

BUILDING THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP: SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR MENTORS

Every mentoring relationship is unique. In fact, there is so much to learn that there are entire books devoted to how to build a mentoring relationship. Following are a few guidelines for you to consider:

Set Goals with Your Mentee

- ✓ Setting goals with your mentee at the **beginning of the relationship** is critical because it gives direction to the relationship and informs you about how to help the mentee. See Appendix B and C in the *Mentoring Guide* for goal setting help.
- ✓ If your mentee doesn't know his/her goals, this can be your **first mentoring moment**. You can ask questions such as "What made you sign up for the mentoring program?" or "What about my profile stood out to you?" or "What are your specific concerns and questions right now?" or simply "How can I help you?"
- ✓ Remember, goal setting can be a **process**, so make a point to check in and ask the mentee if his/her priorities are changing or evolving.

Set Expectations with Your Mentee

- ✓ **Stick** to the decision you made with your mentee on how and when you will communicate with each other. Renegotiate as needed.
- ✓ If the mentee is **unresponsive** at any point in the relationship, initiate contact. Some students will be overwhelmed by how much they are doing and forget to contact you.
- ✓ If your mentee doesn't respond to you after multiple attempts, please **contact** the ACDA Membership Development staff at mentoring@acda.org.

Get to Know Your Mentee

- ✓ Ask **thoughtful** questions about the mentee's interests, experiences, and background.
- ✓ **Follow up** on any important steps the mentee has taken, such as a job interview or a leadership experience, and ask what she/he learned.
- ✓ Be an **active listener** by paraphrasing back what the mentee says and responding to it, avoiding interrupting, and showing interest in your voice and posture.

Offer Options Versus Solutions

- ✓ **Avoid** giving quick solutions. Ask the mentee what he/she is thinking and help him/her process his/her own ideas.
- ✓ Make **suggestions** of things the student might try, for example, "Have you looked into . . ." or "Something I found helpful when I started to conduct . . ." versus "You should . . ." or "You need to . . ."
- ✓ Remember, oftentimes people will not do what we say, so **don't get discouraged** if your mentee does not heed your advice.

Adapted with permission from the Stanford Alumni Mentoring Program, Career Development Center, Stanford University.

Share Your Story

- ✓ Telling your mentee **about yourself** and your experiences builds trust and rapport.
- ✓ Think about how you have learned from your **mistakes** and how your mentee can learn from them.
- ✓ Share the **lessons you learned** during your student and early years and beyond with your mentee.

Be a Coach!

- ✓ Encourage your mentee to **take risks**. They may need a little push, but it will help them in the long run.
- ✓ Remember, students have much to learn from a **professional like you** – everything from how to dress to being on time.
- ✓ Don't hesitate to **give your mentee feedback** if he/she is not acting in a professional manner – it could make a huge difference for his/her first interview, job, and other life experiences.

Coordinating Schedules

- ✓ It may be difficult to find the time to talk or meet with your mentee, so schedule your next conversation at the end of each meeting.
- ✓ Keep the relationship a priority and ask your mentee to do the same.

How to Relate

- ✓ Ask about the mentee's **choral or conducting experience**, as you have that in common.
- ✓ Share what you might have **done differently** if you were a student again.
- ✓ **Refer** to the "Suggested Mentoring Activities" in the *Mentoring Guide* for some ideas of what to do together or talk about.