



Guidelines for the SHPE Mentor

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What is the Purpose of the MentorSHPE Program?

Research has indicated that where students find community, they will persist to the completion of their academic degree programs. Community provides a sense of security and wellbeing, and with the support and advice from people whom we trust, we develop the confidence to tackle new challenges. The MentorSHPE Program is designed to encourage interaction amongst students across different majors, share information about academic and extracurricular programs and events that supplement in-class learning, provide advice and support during the first year of college, and more.

The typical Rensselaer student enjoys working hard and playing hard, and when Rensselaer students collaborate as a team, they're unstoppable! The role of a peer mentor is to help a new student make a smooth transition to Rensselaer and to provide information and guidance to support the mentee in meeting his or her first year academic and personal goals. Mentors and mentees who gather together for monthly activities create a supportive community where students can network and share information and advice from which the entire community benefits.

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PEER MENTORING

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a power-free, two-way mutually beneficial learning situation in which the mentor provides advice, shares knowledge and experiences, and teaches using a low pressure, self-discovery approach.

(Starcevich, Matt, 1999, "Coach, Mentor: Is There a Difference?" www.coachingandmentoring.com)

What do mentors do?

- Coach... by providing examples of how to perform a task
- Facilitate... by creating opportunities for learners to use new skills
- Counsel... by helping the learner to explore the consequences of potential decisions
- Network... by referring the learner to others when the mentor's experience is insufficient

What a mentor is...

Coach
Facilitator
Listener
Friend
Guide

What a mentor isn't...

Savior
Therapist
Servant
Omniscient being

Effective mentoring behaviors

Supportive
Patient
Respectful
Motivational
Empathetic
Resourceful

Tips for Mentors Who Do Too Much

Establish boundaries. Acknowledge your desire for a for a successful partnership but emphasize your limited because you're working to achieve your personal goals.
Generate interest. Ask about how he/she has spent their time since you last spoke and share what you've been doing.
Incorporate routines. Include your mentee in an activity that you would do anyway, like going to the Bookstore, or shopping.

Typical Mistakes that Mentors May Make

- **Saying "call me if you need me."** Don't leave it in the hands of your mentee to take full responsibility for connecting with you. Schedule specific times to speak or meet that work mutually well for both of you and decide together how to spend that time.
- **Promising too much.** While you may be eager to do a good job, offer a realistic amount of time for your schedule and plan reasonable activities. Don't promise friendship until and unless it makes sense as the relationship progresses.
- **Discouraging your mentee's goals.** Don't judge your mentee's goals and visions and squash his or her ideas with discouraging words or body language. Help him or her to explore the positives and negatives of planned goals and stay neutral or positive while they're making their own choices and decisions.
- **Working harder than your mentee.** Don't devote more time, energy and resources to the mentee's development than he or she does for himself/herself. Model good behavior by keeping commitments and working with them to achieve goals that they have established for themselves. Monitor the balance and speak up if necessary.

(Phillips-Jones, Linda, "Mentor Tip of the Month: Mistakes Mentors Make," www.mentoringgroup.com)

HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL MENTOR

1. Prepare for your first meeting/conversation.

- Provide information about yourself (where you live, your interests, why you chose RPI, etc.)
- Prepare questions to learn about your mentee (what are they doing this summer / why did they choose RPI?)
- Remember what it was like starting out at RPI your first year (What questions does your mentee have?)

2. Take the initiative. Stay committed.

- Initiate the first communication with your mentee and initiate subsequent communications.
- Keep appointments with your mentee, unless you have a true emergency. If you schedule a conversation or meeting and an emergency arises, be sure to get in touch with your mentee as soon as possible, explain your circumstances, and reschedule.
- If you forget to keep an appointment with your mentee, don't beat yourself up! Get in touch with your mentee as soon as you discover you've missed the appointment; apologize, explain what happened, and reschedule.
- If your mentee misses an appointment, leave him/her a message that lets them know that you missed them, that you hope everything is alright, and ask them to be in touch to reschedule.

3. Be clear about purpose and boundaries.

- Determine your boundaries and stick to them. Think seriously before loaning money, giving gifts or offering to drive. (Help your mentee find out how to use resources like the CDTA bus!)
- Refer your mentee to other campus resources for assistance with problems beyond your knowledge.
- Communicate how you are willing and able to support your mentee.

4. Create an agenda: know what you want to accomplish when you meet. (See Agenda Plan on page 8.)

- Get to know each other (What does each of you enjoy doing in your leisure time? What are the two of you passionate about? What do you think you might like to do for careers? What was the last good book you read and why?)
- Discuss his/her goals and expectations for the coming year and yours.
- Allow your mentee to ask questions and encourage him or her to express any concerns he/she may have.

5. Listen with empathy and interest and ask questions. Suspend judgment.

6. Plan for the next meeting.

- Know how you want to contact each other. Exchange, emails, cell phone numbers, AIM accounts, dorm room numbers- whatever works best for the two of you.
- Arrange a meeting, cup of coffee, trip to bookstore, study time in Union, trip to WalMart or to Crossgates Mall.
- Determine what would be helpful to your mentee.

7. Focus on what you know.

- Remember that you are a resource.
- Help your mentee to network and to develop other contacts and resources.
- Share knowledge from your experiences.
- Rather than telling your mentee how to handle a situation, offer ideas on what you might do and then ask him or her questions that guide them to a solution that works for them.

8. Maintain and respect privacy, honesty and integrity.

Consider that your mentee's value system may be different from yours! You may have grown up in different environments, have different family backgrounds or culturally acceptable ways of communicating and interacting with family and non-family members. Suspend judgment! Explore and celebrate what makes you different and what makes you the same. Look for common goals, or at least common ground!

Benefits of Mentoring:

- ✓ **Helping others**
- ✓ **Gaining new perspectives**
- ✓ **Growing leadership skills**
- ✓ **Contributing to the Rensselaer community**

TWELVE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

1. **Positive Attitude:** Encourage the student to approach life and goals with enthusiasm and to be accepting of self and others.
2. **Valuing:** Encourage the student to examine beliefs and ideals in an effort to establish personal values and goals.
3. **Open-Mindedness:** Encourage the student to keep an open mind to ideas.
4. **Interrelations:** Impart sharing, caring, and empathy in the interactions between yourself and your mentee.
5. **Creative Problem-Solving:** Encourage the student to use creative problem-solving process.
6. **Effective Communication:** Encourage your mentee to be an attentive listener and an assertive questioner.
7. **Discovery:** Encourage the student to be an independent thinker.
8. **Strengths and Uniqueness:** Encourage the student to recognize individual strengths and uniqueness and to build on them.
9. **Confidence:** Assist the student in developing self-confidence.
10. **Awareness:** Stress that an individual be aware of the environment, be intuitive, be problem sensitive, and be ready to make the most of opportunities
11. **Risk-Taking:** Encourage the student to be a risk-taker and to be an active participant, rather than a spectator.
12. **Flexibility:** Share with a student the importance of being flexible and adaptable in attitudes and action, looking for alternatives, and seeing situations/persons from different perspectives.

Adapted from: Noller (1982) Mentoring: A renaissance of apprenticeship. The Journal of Creative Behavior.

TEN TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE MENTORING

1. Maintain Regular Contact.

Mentors should assume they are the givers in the relationship. Consistent contact models dependability and builds trust. Weekly communication for the first 6 weeks is required. After that, a minimum of twice a month is expected.

2. Always be honest.

Trust and respect are the foundations on which mentorship is built.

3. Avoid being judgmental of a student's life situations.

Acceptance without conditions communicates that your concern comes without strings attached.

4. Avoid excessive gift giving.

Don't do for a student what he/she can do for himself/herself. Your greatest gift is to help a person discover his/her own solutions to the problems.

5. Don't expect to have all of the answers.

Sometimes just listening attentively is all anyone needs.

6. Help your student access resources and expand support networks. Discuss the importance of maintaining positive relationships.

7. Be clear about your expectations and your boundaries.

Set up ground rules and communicate them.

8. Avoid being overwhelmed by your student's problems.

Remain calm and dispassionate to help the student solve his/her problems.

9. Respect confidentiality.

Good friends do.

10. If the relationship seems to stall, don't give up! Be persistent, but don't spam.

Contact the program director, Barbara Ruel at ruelb@rpi.edu, or Michelle Green, SHPE Internal Secretary at greenm9@rpi.edu if concerns arise.

Source: Mentoring Myths and Tips

Nancy Henry, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUR FIRST COMMUNICATION

1. Write out a list of things you want to talk about. This will help you to think ahead about questions you may be asked.
2. Contact your mentee by email, text, letter, or phone after you receive your match information and have read through this document and the folder of materials provided.
3. Explain why you feel the MentorSHPE Program is helpful and why you decided to be a mentor.
4. Share some of your positive experiences and funny stories. Please refrain from sharing scary stories!
5. Put yourself in his/her shoes; recall your own first days and first year at R.P.I.
6. Don't push! If your mentee is not responding, ask them to suggest another time that might be more convenient for you to talk.
7. Ask if they have any questions or concerns
8. Find out if he/she needs help deciding what to bring to campus.
10. If you want to, offer to help your mentee move in if your move-in plans coincide with his/hers.
11. Ask what classes they are scheduled to take and ask if they have any questions about them.
12. If you're planning to be on campus early, offer to show your mentee where his/her classes will be or where to find books in the bookstore, and offer to attend the Activities Fair on August 28 together.
13. Ask about your mentee's family and how they feel about him/her leaving. Ask how he/she feels about leaving their family. Tell them how you and your family coped when you were a freshman
14. Offer to speak to his/her parents to see if they have any questions. (They may want to know: Is the campus safe? What does he/she need to bring? Should we visit?)
15. Be friendly, outgoing, and assuring.
16. Offer to contact him/her again before he/she leaves for campus to answer any last minute questions.

QUESTIONS YOUR MENTEE MAY ASK

1. How are the courses structured?
2. How competitive are students?
3. How much homework can I expect?
4. How difficult are the courses?
5. How much free time will I have?
6. Is it hard to get help with difficult subjects?
7. How easy is it to get in touch with professors or get help from professors?
8. Do you live on campus or off?
9. How is the social life?
10. How safe is the campus?
11. What do you do for fun on weekends?
12. How is the food?
13. How do you like having a roommate?
14. What do you like best about Rensselaer?

Agenda for First Mentoring Session

DATE: _____

TIME: _____

Location: _____

What to bring: _____

Purpose

To introduce ourselves; allow us to get to know each other; both parties gain new perspectives.

Desired outcomes

1. Establish my mentee's expectations for this session.
 2. Establish what his/her academic and non-academic goals are for the coming year.
 3. Discuss our class schedules. Arrange frequency for meeting to ensure that their goals will be met.
 4. Schedule first face-to-face meeting.
 5. Share any knowledge, information, and insights that may be relevant to the needs my mentee identifies during this conversation.
-

Agenda items:

- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
-

Follow-up Items:

ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR MENTEE

• Introduce yourself to your mentee by Facebook, text, or email	July 1 through August 8
• Show your mentee where their classes will be	August 28 to 30
• Share low cost options for purchasing current textbooks or borrowing them	July and August
• Invite your mentee to attend the Activities Fair at the Armory	September 3, 6:30 to 8:30 PM
• Attend the SHPE barbecue with your mentee	September 5, 1 to 4 p.m.
• Discuss adding or dropping courses	Month of September
• Attend first SHPE General Body Meeting (GBM)	September 10
• Attend a SHPE Study Jam (beginning Sept. 14)	Every Monday at 7 p.m.
• Go to a workshop on Pre-Career Fair prep or • Inside Scoop on Undergraduate Research	September 14, 7 to 9 PM or October 26, 7 to 9 PM
• Call or text your mentee after their first test to ask how they did	Evening of first test
• Attend second SHPE GBM	September 24
• Attend the NSBE/SHPe Career Fair, Armory	September 25 and 26
• Go to the SHPE Etiquette Dinner	October 21
• Schedule Final Exam study breaks together	December 14-22
• Invite him/her to be a SHPE mentor for a first year student	mentor training dates: April 5, or 6, or 26, or 27
• Schedule Final Exam study breaks	May 12-20
• Invite him/her to join you for a meal in the dining hall	Any time
• Ask him/her to attend a club meeting or to work out at the Mueller Center	Any time
• Watch a movie or t.v. show (can do with other mentor/mentee pairs)	Any time
• Invite him/her to an RPI athletic event, participate in an intramural game, or to an event at EMPAC or the Playhouse.	Any time

More mentor/mentee activities will be announced as the year moves forward, so be sure to check your email regularly! If you have questions about upcoming events, write to Michelle Green at greenm9@rpi.edu.