

# A Mentoring Guide for Mentors

Advice to help you become a successful mentor

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# What do we believe about Mentoring in a Professional Context?

- It is a two-way **relationship** built on trust.
- It is a **skillful sharing of views**; both parties learn from experience.
- It provides opportunities for **self-reflection**.
- It provides **a safe space** for mentees to try new ideas.
- It allows for the mentor and mentee to **grow professionally**.
- It allows for both mentor and mentee **to contribute** to the discussion of what works and what doesn't.



# Our Mentorship Philosophy

**What is our approach to mentoring?** Our mentorship model follows Wenger's (1998) community of practice approach:

- There is a connection between knowledge and activity.
- Mentees learn by actively participating in professional growth.
- The notion of relationship is central, as is the idea that the parties are within a shared enterprise with shared resources.
- The idea of learning over time is important when mentoring law students. Law school produces transformation over time.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press



# Commonality and Shared Interests, Concerns or Passion

You may or may not yet know some or all the things you have in common with your mentee. You do know that you are both part of the Stetson Law community.

In a community of practice, learning takes place over time, and bonds as well as benefits both mentor and mentee.



# Commonalities You May Discover

- Maybe you were first in your family to go to law school - or conversely, from a family with many lawyers.
- Perhaps you are both explorers - when you began law school you didn't know which area of law would inspire you or draw your interest.
- Maybe you always knew you wanted to go to law school.
- Do you have similar hobbies and interests?
- Are you from the same hometown or home state?
- Do you have similar study and work habits, learning styles, social preferences?
- Do you share values and sense of fairness?
- Do you both do volunteer work of any kind?



# You are not the only Mentor for whom this is a Whole New World:

**Many of us are just getting started, exactly like you.**

This material may help, but if you want to chat, get some ideas, or check a concern, please call or email us.

Our contact information is on the last page.



# Getting Started

- 1:** Make a plan: write down your thoughts about what the first days of law school felt like to you, think about what you may have to offer, and establish your goals.
- 2:** Set some structure for yourself and your mentee. How accessible are you, how many times each semester do you have time to get together by phone, screen, or in person, and think about how you want to introduce that subject.
- 3:** Develop some questions for your first conversation.



# Getting Started

**4:** If you know you have some bad habits, think about how you are going to invite your best self to show up for your sessions, and how you will self-assess your decisions.

**5:** How are you going to introduce yourself and your reason for volunteering for this role?

**6:** Make notes to remind yourself of your plan, your goals, and any specific points you want to make.



# What Habits and Practices turn good Mentors into great Mentors?

## Great mentors:

- Never seek immediate action or response from the mentee.
- Are not prescriptive: suggest ideas, concepts, and plans to consider.
- Are available and accessible.
- Provide both emotional and practical support.
- Exemplify the professionalism we value in the legal field.
- Assist mentees in conceptualizing and developing a professional identity.



# What Habits and Practices turn good Mentors into great Mentors?

- Help mentees integrate theory and practice.
- Are active listeners and understand the mentee's way of looking at the world-- but don't necessarily share their views.
- Articulate effective strategies and alternatives.
- Promote reflection through engaging questions.
- Practice patience and compassion, and also offer constructive feedback.
- Are skilled listeners and genuinely care about their role as mentors.
- Are inspiring, encouraging, and trustworthy.



# Fundamental Don'ts

- Stories are often excellent teaching tools and examples but keep them short and to the point; don't overdo the use of your own experience as an example.
- Some areas of the law have a reputation for being exceptionally competitive, while mentoring is a collaborative enterprise. Try to avoid competition with your mentee.
- Don't forget your last conversation, names of important players in your mentee's life, and the personal details that characterize your relationship. Take notes so that you can pick up the conversation or thread where you left off, if your mentee has an update. It's important to remember your last conversation so that you can ask specific questions.
- Don't forget to make connections on behalf of your mentee; if you don't have an answer or a clue, call on a classmate or friend for help.



# Joann's 10 Tips for Maximizing your Mentor/Mentee relationship

- Reflect on your mentoring experiences and what can you bring to this relationship.
- Establish roles and expectations.
- Help your mentee develop useful goals and examine these goals periodically.
- Ask thought-provoking questions.
- Listen actively.
- Assist your mentee in identifying and accessing other resources.
- Share your experiences (mistakes and successes) and provide examples.
- Encourage your mentee.
- Introduce your mentee to inspiring professionals in the legal field.
- Be a good example.

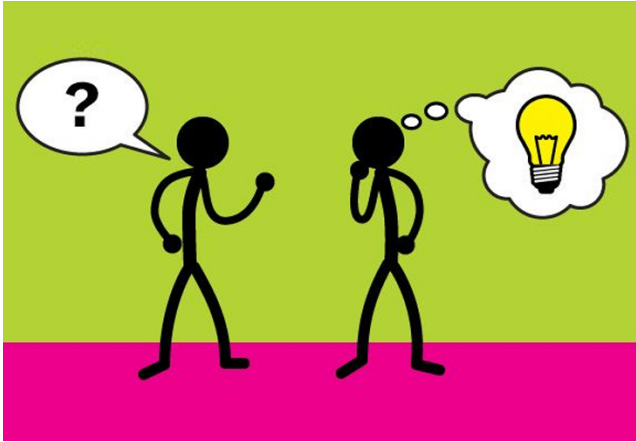


# Best Practices

- **At the beginning** of your mentoring relationship, establish trust, decide the frequency of contact, confidentiality, and the focus of this mentorship.
- Take notes and remind your mentee to **take notes** during the meeting and recap at the end of the meeting.
- Wait until you meet to debrief to give **feedback**.
- Provide **constructive feedback**; objectively describe what you may have observed.
- **Explore alternatives** rather than offer solutions.
- Focus on **change over time** as opposed to radical change
- Pay attention to **what your mentee** is saying during your meeting.
- Establish a **focus for each meeting**.
- Remember **what we value**: professionalism, ethics, civility, mutual respect, integrity.

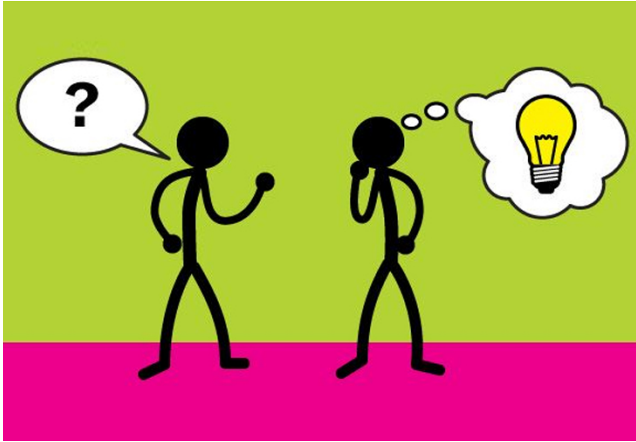


# Ask Engaging Questions



- Let me see if I understand ...
- To what extent ...?
- I'm curious to know more about ...
- I'm interested in ...
- Tell me how that idea is like (or different from) ...
- So, are you suggesting ...?
- What's another way you might ...?

# Ask Engaging Questions



- What criteria do you use ...?
- What would it look like if ...?
- When have you done it like this before ...?
- What might you see happening if ...?
- How was ... different from ...?
- How do you determine ...?

# Conducting Feedback Sessions



We are all different and each of us has a different learning curve and style when working with someone new. If you need or want to give your mentee important and difficult feedback, we have resources, information about best practices, and ideas to share with you before you begin.



# We Asked Law School Graduates what they want from their Mentors:



## They told us that law students want mentors to:

- Be clear about their expectations.
- Give them advice and be truthful.
- Offer constructive criticism.
- Make them feel welcome and accepted.
- Respect their identities and learning styles.
- Want them to succeed.
- Enjoy their mentoring role.
- Be calm and understanding.
- Allow for mistakes and not judge.
- Provide perspective.



# Reflecting on Your Experience



- As a mentor, it is important that you reflect on your experience. This helps you learn about your own mentoring practice.
- From time to time write a one- to two-page reflection on your experience as a mentor.
- Ask your mentee for feedback on your helpfulness and fulfillment of expectations.
- Be open to improving.
- Believe in yourself and your ability to nurture talent - your own and your mentee's.



# Thank You!



- If you have questions, or need resources or help, call the Office of Career and Professional Development at **727-562-7815** or write us at **[career@law.stetson.edu](mailto:career@law.stetson.edu)**
- We included contact information for Cathy Martin and Joann Burnett on the front cover. You are welcome to phone or email us with any questions.

