

MENTORING SUGGESTIONS

There are no sure-fire methods for successful mentoring, but generally it is useful for mentors to meet with their mentees regularly to:

1. **Be supportive.** Engage in ongoing conversation: make sure the student knows that somebody cares and is willing to take the time to talk about a variety of topics. Both professional and (should the case arise) personal topics may be discussed, but avoid asking direct personal questions. Be available, listen patiently, try to provide emotional and intellectual support. Share your own experiences as an academic, but encourage the student's self-sufficiency: the goal is not to clone yourself but to encourage confidence and independent thinking in the student by being honest.
2. **Demystify graduate school.** Find out about the student's previous academic experience and his or her goals in attending graduate school. Discuss various aspects of the academic program, especially those that are implicit or unwritten. The academic advisor should explain the rules and procedures governing the degree, but the mentor should give the student insight into 'how things work' in the department - not so much what has to be done as how to do it successfully. Introduce the student to more advanced students or to peers as a way of integrating the student into the department. Suggest departmental activities for the student to participate in.
3. **Provide honest and constructive feedback** about the student's progress in the graduate program and information about scholarly and financial resources.
4. **Provide professional encouragement and support:** help the student become part of the profession by discussing the student's research and coursework, sharing information, books, and journal articles, and encouraging participation in publication and conferences (as appropriate). Share your knowledge about the profession. If you work or collaborate with the student, discuss your expectations: how polished you expect work submitted to be, how (and how quickly) you will provide feedback, how intellectual property is shared and co-authorship is credited. Help the student form professional networks.