

Florida Tech Counseling and Psychological Services

MENTORING TRAINING

Goals for Mentoring

- Provide a positive adult role model
- Provide a support system beyond classroom contacts
- Assisting in finding solutions to problems
- Improving behaviors
- Reinforce healthy behaviors (i.e. reducing alcohol and drug use, unsafe sex)
- Creating a willingness to trust and accept responsibility
- Increasing attendance
- Improving academics
- Improving retention
- Ease adjustment of being away from home
- Refer student to appropriate support services when indicated

Mentoring a Student Will Help To

- Ensure a smooth transition to the college environment
- Provide positive and relevant role models
- Clarify career and educational goals
- Provide a consistent and reliable source of support and inspiration
- Provide a structured experience to discuss and reflect on the college experience (i.e., time management, study habits, class attendance, campus involvement, responsible decision-making, accessing campus support services, getting to know your faculty, student accountability)
- Aid international students in adjusting to a new culture

The role of the Mentor is one of teacher, guide, and support for the student in the new and challenging educational environment.

The Mentor should:

- Be a resource person
- Be a positive role model
- Be an advocate for the student
- Be a facilitator for the FIT collegiate experience
- Get involved in campus life
- Be a good listener
- Be available and approachable
- Respect and accept the goals and interests of the student

Stages of Relationship

Don't expect the relationship to build too quickly. It may feel awkward and uncomfortable at first.

Many students may be initially shy: you may have to repeatedly reach out to them.

- Getting to know each other generally takes 1 month
- Trust development may take 2-3 months
- Problem solving may take 2-3 months
- Acceptance and emotional bonding may take 6 months to one year

Adjustment Issues for New College Students

- September: Homesickness and Adjusting to College
 - The first few weeks can be very lonely, with concerns about forming friendships. Peers may appear confident and socially successful, making it difficult to understand that others feel the same way.
 - Meaningful relationships should not be expected to develop overnight. Encourage the student to be himself/herself and to allow time to develop intimacy in relationships.
 - Some students may overindulge in new social opportunities and neglect class responsibilities.
 - Excessive alcohol use during the first few weeks may have a detrimental and irreversible effect on academics.
- October: Possible disappointment in college
 - Grades not as high as expected
 - Lack of social network
 - Heavy mid-term schedule
- November: Anxiety over grades
- December: Anxiety, stress over final exams, depression for those who cannot go home or who have family issues, financial strain
- January: Post-Christmas depression and homesickness
- Spring: Anxiety over low grades and possible dismissal from college

Recognizing Signs of Personal Adjustment Issues:

- Skipping classes frequently
- Isolating from social support (family, friends, teachers, etc)
- Decline in personal hygiene
- Significant increase or decrease in sleep
- Rapid weight gain or loss
- Change in personality
- Verbalizing feelings of hopelessness
- Premature consideration of withdrawal from school

Recognizing Signs of Academic Difficulties

- Skipping classes
- Poor time management skills
- Ambivalence toward academic work or changing of major
- Excessive computer usage for non-class activities
- Ambivalence toward major
- Complaints of difficulty concentrating
- Negative attitude toward educators
- Test anxiety
- Lack of motivation toward schoolwork

Developmental Issues that May Arise:

- First true experience of independence
 - Students allowed to come and go as they please
 - No one monitoring their studying
- Increased academic demands
 - Increased amount of homework and reading
 - Increased study time required outside of class
 - Student is responsible for missed work/classes (borrow classmates' lecture notes)
 - Knowing to ask for help when it is needed
- Experimentation with drugs and alcohol
- Financial pressures increase
- Dating/social pressures
- Sexual experimentation
- Potential roommate difficulties
 - Learning to negotiate personal property, space, sleep and studying times
 - Communicating one's needs calmly
 - Listening to and respecting
 - Compromising

Cultural Issues

- Loneliness, missing family, friends, and cultural traditions
- Feelings of isolation
- Homesickness, longing for the familiar (e.g. food, hobbies)
- Nervousness and worry, feeling confused and overwhelmed by surroundings
- Increased fear of failure
- Different beliefs than peers and teachers
- Feeling discriminated against

TIPS TO BECOMING AN EFFECTIVE MENTOR

Maintaining appropriate boundaries

- Avoid assuming the parent role
- Respect student's beliefs and value system
- Keep student's information confidential unless he/she confides planning to hurt self or others
- If that occurs, refer to CAPS. Do not try to handle this on your own
- Allow relationship to develop at a natural pace; don't expect too much too soon
- Self-disclosure
 - Do not disclose too much personal information right away (e.g. history of heavy drinking, etc.)
 - If you decide to disclose, make sure you are disclosing for the benefit of the student and not for yourself.
 - Do not use the mentoring time to discuss difficulties that you are experiencing.

Communication Skills

Do's:

- Give occasional acknowledgements
- Listen with your full attention
 - Maintain eye contact
 - Use appropriate facial expressions and body gestures
- Remain non-judgmental
 - Respond to student with neither approval or disapproval
 - Refrain from criticizing
- Be accepting of student's feelings
- Give occasional acknowledgements
 - Reflect and summarize what is being said
 - Acknowledge feelings. "You sound upset."
- Ask questions to guide thinking
- Offer encouragement
- Help identify strengths and weaknesses
- Explore alternatives
 - Work with student to identify alternatives or courses of action that may be used to solve problems.

Don'ts:

- Don't make decisions for your mentees. Help them make their own.
- Don't attempt to handle situations or make referrals for which you are not qualified.

- Don't talk about "how it was in my day."
- Play therapist
- Don't be critical of other peers, faculty or staff.
- Don't betray confidential information that the student shares with you.
- Don't give up.
- Don't be overly aggressive.

Possible Mentoring Activities

- E-mails
- Lunch at the cafeteria
- Sporting events on campus (basketball, volleyball, softball, baseball, soccer, etc)
- If student is an athlete, attend his/her games
- Shared hobbies (e.g. golf, tennis, movies, etc)
- Shopping (e.g., monthly trips to WalMart)
- Dinner at Mentor's house
- Dinner over holidays if student is in town
- Assistance if hurricane hits

Important Academic Deadlines and Policies:

- September 8: First day to discuss roommate switch with Doug Nolder (present problem to RA before consulting Doug)
- Early to mid-October: Mid-term exams
- October 13-19: Early Warning System
- October 20: Last day to withdraw from a course with the final grade of W
- December 8-13: Final Exams
- Forgiveness Policy: Student may repeat undergraduate course up to five times with only the last grade received in the course used in the cumulative GPA.

Resources and Referral Services:

- <http://www.nnnwerel.org/mentoring/listserve.html>
- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): Jim Oelschlager or Jessica Blitchington, ext. 8050
- CAPS' website (www.fit.edu/caps) has information on difficulties student may be experiencing and treatment options
- Academic Support (Rodney Bowers, 7111)
- Health Center (Deb Ghiotto, 8078)
- Doug Nolder, Dean of Students, 8080 or Patti Kirk, Director of Residence Life, 8160
- Michelle Hibbard, 7371, Beth Sacksteder Mann, 8130, Assistant Directors, Student Activities
- Career Services (Dona Gaynor, 8102)
- International Student and Scholar Services (Jan McCutcheon, 8053)

- Clemente Center Intramurals (Pete Mazzone, 7209)
- Financial Aid (Jay Lally, 8070)
- Academic Advisors