

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 Apprentice

- ✓ Setting goals with your apprentice at the **beginning of the relationship** is critical because it gives direction to the relationship and informs you about how to help the apprentice. See Appendix B and C in the *Mentoring Guide* for goal setting help.
- ✓ If your apprentice doesn't know their 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 apprentice if their priorities are changing or evolving.

Set Expectations with Your Apprentice

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

Get to Know Your Apprentice

- ✓ Ask **thoughtful** questions about the apprentice's interests, experiences, and background.
- ✓ **Follow up** on any important steps the apprentice has taken, such as a job interview or a leadership experience, and ask what they learned.
- ✓ Be an **active listener** by paraphrasing back what the apprentice 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 apprentice what they are thinking and help them process their own ideas.
- ✓ Make **suggestions** of things the apprentice 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 apprentice does not heed your advice.

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



Share Your Story

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

Be a Coach!

- ✓ Encourage your apprentice 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 apprentice feedback** if they are not acting in a professional manner – it could make a huge difference for their first interview, job, and other life experiences.

Coordinating Schedules

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

How to Relate

- ✓ Ask about the apprentice'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.