GUIDE TO STARTING A MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Produced by mentorship & peer programs, student & campus community development

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

STUDENT LIFE | Mentorship & Peer Programs

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Mentorship Resource Centre was created in 2012 to provide resources for students, faculty and staff trying to navigate mentorship opportunities at U of T and to determine some of the best practices that are employed in mentorship programs around the University. This resource is a step-by-step guide to support you in the process of constructing and implementing a new mentorship program or enhancing a program that is already in place. Although the intended audience of this resource is coordinators of peer mentorship programs at U of T, much of the resource is transferable to alumni or faculty programs as well as other post-secondary institutions.

With at least 70 different mentorship programs affiliated with the University of Toronto, our offerings come in three main types: alumni, peer or faculty mentorship programs. These designations are derived from the role of the mentor in the relationship and the mentee in these programs is always a U of T student.

A mentorship program can be coordinated by anyone associated with the University – students in a club or student union, an alumni group, Student Life staff, alumni relations staff or faculty/ department staff and more. Each group runs its own program in accordance with its specific goals and structure.

There is no one correct way to create and run a mentorship program at U of T, but special attention should be given to the issues of risk and privacy of the participants. There are many community-based mentorship programs at U of T, where a U of T student mentors a high school/ elementary school student or other community member, but this guide doesn't address the particular details associated with running a community-based program or working with vulnerable populations.

While researching this guide, we asked coordinators of peer programs what advice they would give someone starting a program. The most common response was to connect with a person or a network of people who are managing similar programs, and can offer advice and resources - in other words, a mentor!

If you'd like to set up a consultation meeting with someone in the Mentorship Resource Centre, please contact mentorship@utoronto.ca at any time.

MENTORSHIP DEFINITION

Mentorship is a term used to describe a mentoring relationship.

A commonly-used definition is that it's a reciprocal relationship where a person with more experience (mentor) is matched with a person wanting to gain or learn from that experience (mentee/ protégé).

However, in almost every paper on student mentorship it's acknowledged that there is no one definition of mentorship.

"A literature review by Crisp and Cruz (2009) identified over 50 definitions of mentoring varying in scope and breadth." (Crisp, et. al, 2017). An early literature review by Jacobi (1991), determined "most researchers defined mentoring in terms of the functions provided by the mentor or the roles played by a mentor in relation to a protégé."

Some of the common functions of U of T mentorship programs are:

- giving information about navigating U of T
- providing support/encouragement
- offering advice/guidance
- basic academic support and referrals
- assistance with clarification of goals
- introducing role models
- facilitating self-awareness/reflection
- fostering a sense of belonging/mattering

As mentorship is a reciprocal relationship, there should be value for the mentor as well. Some common benefits for mentor are:

- practicing leadership and communication skills
- gaining knowledge of new experiences
- receiving support and encouragement from mentee
- reflecting on one's own experiences

VISION AND PLANNING

Every mentorship program is unique and supports the learning and growth of its particular audience. To be most effective, the goals and expectations for a mentoring relationship should be decided together by the mentor and mentee. They should both agree on what the nature of the relationship will be, and what they can expect from it and each other. However, the program itself should be providing structure and support to set the participants up for success.

The vision and planning section is often rushed through when designing a program. However, investing the time in a comprehensive vision and planning exercise with your stakeholders can save time and effort later on, and help focus the program to ensure that it's meeting its objectives.

Guiding questions:

- What is your overarching vision?
- Who is your audience?
- What would a successful experience for the mentors/mentees look like?
- What values are going to guide your program?

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

The first step in vision and planning is to take an initial scan to determine what mentorship programs (if any) exist for your audience or your specific subject area. The environmental scan will help avoid duplication, take advantage of resources that already exist and prepare for the design by learning from the experiences of others.

Guiding questions:

- What other mentoring programs exist?
- What programs and services exist that serve similar goals/ audiences?
- What is participation/usage like for programs and services that serve similar goals/audiences?

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A needs assessment will help you tailor your program to effectively meet the needs of your mentees and mentors. It will help you determine how to measure the success of the program and will ensure that there is a sufficient number of mentees and mentors interested in making a commitment to the program.

A needs assessment can be done by using focus groups, individual interviews, surveys, mining information from existing data or a combination of methods. By comparing the information from the environmental scan with that from the needs assessment, you should be able to determine any gaps that exist and provide a basis for the existence of the mentorship program that will lead to your purpose.

Guiding questions:

- Who are your constituents? What do they see as their needs?
- Of your constituents, who is your target population?
- What needs of your constituents aren't being met by any other program or service?
- What time commitment is available for your constituents to participate in a mentoring program?
- What value proposition would be worth your constituents' time and energy to participate in?
- What are the characteristics of your constituents?
- What difficulties or barriers exist that a potential participant may face, making it difficult for them to participate in the program?
- What will a successful experience look like to your mentors and mentees?

PURPOSE AND GOALS

Using the information you collect from the environmental scan and the needs assessment can help you develop your purpose and goals.

The purpose and goals of the program tell participants the reasons behind the program. They can help potential participants decide whether the program is in line with the benefits they're looking to achieve and they can assist you in making decisions on how to structure the program to ensure its activities and your goals are in alignment.

Guiding questions:

- Why is there a need for this program?
- Which of the common mentoring functions will this program address?
- What are realistic participation numbers?
- What opportunities for learning and growth is it offering? (These can also assist you in producing learning outcomes.)
- What are you trying to achieve by creating this program?
- What will a successful experience look like?

INCLUSIVITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

“Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists: it is making a new space, a better space for everyone” – George Dei (2006)

When creating any kind of program, it’s very important to ensure all students are able to access it and participate. Accessibility encompasses both physical and psychological barriers; it’s important to critically analyze your program to make sure it’s creating a safe and inclusive space for all students to feel welcome participating. In order to do this, the program must be able to respect the diverse variety of backgrounds of students, as well as the different experiences and perspectives they have to offer.

There are many ways to make your program more inclusive and accessible. Here are a few suggestions to consider:

- When hosting an event, workshop or activities, consult the Division of Student Life Accessibility Checklist.
- Invite participants to contribute to the program by sharing what’s important to them and building a space they feel comfortable participating in.
- Provide training and ongoing discussion around inclusivity and accessibility for participants.
- Reach out to students and administrators who may not feel included (or haven’t in the past) and personally invite them to participate in your needs assessment, to review your plan and the content of your program.
- Recruit mentors who are relatable to your mentee population and adequately represent diverse populations. Know why you’re reaching out to a diverse group of individuals. Tokenism is one of the greatest threats to the success and legitimacy of efforts to ensure greater inclusion. No one wants to be invited to join a program to fill a quota.
- Consider what assumptions you’re making about those who may access your program.
- Despite the attention paid to accessibility and inclusivity, barriers will still exist. What are they and what is your action plan to address these barriers?

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The purpose and goals that were conceived in the vision and planning stage will help you form the structure and timeline of the program. At each decision point in the structure, check to make sure that the decision is supporting the purpose and learning objectives of the program.

Coordination

Programs can be coordinated by volunteers or paid staff. Either way, identify the coordinator of the program and the duties of their role. If there are many people involved in the coordination of the program, define the expectations and deliverables of each role.

Tasks coordinators usually undertake:

- setting expectations/structure for participants
- matching of mentors and mentees
- local training of mentors
- regular contact with mentors and mentees
- assessment and evaluation of program
- coordination of any activities or events that support the mandate of the program
- being a resource for mentors if they experience difficulty or need additional training
- Celebrate and recognize volunteers

MENTEE AUDIENCE

Based on your needs assessment, determine the characteristics of your mentee audience. Who needs the program? Who isn't being served by any other programs or services? At what stage in the student's career would a mentor be the most helpful?

Some possibilities to consider:

- year/program/level of student – do recent alumni qualify?
- self-identified characteristics
- direct enrollment or opt in
- limit on number of participants

MENTOR AUDIENCE

Mentoring should be a beneficial experience for both the mentor and the mentee. What experience can the mentor offer? What are mentors looking for in return? What are the characteristics of a mentor that will best serve the purpose and learning objectives of the program?

Some possibilities to consider:

- status of the mentor – peer, graduate student, recent alumni, alumni, faculty member
- required qualifications
- self-identified characteristics
- self- identified experiences
- paid or volunteer

TIME COMMITMENT

The time commitment of the program should be advertised in advance so mentors and mentees can make informed decisions about joining the program and honouring their commitments. Any sessions that participants must attend – training, orientation or other events – should be outlined on the application form.

Guiding questions:

- When are most mentees and mentors available?
- Is there flexibility for the amount of in-person time your participants need to fulfill? Take into consideration the needs of students with family or work responsibilities.
- What is the total time commitment each group is willing to pledge?
- What time commitment is necessary to achieve the desired outcomes?
- How often will the mentors and mentees meet?
- Are there time commitment expectations (e.g. welcome reception/ orientation, group programming, closing reception, email) in between meetings?

TYPE OF PROGRAM

The type of program you offer will shape its structure and operation. To be successful, your program will meet the needs of the mentees and mentors, and provide the experiences necessary to fulfill the purpose of the program and its learning objectives. It may be necessary to combine some elements from the types of mentoring (Figure 1) to meet your program's specific needs.

One-on-one – A mentor and mentee are matched by a program administrator, meet on a regular basis and have contact through email and phone between in-person meetings (face-to-face, Skype or phone). A mentor may have more than one mentee, but they meet with each mentee individually. The topics of conversation and the goals of the relationship are directed by the mentee. The mentor uses their experience to provide guidance. The duration is determined by the program, but can continue after the program has concluded.

Group mentoring – A mentor (or a pair of mentors) meets with a group of mentees on a regular basis (face-to-face) and guides a discussion on topics the group may be interested in or that have been suggested by the mentees. The mentor(s) may have contact with individuals through email or phone as they and the mentees choose.

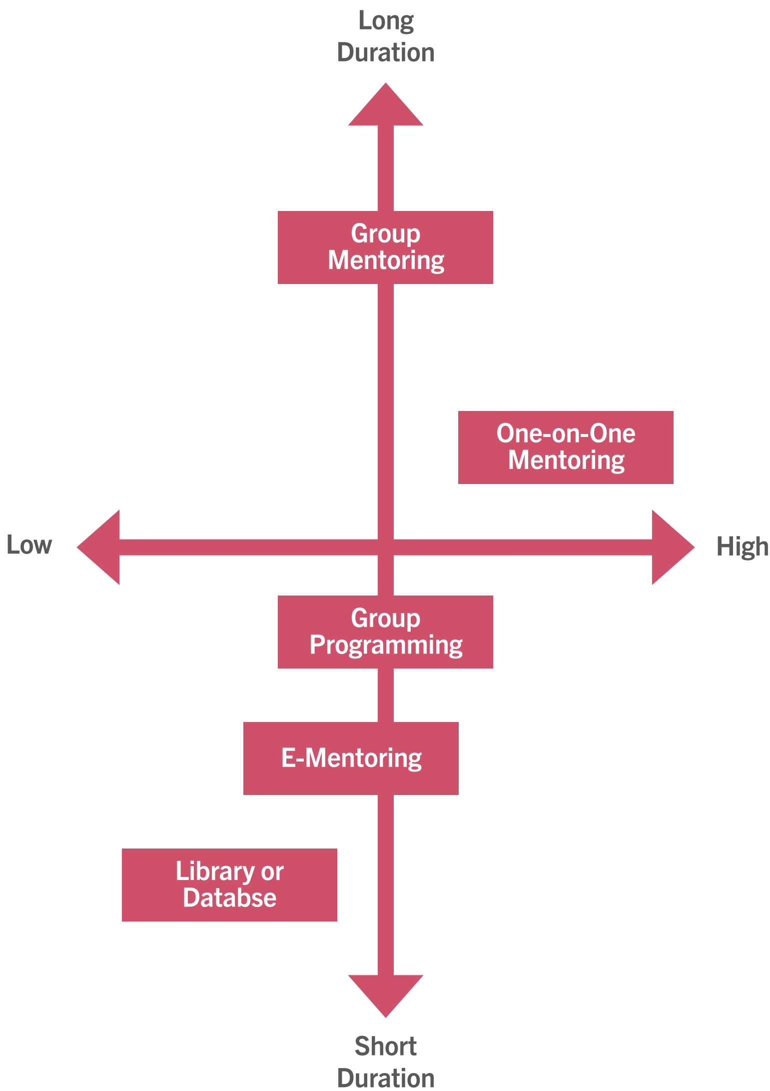
Group programming – Often provided in conjunction with another model to form a mentorship program, mentees and mentors are invited to various activities that range from leadership development, to academic preparation, to social networking. Generally the mentors take the lead on initiating conversation with mentees to make the mentees feel more comfortable.

E-mentoring – Similar to the one-on-one mentoring structure, a mentor and mentee are matched by the program administrator and communicate through email on a regular basis.

Libraries or databases – Participants have access to a list of mentors for easy, one-time connections such as informational interviews. Mentees take the initiative to go to the list, set a meeting and ask for advice (e.g. preparing for an interview) or questions (e.g. what challenges the industry is facing).

Advice from coordinators on program structure:

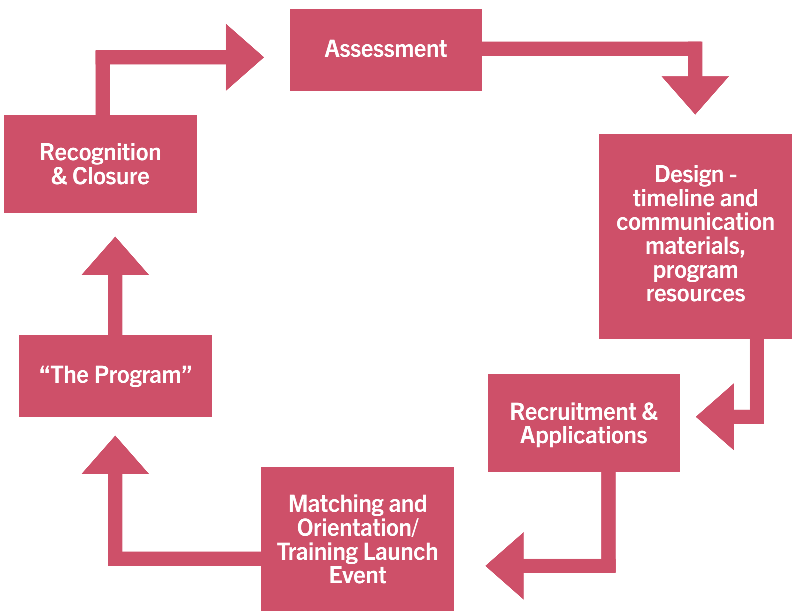
Whatever structure you choose, incorporate some form of shared experiences to help the mentor and mentee get to know each other. It works faster and better than simple conversation.



DURATION AND TIMELINE

To begin, consider the cyclical activities that will make up the program and what items will require the most investment from the coordinator, mentors and mentees. Next, consider the timelines already in place for your stakeholders. Is there a time when the majority of participants have a particularly high volume of work or commitments?

As mentioned previously, program structure can take many forms. Once you've determined your structure, make sure the duration of the program allows enough time to meet the criteria established in the needs assessment and doesn't conflict with any high-volume times of participants. Once the duration and timing of the program is determined, create an action plan keeping in mind the stakeholders' timelines.



Advice from coordinators on the timeline

The more relationships you build during the vision and planning stages, the easier it will be to implement your timeline.

Recruitment will take longer than anticipated. Take the time to ensure you're reaching students that need the program, not just students who participate in everything.

BUDGET & FUNDING RESOURCES

A mentorship program's expenses may fall into the following categories:

- salaries of coordinator and mentors (can also be volunteer)
- training expenses
- gifts/honoraria for speakers
- event expenses
- marketing and promotion
- travel
- t-shirts/swag
- assessment incentives

Available funding resources may include:

- University of Toronto Students' Union (UTSU) club funding (need to be recognized by Ulife and UTSU)
- Student Initiative Fund
- Good Idea Fund (Hart House)
- college councils
- faculty or department budgets
- sponsorship

RISK & PRIVACY

The area of greatest risk in a mentorship program involves the potential for harm to the participants' privacy and physical safety. Here is a list of best practices for you to consider when structuring your program.

The following information is not intended to provide, nor should it be construed as, legal advice. These best practices DO NOT address any issues regarding community-based programs. For this advice you should consult an expert in working with vulnerable populations.

- Mentors and mentees should meet in a public place (preferably on campus) when meeting one-on-one.
- Information such as telephone number and/or email should only be provided by the person they belong to. Coordinators should act as the middle person (and bcc participants) until the participants feel comfortable sharing that information.
- Mentors and mentees should both be encouraged to contact a specific person(s) or office(s) if they are concerned about the behaviour or well-being of any of the participants in the program.
- At minimum, mentors should receive training in setting boundaries and providing resources to mentees who may be experiencing difficulty.
- No demographic or identifying information should be collected or stored by the coordinator unless it is necessary for the implementation of the program. Personal and other confidential information in electronic form should be kept in a secure server environment with appropriate restricted user rights. If it is outside a secure server environment, personal and other confidential information in electronic form must at all times be protected with properly implemented encryption. Personal and other confidential information in hard copy form should be kept in a secure institutional environment.
- (FIPPA - Guideline Regarding Security for Personal and Other Confidential Information)

MARKETING

The number-one way to recruit new participants is by word- of-mouth and personal invitations, while personal emails and

conversations are successful at encouraging students to commit their time. Tell everyone you know that you're recruiting mentors and mentees, and describe the benefits of joining your program.

Here are some potential marketing ideas:

- Email all instructors in appropriate classes, tell them about the program and ask them to introduce it to their classes. Or, ask to speak to the class about the opportunity.
- Host an information session about the program.
- Provide brochures to all instructors, registrars and Student Life/residence offices.
- Hang posters on public bulletin boards and classrooms.
- Advertise on electronic/just in time slides throughout campus.
- Post on social media.
- Post on lists from registrar's offices.

RECRUITMENT OF MENTORS AND MENTEES

Before you start your recruitment process, prepare as much information about the program as possible. Ensure your web and print materials are up-to-date with information on how the program will run, as well as the expectations of both the mentor and mentee participants. It can also be helpful to host an information session to explain the value of the program and the time commitment expected.

Once your website is up to date, ensure you have a listing on the Mentorship Resource Centre Database (mentorship.utoronto.ca). This database is maintained and marketed by Mentorship and Peer Programs. More than 700 students access the database each year looking for mentorship opportunities. If you need assistance with setting up your profile, please contact mentorship@utoronto.ca.

It's helpful to require applications from both mentors and mentees because it sends the message to applicants that they're making a commitment to the program. The application itself doesn't have to be long – a question about why they're interested in the program is fine. You may also want to ask questions that provide helpful information for matching mentors and mentees, such as year and area of study, interests, etc. On your application, explain how any personal information is going to be used and refrain from asking for information you don't need. Finally, having online applications and paper applications will increase the number of potential applicants for your program.

Mentors and mentees should be recruited at the same time so that one group doesn't lose momentum because they're left hanging while you recruit the other group. If you're worried about not having enough of either the mentees or mentors, recruit the group you're concerned about first.

Advice from coordinators on mentee recruitment:

If you're having a hard time recruiting mentees, think about your value proposition and if this program is truly meeting a need for students. If it is, you aren't getting your message out effectively.

Recruitment period vs. rolling recruitment. There are two main types of recruitment:

1. A *recruitment period* is a portion of time in which you'll concentrate on recruiting mentors and mentees with a set date that applications are due. The benefit of this type of recruitment is that it's easier and potentially more efficient for the coordinator of the program to manage the information distribution, matches and training efforts. Deadlines can also be an effective call-to-action that encourage participants to set aside time and commit to the program.
2. *Rolling recruitment* allows for the coordinator to recruit and match participants throughout the year instead of during one period of time. This type of recruitment allows participants to determine when they need the program and how it works into their schedule. The benefits of this type of recruitment are that it can help reach students who don't want to start the program at a prescribed time and it accommodates those who couldn't meet the deadline.

A combination of both a recruitment period and rolling recruitment model is also a possibility. In this case, special attention should be paid to the onboarding process of mentors and mentees to ensure that new recruits feel they received the same introduction to the program that the recruitment period participants received.

PEER MENTOR HIRING

There is research that describes the attributes that are effective in producing the outcomes we desire. Terrion and Leonard (2007) looked at 54 articles on student peer mentorship and program impact. They found that availability and willingness to commit time is the only link to effective peer mentors. Programs where mentors were able to show how they intended to fit mentoring into their schedule tended to be more successful than those that didn't.

Other impactful characteristics and skills:

- Good communication is mentioned in 35% of the literature as an important skill. "Good communication" is broken down into subsets such as listening, understanding verbal and nonverbal language, expressing yourself clearly and the ability to provide clear and honest feedback.
- Support through empowerment is important to mentees and the more supportive (versus critical) a mentor is, the more positive outcomes are cited.
- 24% of the articles reviewed highlighted "empathetic mentors" as essential to the mentoring relationship. Other characteristics included trustworthiness, willingness for mentors to be continuous learners, enthusiasm and flexibility.

The hiring process for peer mentors can include all or some of the following:

- nomination by faculty, staff or current mentor
- application
- interview
- group process activity
- reference check

Advice from coordinators on mentor recruitment:

Once your program is up and running, try whenever possible to recruit from within. Former mentees have had some of the best preparation for the role.

INCLUSIVITY AND ACCESSIBILITY IN PEER MENTOR HIRING

The values of equity, diversity and inclusion should also be intentionally considered during peer mentor recruitment and hiring.

During the Mentorship Moving Forward Professional Development Day in 2015, Liza Arnason, Director of Student Life at the University of Toronto Scarborough said that to integrate equity in mentoring programs, we need to consider the types of students that are relatable to those not usually involved in mentoring. The discussion revolved around how mentors who are highly-involved leaders with great GPAs may not be the most relatable and how we need to remove barriers and provide entry points for student leadership positions to students who are not usually involved in mentoring programs.

Guiding questions:

- How are you reaching students who aren’t represented in your program?
- How are you removing barriers to participation and hiring a representative and diverse team of peer mentors?

MATCHING MENTORS AND MENTEES

A great deal of what will make a successful mentoring relationship has to do with the amount of effort both members put forth. Both the mentor and the mentee must take responsibility for creating a trusting relationship, and need to agree on topics relating to boundaries and honesty as mentoring relationships "do not develop on command" (Bozeman & Feeney, 2008).

There are two main ways to match mentors and mentees:

1. **Pair mentors and mentees based on a common experience or goal.**

   This can be done by taking note of the characteristics the individuals share in the hopes that this will speed up the relationship-building process, and produce a successful match for both the mentor and the mentee.

   There is a long list of characteristics that can be considered for a match. You can choose to ask questions and find one or two similar aspects to match, or you could choose one area to focus on. A caution is that not all characteristics hold the same weight when it comes to matching a common experience.

   For example, gender and focused area of interest (course of study) are two that may be easy to match, but the experiences within these characteristics can vary greatly.

   In Campbell & Campbell (2007), the study of 678 matched students over a three-year period determined that there were no statistically significant differences when matching mentors and mentees on the basis of gender.

   However, when students were matched with someone of their same ethnic group, retention improved for at-risk students. GPA and graduation rate was also positively impacted, but it was not statistically significant.

2. **Let the mentee choose the mentor, or have the mentor and mentee choose each other.**

   This consists of creating a mentor profile and making the information available to the mentees. The mentees then rank the mentors with whom they wish to be matched and the program coordinator tries to connect mentees with one of their top three choices.

Having mentees and mentors choose each other requires an opportunity for the parties to meet, ask questions and rank who they would like to be matched with. Both opinions are taken into consideration. This often takes the form of an event like speed-mentoring which has the added benefit of bringing all mentors and mentees together and the possibility of making many connections.

Please note: There are many companies that provide matching software. This software works the same way as online dating applications, providing the best match based on a set number of variables and using an algorithm designed to speed up the process of matching option number one. While this software may speed up the process, it's very expensive and is as successful as online dating software – some relationships will work, some won't. It depends if the goals and level commitment of the participants are aligned.

MENTOR TRAINING

Mentors must understand the full scope of their roles. Training is a best practice that facilitates an understanding of program expectations and builds similar skills across all programs at the University.

At U of T, we encourage all new mentors to participate in Mentorship Foundations training, which is based on the Mentor Competency Framework (Figure 3). This workshop provides standard training for mentors on role clarity, knowledge of central resources, creating an inclusive environment and leading mentoring conversations. It addresses topics that are common to peer mentors in any mentorship program and is meant to complement local training provided by the program.

1. **Role clarity**
    - Understand your role, purpose and expectations.
    - Maintain confidentiality and trust, while recognizing your limits as a peer mentor.
    - Encourage a reciprocal relationship – exploring shared responsibilities, experiences and expectations.
    - Facilitate a mentoring relationship through the four phases of mentorship.
2. **Engagement & communication (one-on-one, in groups, online)**
    - Apply knowledge of inclusivity to create a welcoming and inclusive environment in your relationship.
    - Lead relationship-building and conversations that contribute to engagement in the relationship.
    - Practice empathy and listening.
    - Participate in difficult or contentious conversations with respect and civility to create an arena for growth.
    - Employ strategies to build relationships online and translate them to in person relationships.

3. **Personal development & well-being**

    - Work to identify your values, purpose and meaning.
    - Set realistic expectations and create achievable initiatives for success.
    - Demonstrate reflective thinking.
    - Determine your balance for personal well-being in the context of your role.
    - Communicate your learnings and experiences to others.

4. **Knowledge of resources**

    - Find and connect your mentee to resources, services and opportunities.
    - Refer students to resources and services when appropriate.
    - Participate in new experiences to continue developing your knowledge of resources.

MENTEE ORIENTATION

Good mentoring depends on a reciprocal learning relationship between the mentor and mentee. For effective learning to occur, the relationship will be a "mix of acquiring knowledge, applying it through practice and critically reflecting on the process" (Zachary, 2009). To set a mentee up for success so they get as much as they can from the program, a training or orientation is recommended.

Things the orientation may include:

- benefits of mentoring
- expectations of this program
- determining and expressing your own motivation for participating
- phases of a mentoring relationship
- personal reflection and self-awareness exercises
- if mentoring right for you at this time

SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THE PROGRAM AND CCR RECOGNITION

Once the program gets rolling, the coordinator usually monitors relationships by keeping in touch with both the mentors and the mentee, providing assistance and support when necessary. Support might include helping mentors engage their mentee (i.e. questions or topics of conversation that might be relevant), re-matching pairs if necessary, assisting mentors in referrals for mentees or developing continued training for mentors.

This may take the form of direct communication such as phone calls and in-person conversations, indirect communication like regular reports written by mentors or a combination of the two.

Recognizing the efforts of peer mentors through the Co-Curricular Record is a great way to encourage them to complete all aspects of their role while they identify and reflect on the competencies they gained or used in the position.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is a tool you can use to determine whether or not you have achieved the goals and learning outcomes of your program. It provides information about what worked well, potential areas for growth and opportunities to improve the overall quality of learning.

Some things to consider when assessing your program:

- How will you know you've achieved your goals?
    - Do your goals have specific outcomes that can be measured?
    - How will you assess the success of the matching in particular?
- How often will you assess your goals?
    - Consistently throughout?
    - Only at the end?
- Can you predict potential areas for growth?
- What kinds of evaluation activities will you use to assess the success of your program?
    - Asking for informal feedback?
    - Survey?
    - Creative assessment?
    - Focus group?
- What kinds of indicators of assessment will you use?
    - Number of mentors recruited and available for matching?
    - Participation in training opportunities?
    - Frequency and duration of match meetings?
- Are you considering who is accessing your programming and who isn't?

Your assessment will lead into the year two design phase of your program.

U of T Resources & Support

Mentorship Database

www.mentorship.utoronto.ca

The Mentorship Database is a listing of all of the mentorship programs available to all U of T students looking for a mentor.

Peer Mentor Opportunity Listing

www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/mpp/peer-mentor-opportunities

The Peer Mentor Opportunity Listing is a webpage with a list of all of the peer mentorship opportunities at U of T and their application deadlines.

Coordinator Email Updates

mentorship@utoronto.ca

Updates and research briefs related to peer mentoring.

Mentorship Foundations Training

www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/mpp/mentor-development

New peer mentors at U of T are encouraged to participate in Mentorship Foundations training offered as a one-day training in September or in individual sessions the first six weeks of fall semester and the first six weeks of winter semester.

Measuring Up Blog

blogs.studentlife.utoronto.ca/MeasuringUp

The primary goal of this blog is to open up a dialogue about assessment in student life, including resources for staff, updates for U of T community partners and reflections from administrators.

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