

WHAT IS A FACULTY MENTOR?

A mentor is an experienced professor who guides, advises, and supports an inexperienced scholar for the purpose of furthering their careers (Cronan-Hillix, Gensheimer, Cronan-Hillix & Davidson, 1986). Although the relationship is personal, it has a specific purpose. In order for the relationship to be effective, each participant needs to possess certain characteristics.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD FACULTY MENTOR?

In her review of the literature on mentoring, Redmond (1990) states, “Effective mentoring involves not only the transfer of academic skills, attitudes, and behaviors, but a level of interaction, trust, and communication which...empowers a student with the knowledge and confidence to grow academically and socially regardless of the environment.”

Some important characteristics of effective mentors are:

- The mentor needs to be above all available (makes the time commitment to the student).
- Interested in and supportive of the scholar.
- Have good interpersonal communication skills (approachable, receptive, clear, and able to maintain a two-way conversation).
- Possess conflict management skills.
- Ability to empower the scholar.
- Ability to honor the scholar’s need for autonomy.
- Ability to tap into organizational networks and know what opportunities are available.
- Exemplary supervisory skills.

Important personality characteristics were a sense of humor, honesty, dedication, empathy, compassion, genuineness, patience, loyalty, flexibility, and unprejudiced attitudes (Cronan-Hillix, et al, 1986). The mentors must be personable, charismatic, patient and courageous, especially in risky situations where the scholar may fail (Murray, 1991).



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MENTOR

Successful mentoring is based on clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The extent to which the mentor engages in the following functions determines the quality of the relationship.

CAREER FUNCTIONS:

- Willingness to serve as a coach to scholar
- Socializes a scholar to his or her chosen profession
- Provides challenging assignments & opportunities
- Assists professional development of the scholar
- Interest in scholar's future
- Advisement on career goals
- Provides instruction in requisite skills
- Provides visibility and exposure
- Helps scholar establish professional connections
- Provides the opportunity to apply newly acquired skills
- Promotes career and professional development of mentee
- Socializes scholar into new profession
- Engages in information-giving & provision of knowledge
- Sponsorship/Advocacy
- Provides training and instruction
- Provides feedback on scholar's work
- Provides information on careers
- Encourages scholar to continue/further education
- Assists scholar in applying for graduate school
- Assists with academic & work difficulties

PSYCHOSOCIAL FUNCTIONS:

- Provides moral support
- Shows interest in scholar's personal growth
- Engages in role-modeling
- Provides acceptance and confirmation of scholar
- Provides guidance, counsel, advisement, friendship



BENEFITS MENTOR RECEIVES FROM THE DEVELOPMENTAL RELATIONSHIP

Some benefits include:

- Increased respect among colleagues and peers
- Recognition among colleagues
- Sense of satisfaction over enabling the scholar to succeed
- Being able to provide technical assistance
- Positive impact on the mentor's sense of well-being
- Increased creativity
- Rejuvenation
- Furthers mentor's career and personal development
- Keeps mentor up to date on new developments within field
- Simply being asked means one is respected, admired
- Enhances self-esteem
- Revitalizes interest in work
- Fulfillment of development needs
- Close relationship with scholar is typically experienced as enjoyable
- The scholar provides assistance on work projects
- Enhanced status, influence, recognition
- Avoidance of burnout

