

Defining Mentoring Goals

Once you have come to an agreement on roles and expectations, it is time for a mentee to set some goals and to develop an action plan for achieving them. Goals should be both a stretch, something inspiring to work towards that may require new skills or the use of different “intellectual muscles,” but also focused enough that the mentee can achieve them.

Goals may be personal (for example: developing personal independence), academic (for example: establishing a relationship with a faculty member in a subject area of interest), or professional (for example: developing leadership experience) in nature. Goals may also change over time. For some, setting goals will help to set the tone for the relationship. For others, time spent relationship-building will help to facilitate the process of setting goals.

When writing goals, use the SMART goal model. Goal statements should be:

Specific – the goal statement should be concrete and action-oriented. What, specifically, is the mentee trying to accomplish? Ask: what do you mean by that? Are there ways to restate the goal to remove any misunderstanding? Does the goal start with an action verb (for example: develop, improve, create)?

Measurable – how will the mentee know when she has achieved the goal? How will she track and measure progress? How does she define success?

Achievable – the goal should require work, but be attainable. Is the goal too big (for example, “travel to outer space” is probably too big of a goal for a first-year student) or too limited (for example, “make dean’s list” probably does not require much work for a straight-A student)?

Realistic – does the mentee have the ability and commitment to reach the goal? What additional resources, of time, money, or capability, will be needed for her to reach the goal? Does the goal set her up for failure from the outset?

Timely – there should be a specific time-frame for achieving the goal which will keep your mentee accountable.

Let’s look at an example: *Develop a personal support network of faculty, staff, and peers by the end of my first year at Wake Forest.* Now a mentee can write out an action plan to achieve that goal, including action steps. A sample action plan is included below.

Mentoring Action Plan

Goal: *Develop a personal support network of faculty, staff, and peers by the end of my first year at Wake Forest*

Action Steps

1. Identify and meet with 2-3 faculty members outside of classes to discuss and receive feedback on my academic and personal interests
2. Identify and meet with 2-3 staff members to discuss extracurricular and personal interests and challenges
3. Identify and join at least 1 social club or organization

Mentoring Action Plan Worksheet

Goal 1:

Action Steps:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Goal 2:

Action Steps:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Goal 3:

Action Steps:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Goal 4:

Action Steps:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.