

# Why Being Mentored Matters



**Johns Hopkins  
Student Assistance Program**

Serving Graduate and Professional Students

Research shows that students who are mentored enjoy many benefits, including better training, greater career success, and a stronger professional identity. But good mentoring rarely just happens. It develops from reflection, planning, and an understanding of your needs as well as your mentor's unique qualities. Recognizing the importance of and choosing the right mentor is one of the most important decisions you will make as a student.

## **What is a mentor?**

By definition, a mentor is a tutor or coach. Having a mentor is more than having a favorite professor or good academic advisor. A mentoring relationship typically extends beyond the boundaries of a particular course into other aspects of your educational experience. A strong mentor serves as a guide for your professional development and challenges you to take advantage of important professional opportunities. A mentor is the first person you think of when you need a letter of recommendation, when you need to consult with someone regarding an academic or employment decision, or when you need direction on an academic project. Once the mentoring relationship has been established, mentors console you during times of disappointment and celebrate with you during times of success. Thus, in addition to being a teacher or coach, a mentor may be more appropriately defined as a model, a problem solver, an advocate, and an investor (of time and energy).

## **What are the benefits of having a mentor?**

- Access to experienced professionals.
- The sharing of personal and professional experiences.
- Establishing collaborative associations with colleagues within and outside JHU.

## **What are the qualities of a successful mentor?**

Successful mentors are approachable, have good personal and communication skills, have good technical skills, and are able to provide you with needed support.

The most effective mentors:

- Welcome newcomers into the profession and take a personal interest in their career development and well-being.
- Want to share their knowledge, materials, skill and experience.
- Are patient, enthusiastic, and supportive as they challenge and guide their mentee to new levels of competence.

- Expose the recipients of their mentoring to new ideas, perspectives and standards, and to the values and norms of the profession.
- Are more expert in terms of knowledge but view themselves as equal to those they mentor.

### **How do I find a mentor?**

- Identify professors with areas of expertise most similar to your interests.
- Talk to your academic advisor and to your instructors for suggestions.
- Friends, classmates and other students may also be able to suggest faculty members that have a reputation for being good mentors.

### **How do I make the most of the mentoring relationship?**

Once you have established a mentoring relationship, it is important to:

- Establish open communication; convey your expectations of the relationship.
- Maintain regular contact and meet regularly (at least once a month); set objectives for each meeting.
- Be on time and prepared for all appointments.
- Be flexible to accommodate your mentor's schedule.
- Ask for input and assistance with your educational and career goals.
- Recognize your mentor's experience; he or she has already traveled the road you are just beginning to explore. Ask this person to share advice, opinions, ideas, and experiences.

For more information about this topic or to set up an appointment to work with a counselor to develop the skills for successful mentoring relationships, please contact the Johns Hopkins Student Assistance Program (JHSAP) at (443) 287-7000 or visit our website at <http://www.jhsap.org/>.