout the year, respect each other's time. Follow the schedule and meet as agreed. Review the Staff Mentor Program *Communication Plan* monthly to keep on track and make revisions as needed.

Successful meetings can use a variety of meeting approaches.

Face-to-Face

Meet face-to-face to discuss important issues.

If the subject matter is confidential, meet in the mentor's office or ask your liaison to arrange a private meeting area.

Have lunch together.

Email

Use email to keep in touch, ask quick questions, and recommend campus events to mentees.

Alert mentees to programs and new information.

Phone

Check in and touch base.

Activity 3

Together, review and complete the Staff Mentor Program *Communication Plan* form on page 12. Use this conversation to affirm ground rules, determine how often you will meet and the methods you will use to keep in touch.

What do we talk about?

The purpose of the mentoring relationship is to support the professional and personal development of the mentee and assist the mentee in meeting professional goals. Because of this, the mentee initiates topics during mentor/mentee conversations.

The first conversation will focus on expressing what the mentee wishes to achieve with the help of the mentor. This focus may continue into subsequent conversations to ensure understanding of the goals.

Goals may include:

- Become part of the UIC family and develop organizational knowledge
- Become acquainted with people at various levels on the campus
- Understand UIC workplace culture
- Increase or improve professionalism
- Develop career and service priorities and goals

The mentee and mentor both ask questions to explore how the mentor can best assist the mentee. Questions are asked to understand each other better. Probing questions are asked to illuminate the situation and help a mentor identify potential actions.

Mentors may:

- Ask about accomplishments and encourage aspirations
- Share observations, provide informal feedback, and advice
- Encourage membership in committees of interest and professional organizations

During any discussion mentees may:

- Express and explain goals and aspirations
- Ask for advice; mentors will not offer mentees advice to avoid driving the conversation
- Be as specific as possible when asking for advice and welcome suggestions
- Ask for clarification if you are unclear on advice or any other information
- Expect to receive criticism and suggestions for your work; a good mentor will offer both

The mentoring conversations may also explore specific "difficult" situations faced by the mentee and suggest follow-up actions. A mentor can help the mentee think about ways to turn an unfortunate circumstance into an opportunity.

What does a mentor do?

A mentor follows the mentee's lead and acts as a sounding board. Mentees initiate topics, and the mentor facilitates discussion and the exchange of ideas. A mentor also acts as a guide to UIC's organizational culture and assists the mentee.

A mentor may help in:

- Planning and setting priorities
- Sorting out questions and concerns
- Acting as an advocate for the mentee
- Offering support and helping the mentee develop strategies to address difficulties
- Advise on how to balance work demands and personal life, and avoiding burnout
- Help find resources to evaluate their work and provide feedback
- Discuss promotion processes and strategy

Mentors may also assist by alerting mentees to upcoming opportunities for career development and discuss how to prepare for them.

This may include:

- Seminars and training events
- Department deadlines
- Campus activities that may contribute to a successful work portfolio

Work with your mentee to develop a follow-up plan to evaluate actions taken toward a goal, discuss next steps, and debrief. Follow-up plans should be simple; identify the action and set a time to discuss and evaluate the results.

Examples of follow-up plans:

- "Let's work on this for a month. Then we'll review progress and determine if we should continue."
- "Let's identify one or two events (workshop, seminar, or networking opportunity) you want to attend, and set a date to debrief."
- "Once you complete your work product, let's look at it together. When do you think it will be ready?"
- "Call me after you talk to x about y, and let me know how it went."

While mentees should drive the discussion, at times conversations may become stuck. Restart conversations and prompt by reviewing the current, or previous, discussion and ask open-ended questions.

- How well did you accomplish your goal?
- What did you learn?
- What is different as a result of this experience?
- Who were the most important people that you met, and why?
- What steps can you take to achieve that goal?
- What skills or knowledge do you hope to gain?
- What will be the most challenging for you?
- What do you think will be the most rewarding for you?
- What are you worried about most?

What does a mentee do?

It is the mentee's job to identify and express their objectives and aspirations to their mentor. Early discussions with your mentor may reveal many goals and priorities. Your mentor can help you sort through and prioritize your goals, and may recommend actions, but your direction is your choice. A good way to set your course is to draft a long-range professional plan to review and discuss; this can clarify your direction and point to next steps.

Some of the areas you may seek help in:

- Building deeper understanding of UIC's workplace culture
- Professional development and job preparation
- Identifying career development opportunities
- Dealing with co-workers and colleagues
- Navigating politically charged situations

The mentee leads the discussion. Prepare for each meeting by reviewing previous discussions and your mentor's recommendations. Think about the actions taken since the last meeting, your observations, and questions. Prepare to share about what you did, what worked, what you learned, and how you used your last conversation as a means of solving a problem or achieving a goal.

Be considerate of your mentor's time. Return phone calls promptly and be on time. When meeting, ask how much time your mentor has to spend with you and abide by that request. Let your mentor suggest taking extra time if needed.

Identify what you want your mentor to do. Mentors follow the mentee's lead, if you are seeking advice, ask for advice. Will you ask your mentor to listen, pose questions, help clarify your thinking, offer advice, teach a new skill, or help solve a problem?

A mentor should not be expected to resolve your issues or make things happen for you. Instead, they are to help discuss options and suggest resources you can use to work toward your goals. When you ask for advice, consider your mentor's counsel when taking action.

- Talk about what has occurred since the last meeting; share results, questions, and thoughts.
- Explore what could have been done differently in a particular situation.
- Seek advice.
- Ask for help in preparing for a networking event, meeting, or difficult conversation.
- Ask for help in identifying resources to help reach a goal.
- Get clarification if you are unclear on advice or any recommendation.

Listen to what your mentor has to say. Seriously consider the advice given to you by your mentor, even if your immediate reaction is not positive. Although some advice may seem irrelevant to you, often it will prove useful at some future date.

Show appreciation for the time and assistance given to you by your mentor. Build rapport with your mentor by talking about how he or she has helped you. Show interest in your mentor's engagements, ideas, thoughts and abilities.

Ending the mentoring year

The Staff Mentor Program is a year-long formal mentoring program and mentor pairs are not expected to continue beyond the year. Successful closure provides another opportunity to grow for both partners. It gives the mentee an opportunity to review how he or she has grown during the year. The mentor has an opportunity to reflect and share his or her hopes and visions for the mentee's future.

Mentoring relationships are powerful. Often strong emotions emerge at the relationship's end. Holding a meeting to mark the end of the relationship and focus on closure is recommended. Mentors should take the lead and propose a closure meeting to reflect on the year and pivot toward the future. The conversation can begin with the mentor observing how the mentee has grown and recount highlights. The discussion can then look to the experience of working together, in sharing observations and offering feedback.

Some of the questions that can open the discussion:

- Let's review how you've grown over this time.
- What goals were established for the year? How well did we accomplish them?
- What goals were not achieved; why, and what to do next?
- Let's share the high points of our time together.
- Let's look at the challenging moments in our relationship and what they tell us about our experience.
- What feedback do we have on what it was like to work with each other?
- Let's share our hopes and vision for each other moving forward.

You and your mentor or mentee may wish to continue the mentoring relationship beyond the end of the structured program. The closure meeting is a good time to discuss future contact and decide whether the mentoring relationship continues. Both partners should feel free to tell the other that they prefer not to continue in the mentoring partnership. If both want to continue as a mentoring pair, discuss any changes to make the relationship more meaningful and productive.

If the mentoring relationship is ending, discuss whether communication will continue. Both partners should feel free to tell the other if they do not wish to, or cannot, continue contact. If it continues, discuss and set expectations for the new relationship.

Even when former mentor pairs wish to stay in touch, both should wait before resuming contact. Several weeks or months of no contact should provide enough time to allow the relationship to reset and proceed on new terms.

Early Endings

The goal of mentoring relationships is to help the mentee move forward in their career and life goals. If this is not occurring, and you do not see what adjustments can be made in the relationship to meet those goals, end it respectfully and honestly.

Meet and begin the last meeting by thanking your mentor. Express your reason for ending early in a way that gives both of you the benefit of the doubt.

- If you have fundamental differences, you may say, “I’ve had time to reflect on my (strengths, communication style, motivations, or another aspect) and I think I need a mentor that is a closer match.”
- If you have not been able to reach your mentor or meet regularly, you may say something like “I’m afraid our schedules are simply not compatible.”
- It could simply be the relationship has run its course earlier than expected.

Keep the doors open with your mentor. At some point in the future, you may find he or she is the best person to consult, and his or her perspective is precisely what you need.

It is crucial for both mentor and mentee to be professional and constructive at the relationship’s end. Make only positive or neutral comments about each other to your colleagues.

Mentoring Resources

Books:

Bell, Chip R., *Managers as Mentors: Building Partnerships for Learning*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1998. Burley-Allen, Madelyn. *Listening: The Forgotten Skill – A Self-Teaching Guide*. 2nd ed. John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1995.

Ensher, Ellen and Murphy, Susan Elaine. *Power Mentoring: How Successful Mentors and Protégés Get the Most Out of Their Relationships*. John Wiley & Sons (US), 2005.

Johnson, Harold E. *Mentoring for Exceptional Performance*. Glendale, CA: Griffin Publishing, 1997.

Kochan, Frances K. *The Organizational and Human Dimensions of Successful Mentoring Programs and Relationships*. Information Age Publishing, 2002.

Murray, Margo. *Beyond the Myths and Magic of Mentoring: How to Facilitate an Effective Mentoring Process*. New and Revised ed. John Wiley & Sons (US), 2001.

Shenkman, Michael H. *Leader Mentoring: Find, Inspire, and Cultivate Great Leaders*. Career Press, Inc., 2008.

Stone, Florence. *Coaching, Counseling & Mentoring: How to Choose and Use the Right Technique to Boost Employee Performance*. 2nd ed. AMACOM, 2007.

Stone, Florence. *The Mentoring Advantage: Creating the Next Generation of Leaders*. Kaplan Publishing, 2004

Zachary, Lois j, Fischler, Lory A. *The Mentees's Guide: Making Mentoring Work for You*. Jossey-Bass, 2009.

Videos:

Mentoring Others Lynda.com - Tom Dewet:

<https://www.lynda.com/Business-Skills-tutorials/Mentoring-Others/144200-2.html> (15 minutes)

Essential Mentoring Techniques: Mentoring Fundamentals - SkillSoft (1 hour)

http://mycareer.uic.skillport.com/skillportfe/main.action?path=summary/COURSES/mgmt_29_a01_bs_enus

Essential Mentoring Techniques: Building and Maintaining Mentoring Relationships - SkillSoft (1 hour)

http://mycareer.uic.skillport.com/skillportfe/main.action?path=summary/COURSES/mgmt_29_a03_bs_enus

