

The Mentoring Connection: Choosing a mentoring program

Finding the right mentoring program is a proven means of increasing the institutional affinity, academic performance, development of interpersonal competencies, and retention of students at the graduate level. Particularly for first-generation students and students from underrepresented populations, mentoring is an excellent way to become more engaged with your department, college or community. This best practice document outlines ways to classify and think about mentoring, helping you to foster successful strategies for your mentoring relationship.

Mentoring structures:

There are **four common types** of mentoring programs. While they may share common goals or outcomes, the variation in structure or teaching mode may appeal to students in different ways.



One-on-one mentoring:

One-on-one mentoring is the simplest mentoring structure and has the most direct involvement between mentor and mentee. It emphasizes fostering personal relationships and requires high degrees of trust and disclosure. It is effective in exploring individual development, whether personal, academic, or professional.



Small-group mentoring:

Consists of one mentor and a small group of mentees who meet as a group. The focus is group exploration of issues or topics. It can also be used effectively to provide training or orientation to multiple new faculty or students, and facilitates team-building and group affinity.



Peer mentoring:

Both mentor and mentee are of the same group (student-to-student, faculty-to-faculty) in which the mentor is more advanced in skill or experience and can provide guidance.



Faculty mentoring:

A professional relationship in which there is a hierarchical distance between mentor and mentee and in which the faculty member assists the mentee through academic guidance or professional development.

Benefits of mentoring:

Various mentoring structures offer different benefits, such as:

- Training and orientation to subject/field
- Professional/personal role modeling
- Emotional/psychosocial support and community building

Many successful mentoring programs employ a multi-tiered model, combining one-on-one and small-group mentoring.

Choosing a type of program:

Different types of structures may be better aligned to facilitate specific desired outcomes. When choosing a type of program, consider:

- ❓ How do you learn best? Socially in groups or individually?
- ❓ What is the mentoring program designed to do?
- ❓ Would you benefit from participating in multiple mentoring programs with different structures and outcomes?

Considering programs:

As you consider types of mentoring programs, ask yourself what you want to get out of the program.

- ❓ Are you looking for emotional or social support?
- ❓ Are you interested in connecting with people who share your interests?
- ❓ Are you looking to enhance specific skillsets or knowledge?
- ❓ Are you interested in exploring or fostering a part of your identity?

Types of mentoring:

Which program best meets your needs will be determined by the **focus** and **outcomes** you are looking for. Three common themes in mentoring include the following:



Proficiency-based mentoring:

Organized around academic interest or aptitudes, with outcomes focused on academic development or improvement.



Affinity-based mentoring:

Allow participants to become more closely involved with or learn about a particular community and focus on social interaction and interpersonal development.








Identity-based mentoring:

Providing interpersonal connection and identity development or exploration among members of underrepresented communities (race/ethnicity, sexual orientation/gender identity, etc.), the most immediate outcome for these are social support and connection.

Questions to consider:

As you contemplate what form of mentoring structure and program are right for you, consider the following:

-  What kind of relationships do you want to develop through this program?
-  Can your mentor help you reach your stated goals?
-  Do you have clearly defined goals and expectations of your mentoring relationship?
-  Have you clearly articulated these goals and expectations with your prospective mentor?
-  Are your goals in alignment with the stated objectives of the mentoring program?

Helpful tips:



No mentoring program or style is right for everyone. Your answers to these questions can help guide you toward the mentoring program that is the best fit for you!



Keep in mind that no matter your desired mentoring outcomes, the mentor/mentee relationship itself is integral to a successful mentoring partnership. It is important to identify and share clear goals with your prospective mentor.

Resources:

Peer mentoring:

Peer mentoring models such as the Graduate College's SHADES cross-cultural and HUES LGBTQ+ peer mentoring programs (graduate.asu.edu/professionaldevelopment/mentoring) lend themselves to exploration of affinities or identities, social development or community involvement.

Faculty mentoring:

Strong faculty mentoring relationships are integral to graduate student success, allowing students to build professional competencies and gain valuable research opportunities and perspectives.

See the Graduate College Graduate Mentoring Network webpage (graduate.asu.edu/professional-development/mentoring) for more resources and information on faculty mentoring, and to access the Graduate Faculty search tool.