

Penn State Liberal Arts Mentor Program

Getting Started

Start your mentorship by getting acquainted with one another. Be curious about one another, and you'll discover amazing commonality as well as uniqueness. Ask open-ended questions such as: "what's the best vacation you've ever had?" instead of yes/no questions like "do you like to travel?"

Students, keep in mind, when you have someone willing to mentor you, don't delay or drag your feet. If you don't appear willing and eager for help, the desire to help goes way down.

Alumni, keep in mind, students may not know what they want from a mentorship. Don't assume they can articulate their career goals. Start by asking and listening, not talking.

About your mentor:

What are your hobbies, outside interests, volunteer activities, etc?

Where would you like to go on your next vacation?

What are you reading these days?

What kind of movies or television shows do you like to watch?

Tell me about your family

How did you pick Penn State?

What was it like at Penn State when you were a student?

What was your first job out of college and how did you get it?

What trade-offs have you made in balancing work and family as your career has developed?

What do you do during a typical workday?

What aspects of your job take the most time?

What do you like most/find most interesting about your work?

What do you like least about your job?

What kinds of problems do you face? Find most difficult?

What skills/abilities do you find are most important in your work?

About your mentee:

What are your hobbies, outside interests, volunteer activities, etc?

Where would you like to go on your next vacation?

What are you reading these days?

What kind of movies or television shows do you like to watch?

Tell me about your family?
How did you pick Penn State?
How did you pick your major(s) and your minor(s)
What has surprised you the most about your Penn State experience thus far?
Tell me about part-time or summer jobs you've had
Describe your favorite class, learning experience, or job—in detail
What kinds of problems do you face? Find most difficult?
What skills/abilities do you find are most important as a student?
What skills do you want to improve?

Envisioning

The ability to communicate well-defined goals takes vision.

Mentees:

Where do you want to be 3-5 years from today?
What do you want to be known for?
How would someone who knows you well describe you?
What type of reputation have you built?
What skills or qualities set you apart?
How are you making a difference?

Mentors:

LISTEN
Ask strategic questions to clarify what you heard
Paraphrase what you heard
Resist the temptation to advise, redirect, or problem-solve

At this stage, you are getting to know your mentee's interests, skills, and experiences. Next, you can begin to identify goals for your mentorship—and together draft an action plan to achieve them.