

Mentoring Matters – Tips and Advice for Students

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Mentoring is more than just a one-way connection. It is a two-way relationship. This means you have to engage with your alumni mentor, be proactive and open to their ideas, thoughts and advice. Also, mentoring is not just about one person – it is about building a mentoring network. Your developmental networks are a group of people who take interest in and action to support and/or advance an individual's career, personal and/or professional development. In building an effective mentoring relationship, your principal objectives as a mentor should be to:

- **Put effort toward establishing a positive and productive relationship**
 - As with any relationships, cultivation takes time; effort is required to build an effective mentoring relationship
 - Regular interaction and consistent support are important in building effective mentoring.
 - Focus on a specific activity, project or plan to get things started within the first 30 days.
 - Trust and respect must be established and cultivated – both require time and experience.

- **Have a plan as you reach out to alumni mentors**
 - What do you want to achieve?
 - Which type of support or information are you seeking?
 - What background and knowledge do you have about the person you are reaching out to?
 - What are your goals and objectives?
 - How are your goals and interests aligned with the mentor's skills/expertise?
 - What are your expectations about what you will receive from this mentoring relationship?

- **Honor your commitment – be professional** - Your mentor probably has a very demanding job. Value his/her commitment, time and investment. Follow up and respond in a timely manner to your mentor's questions and comments. If you don't have the time to respond at the time, send a short message letting him or her know you will be in contact when you have the opportunity. Remember – relationships require time to be meaningful and beneficial.

- **Be realistic – expect help, advice, and guidance – but not miracles** - You can expect a certain level of support and advice from your alumni mentor, but he or she can't solve all of your problems for you. Perhaps the most valuable quality a mentor can offer is to act as a “sounding board” – to offer their perspective, give you feedback or identify resources. They cannot be seen as a “fix” to every problem or situation that you may face.

- **Remember that the key characteristics of successful mentoring relationships are your willingness to engage with your mentor.**
 - Communicate clearly – identify needs and communicate them as clearly as you can
 - Be willing to learn new things, obtain another perspective, and look at things from a different viewpoint
 - Be responsive to suggestions, constructive criticism and feedback
 - Remember that effective relationships are mutually beneficial, never exploitative