BEACON
Mentor Guide

Office of ENGAGEMENT
THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH
Welcome BEACON Mentor!

As a mentor you will help serve as an important bridge for the scholar that you work with. You will help connect this individual to the University of Utah’s resources, events, and supports. In doing this, you will come across a number of experiences that you will also be able to learn from to enhance your own abilities to succeed. We hope that this exploration will also be a fun and rewarding experience. As you build relationship and collaborate with your scholar, you may also be challenged and at times need assistance. Throughout the BEACON program you will have the chance to improve your mentoring skills, while providing & receiving feedback and support as well. Here in this guide are very basic but essential ideas to approach your responsibilities as a BEACON mentor, including room to contribute the valuable knowledge that you already carry with you.

Being a Reliable and Effective Mentor

As you go through the process of working with students and building mutual relationships, there are a number of things they may reach out to you for help with, especially as first year students. Being a good mentor is not an exact science and doesn’t mean you need to be a superhero. But it does involve a combination and balancing of what you do and don’t know, being open and friendly, while working with clear boundaries of what you can and shouldn’t do as well.

MENTORS ARE NOT…
- A PARENT
- A COUNSELOR
- A SOCIAL WORKER
- A FINANCIER
- A PLAYMATE

A MENTOR SHOULD NOT…
- BREAK PROMISES
- TALK DOWN
- COERCE
- BE INCONSISTENT
- BECOME A CRUTCH
- CAUSE FRICITION
- BREAK CONFIDENTIALITY
  (EXCEPT IN LETHAL SITUATIONS)
Skills to work with mentees

As a peer mentor you will be addressing issues related to a variety of areas, including academics, finances, relationships, and more. These issues will often have an impact on their success as a student. The most important thing to remember in any situation is that you are not a counselor. Know your limits-sometimes the best way you can help others is by referring them to someone else with more experience.

Keys to Success:
- Listen
- Ask open-ended questions
- Attend and respond to both content and feeling
- Let the student solve the problem
- Refer to/use your resources

Ask open-ended questions: Anything that elicits a “yes/no” response won’t be as helpful as a “what, when, how, who” question. “Why” questions will get the most in-depth information, however keep in mind that they can sometimes imply criticism and cause defensiveness (i.e. “Well, why didn’t you go to all the study sessions?”).

Attend and respond to both content and feeling: Often there are two things going on at once 1) There is an issue and 2) the person has some kind of feeling or reaction to that issue. You need to attend and respond to both. Consider this: “I’m so mad about my Chem test!” What is the content (performance on Chem test)? What is the feeling (anger)? It’s important to attend to both. Remember that issues presented to you could have some underlying themes and might even be symptoms of a larger problem.

Let the student solve the problem: It’s easy to want to solve things for people, but that’s not really as helpful as it might seem. Usually, the student knows the answer or knows how to solve the problem but just needs someone to ask the right questions and encourage their processing.
Refer to/use your resources: Sometimes it can be tempting to want to solve problems for others without asking for help. Remember there are countless resources on campus (HDs, Housing staff, Counseling Center, Student Life office, OIS staff, etc) for you to use and you are expected to use them when appropriate. These are trained professionals who can provide the appropriate services to students, whether it is a personal issue, career related, or anything that you may not know of. It is ok to say “I don’t know” or “I don’t know what to do in that situation” as long as you get the information for the person or get them the help they need.

Communication skills include:

- **Listening**—fully participate in a conversation by being an active listener and utilizing some simple counseling skills such as reflecting, encouraging, and asking questions. Be aware of how your body language can affect a conversation.
- **Observing**—be aware of how your mentee is presenting the message or ideas through body language and unspoken words.
- **Communicating**—be very clear in your presentation of facts and opinions.
- **De-centering**—try to understand what your mentee is saying, not by how you hear it, but in how they are approaching and thinking about what they are saying. Communicate in a way they will understand.

Personal skills include:

- **Availability**—even if your mentee does not seem to see you out, they see you as being a helpful mentor when you are present and available to them.
- **Seeking**—seek mentees out, especially at the beginning of the year. Students are less likely to see you out initially, so waiting for them to come to you may be a waste of time and will not help in building the mentoring relationship.

Being an example—the mentees with who you work will observe you closely, especially in their first year as they are new to campus. Your role is one of responsibility; make good decisions in what you say and how you act when you are interacting with them. Remember you are a role model!
Thinking about 1st year students

Your own experience is one of the most valuable resources to go to for thinking about the issues, challenges, and opportunities that are important for first year students! However, it is also critical to acknowledge that not everyone’s experience will relate exactly to yours either. Every student’s circumstances will not be the same, and what is valuable and meaningful will possibly be different in many ways as well.

So in addition to what you know, here are some basic adjustment issues that incoming freshman may have to deal with.

**Personal Challenges:**
- Moving to a new environment
- Leaving family
- Living with a roommate
- Meeting new people
- Making personal decisions everyday
- Facing new peer pressures (sex, drugs, alcohol, etc.)
- Conforming to behaviors that conflict with personal beliefs

**Intellectual/Academic Challenges:**
- Speaking up in class
- Communicating with professors
- Managing course demands and schedules
- Developing semester course schedules
- Seeking academic assistance when problems arise
- Balancing academics and social life

**Physical Challenges:**
- Coping with weight gain/loss
- Competing athletically
- Forming positive health habits and breaking problem habits
- Becoming self-reliant in managing health/stress
- Finding lifetime hobbies and activities

**Interpersonal Challenges:**
- Connecting with a new friendship group
• Starting and managing romantic relationships
• Learning how to show emotions in appropriate ways
• Managing conflict situations
• Recognizing/deciding to act on sexual orientation

**Career/Lifestyle Challenges:**
• Choosing an academic major
• Changing a major
• Deciding on participation in internships and other work experiences
• Deciding to leave school/change schools
• Making decisions related to future issues (marriage, income needs, etc.)

Other issues not listed:

Below are some areas you may be particularly suited to with your mentee. Think of those things that you might say to yourself “If I had only known that when I was a 1st year”.

**Academic:**
• Scheduling/Registering for classes
• Changing majors
• Grading policies/procedures
• Interacting with instructors
• What to do about missing classes or late assignments
• What instructors to take/what to expect from instructors

**Studying-related:**
• How to study
• Test taking
• Class work, projects, writing essays, etc.
• Resources to utilize
**Personal/General:**
- Career questions
- Finding internships/work experience
- Finding the right major
- Roommate conflicts
- Weekend activities

**Time Management/Balancing Activities:**

Time management is one of the more important issues incoming first year students endure on a consistent basis in college. As a peer mentor you are well-equipped to provide tips to first year students on time management. Time management is necessary in order to utilize time effectively and efficiently. When time in managed, there is time available for academics, work, social activities, and anything else that needs to be done. A few steps to make time management simple include:

- Set priorities along with major goals that need to be accomplished within the next week, month, semester, and year.
- Keep a log of how you currently spend your time—this helps you identify time wasted, time that may be better used in other ways, etc. It can really be an eye-opening experience.
- Keep a master schedule that lists activities that occur every week (classes, work, meetings, etc.)
- Make a list of assignments due each week and post it on your desk, near your computer, or somewhere else prominent so you’ll see it many times during a day.
- Check things off as soon as they are completed.
- Get organized so you can easily find supplies and resources when you need them.
Resources and opportunities

There are all types of resources on and off campus for academic and personal life that not only are good to know for the scholars you’ll be working with, but that you can utilize as well. Throughout the year BEACON will introduce 1st years to a number of these on a more general level. Your job as a mentor is to help personalize these resources from either your own experience or because you know they may specifically suit your mentee. Take a few minutes to write down some possibilities.

STUDENT GROUPS:

___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________

EVENTS:

___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________

PEOPLE (Counselors, professors, advisors, etc.):

___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________

PLACES ON CAMPUS:

___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________

OTHER:

___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________
**Mentor Ethics**

Write in your notes thoughts for the following ethics:

- Trust and confidentiality

- Genuine interest and respect

- Clear and managed expectations

- Integrity, reliability and consistency

- Self-determination

- Empower rather than enable

- Inclusion and connection

- Reciprocity

- Healthy, appropriate relationships