

STUDENT GUIDE

TO

developing

EFFECTIVE

MENTORING

RELATIONSHIPS



**MENTORING
RESOURCE CENTER**

WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY

WHY ARE MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS IMPORTANT?

An effective mentor is someone who has more experience than you and who will push and challenge you by asking thoughtful questions and providing objective feedback.



Mentors help you to learn and grow as you pursue personal, academic, and professional goals. Mentors allow you to take risks in a safe space. Mentors facilitate connections to resources, including people and opportunities, and advocate for your future. Additionally, by meeting with and learning from a mentor you will gain valuable skills that will help you to build effective personal and professional relationships.



WHAT WILL WE TALK ABOUT? (KEY QUESTIONS)

Effective mentors ask thought-provoking questions and give objective feedback. Below are key questions you should routinely reflect upon:

- **What have I learned about myself in the past six months?**
- **How can I use that knowledge in the future?**
- **How do I want to be different (six months from now, after this experience)?**
- **What are my goals (for the next six months, for this project, for this experience)?**

You also should ask your mentor thoughtful questions. Below you will find some good conversation starters:

- **What is the greatest challenge or hurdle you have had to overcome and what did you do?**
- **What is the greatest success you have accomplished?**
- **What were the differences between the best and worst decisions you have made?**



WHAT WILL WE TALK ABOUT? (ASKING FOR FEEDBACK)

Receiving objective feedback is a great learning opportunity for you. Practice asking for feedback related to specific projects or experiences by asking two key questions:

- 1 What did I do well?
- 2 What could I have done better?

It's also important to ask for regular feedback so that you can practice how to respond effectively. Try one of the following tips:

- **Hold your reaction until you meet with your mentor again.** You can say something like, "Thanks for the feedback. I need some time to think on it." By removing yourself from the situation you can more objectively assess the message without focusing on the delivery or how it felt.
- **Practice your active listening skills.** Summarize in your own words what you heard before you respond with a statement like, "I want to be clear that I heard you correctly. What I heard you say was...."
- **Take some time to process what was said, write down some thoughtful reactions, and bring those to the next meeting.** Then practice giving thoughtful and candid feedback to your mentor.



HOW DO I FIND A MENTOR?

At Wake Forest you have the opportunity to join a formal mentoring program. You can find a list of formal mentoring programs here:

mentoring.opcd.wfu.edu/mentoring-programs/

Additionally, chances are that you already know someone who currently is, or has the potential to be, an informal mentor. Potential informal mentors include professors, staff members, other students, and adult fans such as teachers and coaches from home. Think about a person you know who has provided objective feedback and guidance, who has asked insightful questions, and who has pushed you to focus on your goals. What type of advice or guidance would you like to receive from this person? Develop a list of questions you can ask and then invite him (her) to join you for coffee or lunch to discuss your interests and goals.