
THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF MENTORING

1. Don't be afraid to be a mentor. Many mentors underestimate the amount of knowledge that they have about the academic system or their organization, the contacts they have, and the avenues they can use to help someone else. A faculty member does not have to be at the absolute top of his or her profession or discipline to be a mentor. Teaching assistants can mentor other graduate students, graduate students can mentor undergraduates, and undergraduate majors can help those beginning the major.
2. Remember you don't have to demonstrate every possible faculty role to be an effective mentor, but let your new faculty colleagues know where you are willing to help and what kind of information or support you can give that you believe will be particularly helpful.
3. Be clear about whether you are willing to advise on personal issues, such as suggestions about how to balance family and career responsibilities.
4. Clarify expectations about how much time and guidance you are prepared to offer. Let new faculty know if they are asking for too much or too little of your time.
5. Be sure to give criticism, as well as praise, when warranted, but present it with specific suggestions for improvement. Do it in a private and non-threatening context. Giving criticism in the form of a question can be helpful, as in "What other strategy might you have used to increase student participation?"
6. Where appropriate, "talk up" your new faculty accomplishments to others in your department and institution, as well as at conferences and other meetings.
7. Include new faculty in informal activities whenever possible – lunch, discussions following meetings or lectures, dinners during academic conferences.
8. Teach new faculty how to seek other career help whenever possible, such as funds to attend workshops or release time for special projects.
9. Work within your institution to develop formal and informal mentoring programs and encourage social networks.
10. Be willing to provide support for people different from yourself.