

MENTORING

A Guide for Mentors in the Women's Leadership Initiative



PennState
College of Health and
Human Development

Women's Leadership Initiative

MENTORING

Mentoring: A Cornerstone of the Women's Leadership Initiative

The mission of the Women's Leadership Initiative (WLI) is to educate, inspire, and empower the next generation of female leaders with the core values, attitudes and skills that are the foundation of quality leadership. Mentoring helps us to fulfill this mission. A key component of the WLI since its inception, the WLI mentoring program provides opportunities for women students to observe, interact with, and learn from outstanding established leaders.

WLI MENTORS

Mentors are women leaders, usually Penn State alumni, who provide encouragement, guidance, information, and support to students during the academic year of their participation in WLI, and often beyond.

As a WLI mentor, you will play several key roles in your mentee's leadership development:

- **GUIDE** – Your life experiences – in your career, in your community, and beyond – are invaluable. As a mentor, you can help guide your mentee as she charts her own path. This may come in the form of information or advice about graduate or professional school, career advice, or assistance with building your mentee's network.
- **COACH** – Mentors provide encouragement and feedback throughout the course of their relationship with their mentee. You might help your mentee think through her own decisions or examine real-life leadership scenarios that either of you might encounter. You may encourage your mentee to step out of her comfort zone or take healthy risks that will pay dividends in terms of increased knowledge or enhanced confidence.
- **SUPPORTER** – Mentors provide support to their mentees during their leadership journey, hearing their ideas, fielding questions, and listening to concerns. They are invested in their mentees' success.
- **ROLE MODEL** – As a woman leader, you are a role model to your mentee. You can model leadership behaviors and skills for your mentee and give her examples of ways in which you have faced challenges, behaved ethically, or solved complex leadership problems. At the same time, you can be candid with her about your mistakes and how you might have made decisions or approached challenges differently.

Receiving Your Match

Mentors and mentees each submitted information about their career field/career goals and statements about what they hope to gain from a mentoring relationship. Mentor/mentee matches are based upon many different factors such as career interests, geographic proximity, and sometimes other factors such as similarity of personalities, shared interests, or particular mentorship goals.

Introducing yourself

Your mentee has been instructed to introduce herself to you via email, but you should also feel free to send an introductory email or make an introductory call. Take this time to:

- Tell your mentee a bit more about yourself
- Find out about your mentee. You might ask where she's from, what some of her interests are, and what career she hopes to pursue.
- Discuss how you each prefer to be contacted (phone, email, and Skype are all popular methods of contact) and at what times it's best to reach you. The more information you provide in these initial stages the easier it will be to get connected. Don't be afraid to make the first step if you haven't heard from your mentee – students enter WLI with varying levels of comfort with contacting someone whom they don't know.

Establishing goals

Setting goals are an important step in beginning a new mentoring relationship, and can set the stage for a successful partnership. Both mentors and mentees should think about what they hope to gain from the mentoring relationship.

The next page contains a goal-setting worksheet that you can complete with your mentee. While this is not required, it may help to facilitate communication throughout the year and ensure that both of you are satisfied with your mentoring relationship.

It is helpful to revisit your goals with your mentee throughout the year. Don't be afraid to eliminate goals if they are no longer relevant, or to add new goals during the course of the year.

Mentor Goals	Mentor Action Steps
Sample goal: Introduce my mentee to people in my network	Sample action step: During the fall semester, introduce my mentee to one person in my workplace whose career field matches my mentee's interests
Sample goal: Help my protégé to define and refine her interests and professional/educational goals	Sample action step: Encourage my mentee to obtain information about her career field from a professional organization related to that field and discuss her findings with me
Sample goal: Discuss current issues related to my career or field	Sample action step: Send my mentee one article per month about a current issue in my field and discuss by phone



Mentee Goals	Mentee Action Steps
Sample goal: Expand my network	Sample action step: Ask my mentor to introduce me to one person in her network whose career field is interesting to me
Sample goal: Receive guidance about applying to graduate school	Sample action step: Identify several schools in which I am interested and discuss these with my mentor
Sample goal: Learn about the various opportunities available in my career field	Sample action step: Interview my mentor about her job – what a typical work day looks like for her, what tasks she enjoys/doesn't enjoy, and whether she would pick the same field if she had the chance to do it again



Meeting your mentee

Throughout the year, Women's Leadership Initiative provides opportunities for the mentors and mentees to establish a lasting relationship. Attending a WLI event, such as the Kickoff Dinner in the fall, Celebration Luncheon in the spring, or a WLI workshop during the academic year, is a great way to connect with your mentee. If attending a WLI event is not possible, try scheduling another in person meeting, either on campus, at your workplace, or in the community where you live. Going to lunch, providing tours of your office or attending a lecture together are only a few suggestions. It's not required that you meet your mentee in person, but mentors and mentees often report that meeting each other in person was a key factor in establishing a successful mentoring relationship.



Staying connected

Now that your match has been made it is up to you and the student to manage and maintain this relationship. Those who get the most out of this mentoring experience are those who maintain regular contact throughout the year. By taking just a few minutes a week to write an email or make a phone call, this can become a great relationship.

Here are some suggested conversation topics and mentoring activities to help keep your mentoring relationship going:

- Discuss your mentee's interests and goals.
- Tell your mentee about your background (educational and work).
- Talk about the field that your mentee is interested in.
- Talk about your career path and profession: how you got started; role of networking, etc.
- Discuss your mentee's semester, courses, activities, etc.
- Facilitate a job shadowing experience, if possible.
- Send your mentee emails as you have new thoughts and ideas.
- Discuss career trends and opportunities within your field.
- Make a quick phone call to chat about your day.
- Discuss the balance between work and personal life.
- Talk about coping strategies for life's stressors.
- Ask about your mentee's family and friends.
- Read a book together and discuss it.



Finding Lasting Success

As a mentor, it's important to understand your own responsibilities and expectations, as well as those of your mentee. The next page provides a list – by no means exhaustive – of typical roles and responsibilities of a mentor, typical mentor expectations of a mentee, and roles/expectations for mentees. You may want to review this list periodically to ensure that you are fulfilling the responsibilities that you want to fulfill and that your mentee is fulfilling her responsibilities. If you feel that one of you is not fulfilling responsibilities or meeting expectations, try to have a candid conversation about it. That may be all you need to get the relationship back on track.

MENTOR AND MENTEE

Roles, Responsibilities, and Expectations

As a mentor, I expect my mentee to:

- Develop a set of goals
- Provide feedback
- Be willing to accept constructive criticism
- Commit time to the program
- Be comfortable initiating communication
- Follow through
- Be flexible
- Give back
- Help me grow
- Keep high expectations of me
- Set high goals
- Respect my time
- Take risks
- Appreciate opportunity
- Discuss how to communicate
- Be aware of my mentor's work environment
- Have fun

As a mentor, I will:

- Make no judgments
- Provide honest feedback
- Be flexible
- Ask other mentors for advice
- Listen
- Commit time to the program
- Encourage
- Guide
- Respect
- Learn
- Share experiences
- Be patient
- Be creative and imaginative
- Support
- Seek answers
- Make recommendations
- Identify opportunities
- Be available
- Share my network
- Have fun

Adapted from Penn State Commission for Women and HHD Mentoring Program.



MENTOR AND MENTEE

Roles, Responsibilities, and Expectations

As a mentee, I expect my mentor to:

- Be a good listener
- Offer constructive feedback
- Be non-judgmental
- Be patient
- Be trustworthy
- Offer well-considered advice
- Celebrate both our differences and our similarities
- Help me develop my strengths
- Share his/her skills and insights
- Make time for me and be flexible in scheduling
- Introduce me to new experiences
- Be compassionate and passionate
- Introduce me to others who can help me
- Help me with expand my network
- Allow me to fail so I can grow
- Allow me to ask questions
- Be a guide
- Help me to analyze my mistakes
- Help me to develop a plan to grow
- Have fun

As a mentee, I will:

- Be open to new experiences
- Explore possibilities
- Learn from others' experiences
- Gain confidence
- Accept feedback and constructive criticism
- Become more informed
- Enhance my network
- Help my mentor grow
- Respect my mentor's time
- Share my mentor/mentee experiences with others, especially outside the program
- Take responsibility for my individual growth
- Set goals and evaluate them regularly
- Develop greater self-awareness
- Commit time to the program
- Develop leadership skills
- Not be afraid to fail
- Think positively
- Have fun

Adapted from Penn State Commission for Women and HHD Mentoring Program.



MENTORING TIPS

1. Begin with your own experiences

- Think about what you wish you had known when you were college.
- Share your career path.
- Reflect on the people who mentored you and what you gained from that experience.

2. Share what you know now

- Share your failures and triumphs.
- Model leadership skills.
- Provide insight and wisdom.
- Share work ethics and values.

3. Provide perspective

- Help your mentee to recognize both her strengths and opportunities for growth.
- Be candid with your feedback; your perspective could be one that your mentee has never experienced.

4. Enjoy the benefits of being a mentor

- Take advantage of the two-way exchange of advice and new perspective.
- Gain a sense of fulfillment for passing your wisdom on to others.

5. Know the limits to mentoring

- Don't feel you have to know all the answers.
- Expect some failure, but don't let this get in the way. Keep trying and things should get on the right track.
- Not every mentor/mentee relationship is going to be a success but that does not mean the next one won't work out.



Women's Leadership Initiative

College of Health and Human Development
325 Health and Human Development Building
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA 16802-6501
814-863-0546
www.hhd.psu.edu/wli



Sources used in developing this guide:

A How-to Guide for Mentors and Students. (2004). FastStart, 1-7.

Creating Successful Mentoring Programs: A Catalyst Guide. (2002). Catalyst, 17-23.

It's What You Know. (2000). AMS, 3-14.