

# STEPS TO EFFECTIVE MENTORING

- How to make effective phone calls
- Electronic mentoring
- Contacting your mentees via e-mail
- Letter writing ideas
- Meeting with your mentees
- when to contact your mentees

## Step 1. How to Make Effective Phone Calls

It is important to realize that an impression is formed within the first 30 seconds of a telephone call. The impression begins to form as soon as the person on the other end of the telephone hears your voice. Unfortunately, you never have a second chance to make a first impression. The more effective you are on the telephone, the more effective the Mentor program will be in helping students and recruiting participants for activities and organizations the following section covers:

- 1) How to make a good impression
- 2) How to make the person feel special
- 3) How to be an effective listener
- 4) How to make sure the person understands you
- 5) How to handle disinterested/angry people
- 6) How to keep enthusiastic about your work

### 1. How to make a good impression:

The way you present yourself will have the greatest impact on how the call is received. The following tips should be kept in mind when making a call:

*Speak in lower tones.* People tend to find high tones irritating. Higher tones are usually signs of excitement and enthusiasm. Even though enthusiasm is good, when you are trying to

establish rapport with people over the telephone they are more receptive to someone who speaks in lower tones. Please do not confuse lower tones with a monotone voice. You should always make use of fluctuations in your speaking voice to show interest in the topic at hand.

**Keep your voice relaxed.** This will give the impression of confidence and knowledge. It will also be relaxing for the person on the other end of the telephone. It may be a good idea to role play a few conversations with other peer mentors over the telephone so that you are comfortable with the information you will be giving and will feel relaxed on the telephone. Before you pick up the telephone to make a call you should pause, take a deep breath, and relax.

**Begin speaking slowly.** People usually miss the first three or four words of telephone conversations. Give them every opportunity to understand what you are saying by speaking slowly.

**Be informed.** Be comfortable and familiar with the purpose of your call. Make sure you are readily able to clearly explain to anyone at anytime why you are contacting these people. It may be a good idea to write a concise statement of purpose that you could refer to if you get flustered on the telephone. However, if you must refer to this statement, try to be natural and not sound like you are reading. You may face many of the same objections or questions from the people you are calling that other peer mentor's face. Consider getting together with other peer mentors and making a list of these questions and objections. By brainstorming, you can generate the most effective answers.

**Do not put anything in your mouth.** The sounds of chewing gum, eating candy, drinking soda, or smoking are not easily noticed in a room full of people. However, these sounds are easily carried over the telephone and do not create the impression that you are giving this conversation your full attention.

**SMILE!** Keep a smile on your face when you introduce yourself and the purpose of your call over the phone. By smiling, you will sound confident and enthusiastic. You will also sound more interesting, so the person will be more likely to hear you out. It is extremely difficult to give the impression of disinterest or boredom with a smile on your face. It will also help you enjoy your work.

**Keep your head up.** Bending your neck distorts your voice. Try to sit up straight and keep your head up whenever possible.

## 2. How to make the person feel special:

**Try to make the person feel special.** There are many simple ways to do this. You should remember to call people by name throughout the conversation. Always end the conversation using the person's name ("I am really looking forward to meeting you in person Claire!") Using his or her name keeps the conversation personal and makes the person feel important.

**Listen for feelings.** Since your interaction with this person will take place over the telephone, the tone of his or her voice will be your best indication of the feelings he or she is experiencing. You will be able to recognize happiness, frustration, anger, depression, and many other feelings by tones of voice. Tune in to these clues and react accordingly.

**Say something that relates only to this person.** Again, this will make the person feel special. Also, try to relate something about yourself which demonstrates understanding. If s/he is experiencing something at WSU that you have experienced in the past, share those experiences. This helps to build rapport.

## 3. How to be an effective listener:

**Be an active listener.** Do not take a passive role in the conversation. Try to be more interested in what the other person

may have to say to you than in what you have to say to the person.

**Put all other work or distractions aside.** Try to focus all of your attention on what the other person is saying to you. Do not look around the room or make gestures to other peer mentors who may be calling. Do not doodle or draw pictures while the person is speaking. Tune in to what the person is saying to you.

**Try to generate a visual picture of what the person is saying to you.** If you can picture the situation the person is describing, you will be better able to relate to the emotions he or she is describing. If you do not try to visualize what the person is saying, you will probably begin to visualize other things like what you will be doing when you are done calling, or what you will say next.

**Do not cut the person short.** By interrupting the person before they are finished speaking, you run a risk of misinterpreting their meaning. It is also bad manners to interrupt. Be patient and hear the person out. Remember to concentrate on what the person is saying, pause a moment to think of your response, then respond.

**Ask questions.** If you find that your attention in the conversation is fading, ask questions about what the person is saying. This will show interest and also draw you back into the conversation. The person will be more interested in speaking to you if you participate in the conversation.

**Give feedback.** As the person is speaking to you, give feedback. Responses such as "Yes", "I see", "Uh-huh", etc, demonstrate that you are interested and listening.

#### 4. How to make sure the person understands you:

**Make sure you have a good conversation.** Unnecessary static or other interference will be distracting. If you have a bad

connection, try hanging up and calling again. If the connection does not improve, consider calling back another time.

*Adjust the volume of your voice.* If you are speaking too loudly, the person will become irritated. If you speak too softly, the person will have to strain to hear your voice. Be aware of signs that you are speaking too softly or loudly and adjust the volume of your voice accordingly.

*Adjust the rate of your speed to match the person.* If you speak too quickly the person may have a difficult time catching all the information you are giving. If you speak too slowly the person may become annoyed or bored. A good rule is to model your speaking pace after the person you are speaking with.

*Keep it simple. Use simple terms, phrases, and sentences.* Above all you want to make sure the person understands what you are saying.

*Get the person involved in the conversation.* Get the person to talk about himself or herself, use his or her name and establish a rapport so that he or she feels more comfortable asking you questions.

## 5. How to handle disinterested/angry people:

*Stay composed.* If the person you are speaking with becomes angry or is extremely disinterested and tells you so, do not let it get to you. Stay calm when dealing with people who are upset or angry. If you get excited or react to what the person is saying, the problem will escalate.

*Do not take things personally.* If you approach your calls seriously and as described above, you can feel confident that a person's reaction is not towards you personally. You are not the target, you just happen to be the one at the other end of the telephone. The reaction is probably a result of their personal feelings towards the program or of other personal factors you

may not be aware of. By knowing that you handled a situation to the best of your ability, you can go away from any call with a good feeling, regardless of the outcome.

*Listen to the person.* Why is the person upset or disinterested in what you have to say? Ask questions so that you understand her or his feelings, if possible. Acknowledge the person's feelings and try to address them directly.

*Use empathy.* Statements such as "I understand your feelings about this" demonstrate that you are sympathetic to how the person feels. This shows that you are not taking the reaction personally and would like to do something to help her or him feel better about the situation.

*Take a break.* If you have had a particularly difficult conversation, get up and take a break after it is over. Talk with one of your peers or a counselor if necessary. Do whatever it takes to clear your mind so that you can approach your next call with the interest and enthusiasm it deserves. Also remember that you should not take any conversation personally. The person is reacting to the situation or circumstance, not to you.

## 6. How to keep enthusiastic about your work:

*Put personal problems aside.* Before you begin calling you must clear your mind of any distractions that can have an impact on your telephone conversation. If you have things on your mind, set aside time during the day to think about and deal with these issues. Keep your mind clear of these problems for the rest of the day and do not dwell on them.

*Do not be distracted.* Do not be distracted by thoughts of how much fun you are going to have when you go out later that night or what you are going to do after you are done making your calls. Keep your concentration on the task at hand.

*Be sincerely interested in the conversation.* If you are interested in what you are doing, you will enjoy it more. The more interest you show in the conversation you are having, the more successful you will be in gaining people's interest in your program, organizations, and activities.

*Come to work rested and relaxed.*

*Become absorbed in your work.* You will get back from this work only what you put into it. Be friendly and enthusiastic and the people you talk with be the same.

## Step 2. Electronic Mentoring: Contacting your mentees via e-mail

The following points are to serve as guidelines for contacting your Mentees via e-mail. You may want to create your personal "Mentee Serve" giving you quick and easy access to all of your Mentees. E-mailing your Mentees will also encourage them to become familiar with available technology.

1. E-mailing is not a substitute for personal contacts such as visits or phone conversations.
2. E-mailing is a quick and effective means to stay in touch

3. E-mailing will allow you to regularly update Mentees on key deadlines, activities, events, and opportunities.
4. E-mailing will allow you to connect Mentees to each other and to faculty/staff that could serve them as professional Mentors.

### Step 3. Letter Writing Ideas

Another effective way to build your relationship with your Mentees is through letter writing. On those occasions where you might write a close friend, such as birthdays, getting a good grade on an exam, feeling blue sickness, etc., you may want to send something inspirational. Such as a card, newspaper article, cartoon, or poem. (be creative!)

### Step 4. Meeting with your mentees

Of all the contact ideas in this handbook, one to one meetings with your Mentees are the most valuable mentoring tool. Meeting with your Mentee adds the human element to the mentoring process. This is a real opportunity to get to know your Mentee and to be known by her/him. The following meeting ideas should serve as a starting point.

1. Campus Event. Attending events together, such as home games, speakers, exhibits, movies and plays, will not only help build your relationship, but will also introduce Mentees to activities on campus they may not have explored on their own. Stay tuned for upcoming events on campus mentioned during the weekly meetings.
2. Elsewhere on Campus. Student Mentors can meet their Mentees for lunch, to workout, or to just get together to talk over coffee.

### Step 5. When to contact your mentees

Contact with Mentees is the essence of any mentoring program. Mentees should be contacted at least once every week or two, the first contacts being as early in the semester as possible. These contacts expose the Mentees to services and opportunities that they may need early in the academic year. In addition, Mentees can also get a clear message that someone is willing and able to help with any of their needs.

The opportune times to call students vary as not all students will be at home at the same time. Mentors should choose a calling time that is convenient for both the Mentor and the Mentee. Mentors are advised to remember that they are calling freshmen and new transfer students, as well as some graduate students, and to ask themselves these questions; what time was I home? What was I doing at that time? Would it have been convenient if a Mentor called?

It is best to contact Mentees to inform them of a program, upcoming workshop, scholarship, internship, or special opportunity. After sharing information about an upcoming event, Mentors can ask the Mentee how things are, using questions as a tool to facilitate the conversation and to open new areas for discussion. Furthermore, when talking to the Mentee, Mentors should be able to appreciate the emotion behind the student's voice, constantly checking their understanding of what they hear, not interrupting Mentees sentences, letting Mentees tell their story, and trying to avoid giving the impression of wanting to jump right in and talk.