Developing Constructive Mentoring Relationships: Tips for Mentors and Mentees

The Committee on Career Advising (CCA) hopes that the following tips will be helpful to faculty participating in mentoring relationships throughout the campus. We recommend that regardless of your role (as mentor or mentee) you read both sections of this document, to gain helpful insights into the mentoring process and its potential, from the perspective of both parties.

Tips for Mentors

Thank you for serving UCSC faculty through your mentoring. Mentees value the guidance and suggestions they receive from mentors in order to successfully face the challenges of academic life and integrate themselves into our community. Many UCSC faculty who have served as mentors find the experience to be gratifying, not only because they make a meaningful contribution, but also because they learn a lot from their mentees.

An essential part of mentoring is listening attentively to the questions and concerns of your mentees. This helps you tailor your support to mentees’ needs and develop a trusting relationship with them.

It is also valuable to ask important questions, in order to understand mentees’ challenges and encourage their self-reflection.

When giving feedback, make it honest and constructive, encouraging and nonjudgmental. In addition, prompt mentees to reflect on the positive aspects of their professional and personal lives and the ways these two complement each other.

It is often helpful to mentees to talk through their goals. Many benefit from a mentor’s help in thinking through and setting specific near-term and long-term goals.

Mentees appreciate hearing about the experiences, strategies, and concerns of their mentors. We encourage you to share your failure and success stories and what you have learned from them. It helps to be open about your own struggles, show mentees it is natural to feel overwhelmed with work, and reassure them there are things they can do to improve the situation.

Provide guidance, but also recognize that mentees will find and follow their own path. It is important to appreciate differences in others and not assume your own way is the best.

You don’t need to know the answers to everything. Feel free to say “I don’t know,” and make suggestions regarding where else mentees might get the information they need.

Please treat all personal information confidentially, unless you are required by law to report it to the appropriate authorities.

It’s valuable to share your insights on mentoring with other mentors and learn from them. Consider joining some of the events that CCA organizes to support mentors and mentees.
We encourage you to include a detailed reference to your mentoring activities in the personal statement you submit in personnel review files so that your mentoring can be appropriately acknowledged as an important service contribution. In the section of your personal statement discussing Academic Senate Service, mention how many mentees you have and what kinds of activities you have undertaken (e.g. participation in the Meet and Greet event, x number of meetings, specific feedback on their teaching or research, assisting mentees in preparing their personnel reviews or submitting grant applications, etc. Also mention achieved outcomes and benefits resulting from your mentoring -for both you and your mentees). In your online biobib, create an entry under “Academic Senate Service”. For example: 2015-17. Mentor to 3 mentees through the UCSC Faculty Mentorship Program managed by the Committee on Career Advising (CCA).

**Tips for Mentees**

We hope that the relationships you build with your mentor(s) will be rewarding and will support your development as a researcher, teacher, and contributor to UCSC.

You can openly share questions, concerns, and struggles with your mentors. If they do not have an answer to a question, they may be able to direct you to someone else who does.

New faculty may feel isolated and overwhelmed with teaching and service duties at first. Developing relationships with mentors can help you get connected across campus, strategically plan service commitments, and juggle work-life balance issues. Mentors can also offer valuable advice on teaching and research and help you develop an action plan to reach your goals.

It will be helpful for you to take initiative in your mentoring relationships and let your mentors know what your needs and goals are. Also, share with them your suggestions about how they and the mentoring programs you are part of can improve the support they offer to you and other faculty.

We encourage you to mutually agree on the frequency and duration of meetings that will serve your needs and be amenable to both. If unexpected challenges arise, do not hesitate to contact your mentors for advice, even outside your regular meeting schedule.

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It is a good idea to develop a network of mentors from inside and outside your department, in order to get a range of advice relevant to your career and become familiar with diverse perspectives. We encourage you to be open to trying new approaches, but also reflect on the advice you receive from different sources and evaluate what might serve your needs better.

Finally, if you feel that your mentors’ advice is helpful and constructive, let them know. Developing a culture of faculty support is very rewarding for all involved.