Did You Know? Mentoring between a faculty member and a student can be either a formal or informal relationship.

What is Mentoring?

“Mentoring is a dynamic, reciprocal, long-term formal, or informal, relationship that focuses on personal and/or professional development. A mentor is a sounding board and guide. Mentors provide perspective, resources, and ask thought-provoking questions. In the ideal mentoring relationship, mentors and mentees or protégés learn and teach each other” (Foster Heckman, Brown and Roberts, 2007).

History of Mentoring:

- Mentoring, both conceptually and in practice, is ancient. The Greek author, Homer, described Odysseus asking his friend Mentor to guide and protect his son when he went to war.
- In the 20th Century, as organizations like Big Brothers, Big Sisters and 12-step programs, like Alcoholics Anonymous, became popular, mentor models have proliferated.
- Mentoring programs for people with disabilities have been around at least since the 1970’s.

Types of Mentoring:

- **One-to-one relationships** – Face-to-face mentoring, telephone conversations, email, letters, text messaging, any direct contact.
- **Group mentoring** – One mentor works with more than one mentee at a time.
- **Community-based mentoring** – Mentoring located in community-based situations such as volunteer mentoring.
- **Electronic mentoring** – Online communication: Internet, chat rooms, bulletin boards, discussions groups, social networks, and other technology.
- **Peer mentoring** – Two people of equal status and similar situations. One person is the mentor, but both share common characteristics and experiences.

FACTS: What are the benefits of a mentoring relationship for faculty?

- Mentoring is a reciprocal relationship. Mentor and mentee learn from each other;
- Mentoring facilitates long-lasting relationships;
- Students learn about the faculty member’s area of expertise;
- Faculty learn about a student’s area of expertise, for example about how to live and succeed in school with his/her particular disability;
- Mentoring skills are transferable to other areas of learning and life;
- Mentoring can be a formal or informal relationship.
Mentoring Components (from Foster Heckman, Brown and Roberts, 2007).

- **Reciprocity** – Mentor and mentee both learn from the experience.
- **Informality** – Most mentors/mentees consider their relationship casual.
- **Longevity** – Mentors and mentees are together for longer than a year.
- **Socializing** – Drinking coffee, socializing, spending time together in non-academic ways.
- **Technology** – Using computer and networking technologies for electronic, or e-mentoring. Social networking sites include, but are not limited, to sites such as MySpace (www.myspace.com) and Facebook (www.facebook.com).
- **Collaboration** – Cooperation, such as exploring scholarly research writing, and presentations together.
- **Communication** – Face-to-face meetings, emails, and phone conferences.
- **Commitment** – Mentors and mentees make a long-term commitment (generally at least a year.)
- **Transferable** – Faculty and student mentoring relationship evolve over time. Relationships may continue after a student graduates. Mentoring relationships are fluid and can take a different shape over time.

**Fast Fact Strategies: What you can do to help:**

- Be open to working with students with disabilities.
- Remember open communication is important.
- Mentor/mentees need to develop the best way to work together.
- Seek opportunities to maintain contact.

**References:**


HEATH Resource Center: Online Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Disabilities. George Washington University.

For more information on working with students with disabilities, visit our Web site at www.ist.hawaii.edu.

Please feel free to distribute with the following acknowledgement: Teaching All Students, Reaching All Learners, Center on Disability Studies, University of Hawai’i, Honolulu, HI. For more information contact Steven (Steve) E. Brown, Ph.D., Project Coordinator at sebrown@hawaii.edu or visit the Web site at: www.ist.hawaii.edu.

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