MENTORING 101

SEAS Center for Women in Engineering
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womenengineers.seas.gwu.edu
Mentoring: What is it?

- A professional relationship between a mentee and a mentor
  - Driven by the mentee
  - Mutually agreed upon structure
  - Confidential
- What does a mentor gain from the relationship?
- What do you, as a mentor, have to offer?
A mentor is:
• A friend
• A supporter
• A motivator
• An advocate
• A role model

A mentor is able to:
• Work with others one-on-one
• Listen and teach
• Be dedicated to the program
• Devote time to being a mentor
**A mentor is not:**
- A surrogate parent
- Replacement of a teacher or tutor
- A psychologist
- An ATM
- A playmate
- A social worker
- A savior

**A mentor should not:**
- Tell the mentee what she needs to do
- Give advice more than listen
- Focus on hard tasks to meet specific goals based on what the mentor thinks the mentee needs
- Push the mentee to discuss issues or concerns about her life
- Try to “fix” the mentee’s problems
Tools for a mentor – active listening

- Engage yourself
  - Focus solely on speaker
  - Maintain eye contact
  - Keep an open mind
  - Minimize distractions
- Respond appropriately
  - Ask for clarification

- Reflect on content
  - Check your assumptions
  - Make empathic connections to content
  - Summarize

- Give feedback
  - Ask questions
  - Paraphrase / restate
  - Use “I” Statements
Tools for a mentor – difficult conversations

• Think beforehand about what you want to accomplish.
  • Bring things up early in the visit.
  • Stay serious but supportive.
• Reinforce something positive about your mentee.
  • Separate the behavior from the person.
• Keep responses open
  • “What I heard you say is…”
  • “That’s one way of looking at it. What might be another?”
• Discuss sensitive issues in a private place.

It takes courage to stand up and speak, it takes courage to sit down and be silent.

-- Sir Winston Churchill
Tool for a mentor: Questions

- Learn to ask questions that require more than one-word answers
- Use “What” or “How”
- Keep the conversation going by asking follow-up questions or providing open-ended responses to questions asked
- Try something like this:
  - What is your favorite thing to do at school?
  - What do you hope to be doing in five years?
  - How are you going to get there?
  - What five words best describe you?
Tool for a mentor: Problem solving

• Define the Problem together
  • Anticipate the Consequences
• Brainstorm Options
  • Respond with the best choice
In summary – watch out for...

- Taking the lead from your mentee
- Failure to communicate or maintain boundaries
- Sporadic meetings
- Imposing personal values
- Giving cash, used items, expensive gifts
Ready?

• Be prepared and be on time
  • Have your first few meetings somewhere/somehow where it will be easy to talk
  • Clarify expectations and ground rules
  • Be predictable and consistent
• Have some icebreaker questions ready
• Establish confidentiality
• Enjoy the experience
• Consider when it is time to review the relationship