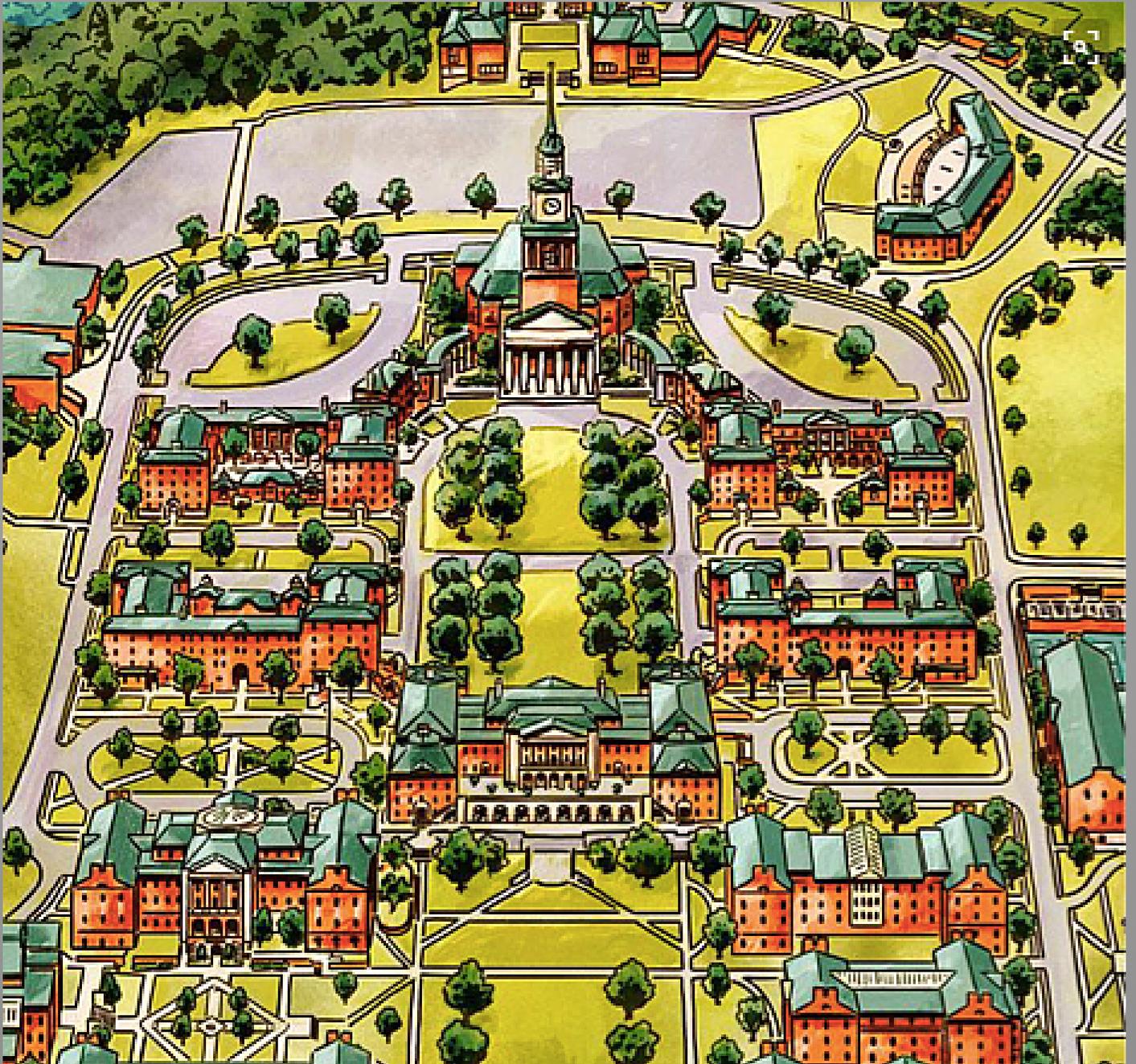


A FACULTY GUIDE TO

MENTORING STUDENT PROJECTS

@ WAKE FOREST



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INTRODUCTION

College student development happens both inside and outside of the classroom. Within the classroom, students learn subject matter content, as well as skills related to analytical reasoning, critical thinking, oral and written communication, creativity, the scientific method, ethical decision-making, navigating cultural differences, and many more. Effective faculty mentoring helps to identify linkages between curricular and co-curricular/extra-curricular experiences, create opportunities for application in practice, and deepen student learning and development.

This guide has been created as a support for faculty who intentionally engage as formal mentors of student projects. “Projects,” in this guide, refers to student research or other scholarly activities, internships, student organizations, or work-study experiences.



WHY DOES MENTORING MATTER?

Mentoring, when done well, provides tangible and positive outcomes for students. These outcomes include increased likelihood of persistence to degree, higher educational aspirations, greater academic achievement, and more personal development. A recent Gallup study (link provided on the Resources page at the end of this guide) demonstrated that students who had the following three experiences within college were **more than twice as likely** to be engaged in work and thriving in overall well-being post-college:

- Felt that they had professors who made them excited about learning;
- Felt that professors cared about them as people; and,
- Felt that they had mentors who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams.



At the same time, a recent AACU study (link provided on the Resources page at the end of this guide) found profound differences between student perceptions and those of employers across key learning outcomes, including working with others in teams, ethical judgment and decision-making, written communication, critical/analytical thinking, and analyzing/solving complex problems, among others; in other words, all of those things that we pride ourselves on teaching in institutions of higher education.

Mentored student projects provide a unique opportunity to address these perceived gaps through hands-on experience while simultaneously providing the long-term benefits identified above.





MENTORING FOR STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

The transition from high school to college to after-college is also a transition from adolescence to adulthood. Developmental psychologist Jeffrey Arnett (2000) calls this period of transition emerging adulthood, **“a time in life when many different directions remain possible, when little about the future has been decided for certain, when the scope of independent exploration of life’s possibilities is greater for most people than it will be at any other period of the life course.”**

When thinking about how to mentor these emerging adults, it is useful to frame that work within principles of human development, as defined by Newton and Ender (2010):



1. Development occurs as a result of **pressure from three sources**: outside or situational circumstance, biological changes, and personal values and aspirations. It's important to remember that each student may grapple with a different set of issues and behave on a different level of readiness to handle these pressures than his peers.

2. Students mature by making **gradual changes over time** and by **facing and overcoming challenges**, including identity formation, selecting a career path, forming relationships, finding meaning and purpose, choosing values, and managing conflict. For some students this will be a process of dealing with small changes over time, eventually allowing them to deal with the world around them more easily. For others, the process of adjustment will be more difficult.

3. **Maturation is a cumulative process**; one must master simple tasks before he can master the more complicated ones. By helping students learn how to solve small problems, you are teaching them the skills that they will need to solve the larger ones down the road.

4. **Individuals develop at different rates** and each person has a unique way of adapting to personal challenges. Don't assume that someone else has attained the same capability, experience, and confidence in an area that you may have had at the same point in life.

5. In each phase of maturation, **an individual must acquire certain skills, knowledge or behaviors** that correspond with that phase in order to move on to the next one. In other words, in the transition from adolescence to adulthood, students cannot skip over the emerging adulthood phase.

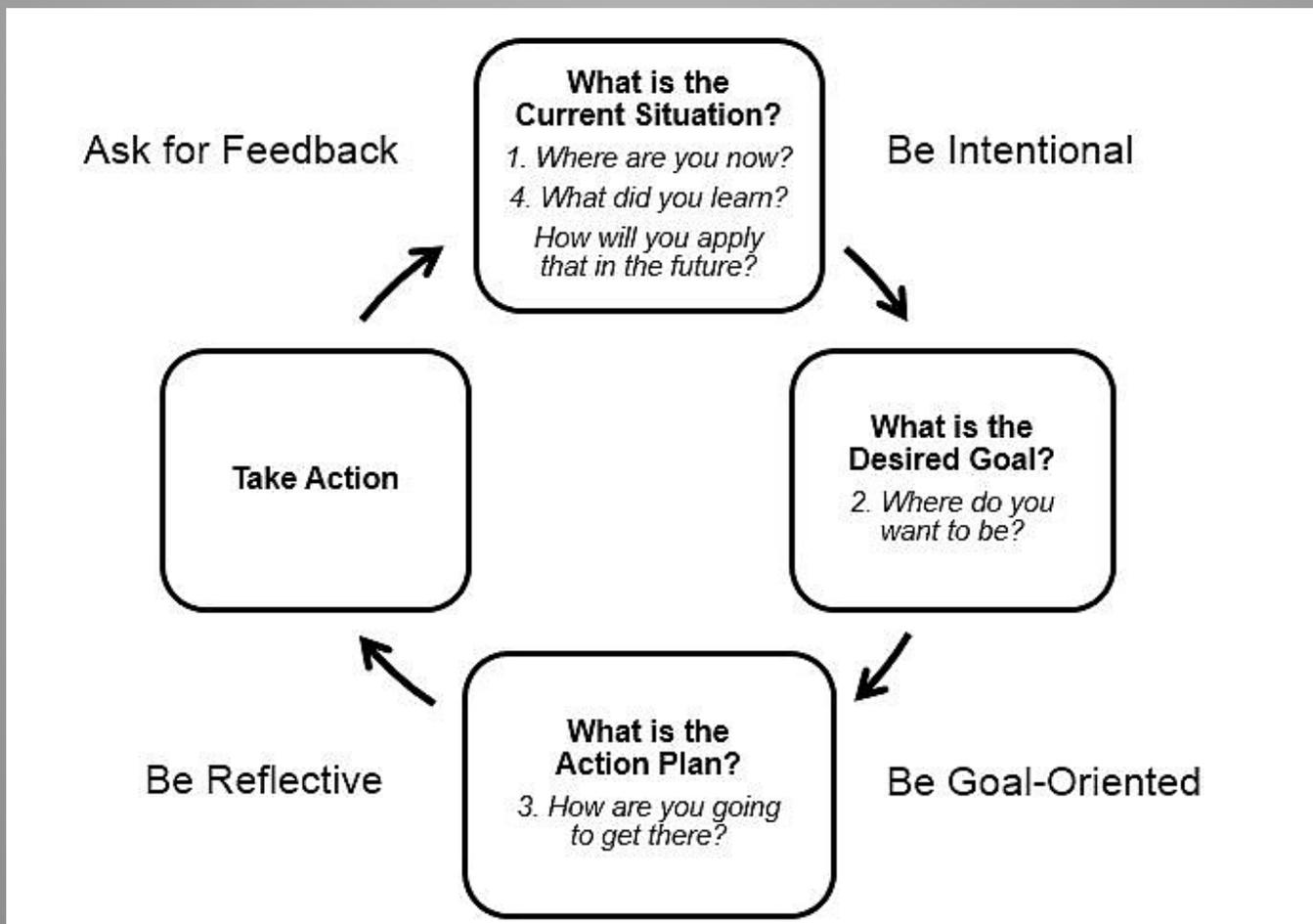


EFFECTIVE MENTORING CONVERSATIONS

At Wake Forest, we define mentoring as: *A purposeful and personal relationship in which a more experienced person (mentor) provides guidance, feedback, and wisdom to facilitate the growth and development of a less experienced person (mentee).*

Or, to put it another way: Mentoring is a developmental **relationship** based on **intentional** conversations.

An effective mentoring conversation is based on the principles of experiential learning, which is learning through reflection on doing. David A. Kolb, a professor of organizational behavior at Case Western Reserve University, is credited with developing the four-phase experiential learning cycle. The **mentoring conversation model** is built upon this cycle:



MENTORING STUDENT PROJECTS

In this section, we describe how to apply the mentoring conversation model in your mentoring relationships with students.

Define Expectations

The mentoring conversation model happens on a macro scale over the course of the relationship. At the beginning of the relationship, talk to the student about the decision-making process that led him to this project by asking thought-provoking questions to encourage reflection:

- *Why have you chosen to pursue this project?*
- *How does this project fit with your academic or career goals?*
- *What do you hope to accomplish or learn?*
- *What do you anticipate that could be challenging?*
- *What would success look like to you?*
- *What do you expect from me? What can I expect from you?*

This is a good time to talk about relationship expectations as well. **Effective mentoring relationships are clearly structured with defined expectations.** By clarifying these expectations at the beginning of the relationship, there is less chance for misunderstandings down the road. For example, determine how often you will meet, who will set up the meetings, and what will you work on together.

You may find the Relationship Expectations Worksheet (located on the Resources page at the end of this guide) helpful to facilitate this conversation. It's important to note that effective mentoring conversations are two-way conversations; both parties must be willing to share and to disclose alike to build trust in the relationship.

Set Goals

Once you have clarified expectations, work with your student mentee to help him write 2-3 concrete goals for the project. These are the items you will work on together during the mentoring relationship and will form the basis of your mentoring conversations. For example, a student working on a research project may have as a goal, “Create a draft article to submit for publication by the end of the semester.” Depending on the length of your mentoring relationship, the student should have 2-3 goals that are a mixture of short, medium, and long-range targets. You may find the Goal-Setting Worksheet (located on the Resources page at the end of this guide) helpful for this process.

Effective mentoring is mentee-focused. Effective mentoring relationships are always built around the mentee’s goals. Effective mentors are facilitators of their mentees’ growth and development, pushing the mentee to take risks and to take intentional action towards defined goals. Effective mentors ask the question, “Where is it that you want to go, and how can I help you to get there?”

Another resource that is helpful in defining expectations and goals is a Mentoring Relationship Agreement (located on the Resources page at the end of this guide). This is a tool to ensure that both mentor and mentee understand their agreements and sets some check-in dates for the relationship. It formalizes both the relationship and the work.

Provide Feedback

During the relationship, the mentor’s role is to push the mentee to take action towards achieving his stated goals. Effective mentors ask questions and provide feedback based on the wisdom of their personal experiences to support their mentees’ growth and development. During this time, the mentoring conversation model also works on a micro scale within each mentoring conversation:

- *What has happened since we last met (where are you now)? What did you learn? What will you do with this new knowledge?*
- *What would you like to accomplish before we meet next (where do you want to be)?*
- *What steps do you plan to take to accomplish those goals (how are you going to get there)? What resources will you need? What barriers or challenges can you anticipate?*

Reflect on Lessons Learned

At the end of the project, the mentor should push the student to reflect on greater lessons learned and application for the future:

- *Were you successful in meeting your goals? Why or why not?*
- *What challenges did you encounter? How did you overcome these?*
- *What helped you to be successful? How can you use those same strategies again in the future?*
- *What did you learn about leadership/research/writing/public speaking/working in teams?*
- *If you were to do this project again in the future, what would you do differently?*
- *How will you describe this project and what you learned/accomplished to a future employer/graduate school?*



CONCLUSION

Finally, in addition to the goals that your student sets for his project, it's important to remember that **effective mentoring creates learning opportunities for both partners**. Mentoring relationships provide unique opportunities for students to learn how to build effective personal and professional relationships, set goals for personal growth and learning, ask for and receive feedback, and reflect on experiences and lessons learned for future application. Mentors, at the same time, have the opportunity to learn how to build and support effective relationships, provide objective feedback and guidance based on personal experience, facilitate reflective thinking, and take ownership for one's own personal growth and learning.

We have created a chart that further describes these **mentoring learning outcomes**, as well as self-evaluations for both mentor and mentee to evaluate growth (located on the Resources page at the end of this guide), which you may find useful during your mentoring relationship.



RESOURCES

Arnett, J.J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55(5), 469-480; p. 469.

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Gallup - Purdue University Index Inaugural National Report (2015), <http://products.gallup.com/168857/gallup-purdue-index-inaugural-national-report.aspx>

Goal-Setting Worksheet, Mentoring Resource Center, Wake Forest University, <http://mentoring.opcd.wfu.edu/files/2015/01/Mentoring-Goals-Worksheet.docx>

Mentee Self-Evaluation, Mentoring Resource Center, Wake Forest University, https://docs.google.com/a/wfu.edu/forms/d/1YINZVafsmYr4GRs3_wj0SvC6Ta_ITcOy2cexaNreE-k/viewform

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Relationship Expectations Worksheet, Mentoring Resource Center, Wake Forest University, <http://mentoring.opcd.wfu.edu/files/2015/01/Defining-Relationship-Expectations-Worksheet.docx>





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