Guidelines for the Mentor

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OUR MISSION

The purpose of the Mentor Program is to help first-year students to make a smooth transition and to provide a sense of community among women at Rensselaer. Pairing incoming women with upper class women students in a mentor relationship will foster a supportive environment, a connectedness to Rensselaer, and encouragement to persist in disciplines where women are an underrepresented minority.

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WHAT IS A MENTOR?

According to Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, a mentor is “a trusted guide or counselor; tutor; coach”.

MAKING THE FIRST CONNECTION

Whether you’re a first-time mentor or an old pro, we’re glad to have you! Your friendship and encouragement will make a world of difference in the lives and careers of your fellow Rensselaer women students.

If you haven’t already read the cover letter that accompanied your red folder, please read it! In addition to your mentee’s name and contact information, the letter includes a few tips for when and how to make your first connection and how to sustain a successful mentoring partnership. This brochure contains additional information and tips for contacting and sustaining a strong partnership with your mentee.

The Mentor Program was created to help first-year women students transition smoothly to Rensselaer. In college, women typically look for appropriate communities that provide the means for socialization, friendship, and achieving their academic goals. On the Rensselaer campus, where women are a minority population, the Mentor Program provides critical mass for women to develop community and to network and meet other students with broad interests and talents. As a mentor, your mentee will look to you as a trusted advisor, friend, or big sister. Being friendly, supportive and encouraging your mentee to take part in the many programs and activities that Rensselaer has to offer is the key to being a successful mentor. For help with that all-important first step towards beginning the relationship, just turn the page...
FIRST CONTACT SUGGESTIONS

1. Write out a list of things you want to talk about. This will help you to think ahead about questions you may be asked and will help avoid awkward silences.

2. Call, send email, or write a letter to your mentee, preferably in the month of July.

3. Explain the Mentor Program and why you decided to be a mentor.

4. Share some of your experiences and funny stories; please—don’t share scary stories!

5. Put yourself in her shoes; remember what it was like for you.

6. Don’t push! If she’s not responding, ask her to suggest another time for you call back.

7. Ask if she has any questions.

8. Ask her some questions, but don’t make her feel like she’s being interrogated!

9. Find out if she feels confident about what to bring to campus.

10. Offer to help her move in on August 24 if your move-in date coincides with hers.

11. Tell her about college, the classes, the workload, the social life, the clubs and sports, and the Union.

12. Ask what classes she’s scheduled for.

13. Find out if she can make it to the Ice Cream Social on Wednesday, September 8, 8 to 9:30PM in Mother’s. If yes, arrange a location to meet so you can walk to the social together.

14. Ask her about her family and how they feel about her leaving, how she feels about leaving her family. Tell her how your family survived.

15. Offer to speak to her parents to see if they have any questions. (They may want to know: Is it safe there? What does she need to bring? Should we visit?)

16. Be friendly, outgoing and assuring.

17. Offer to contact her again before she leaves for campus to answer any last minute questions.
QUESTIONS YOUR MENTEE MAY ASK

1. How are the courses structured?
2. How competitive are students?
3. How much homework can I expect?
4. How difficult are the courses?
5. How much free time will I have?
6. Is it hard to get help with difficult subjects?
7. How easy is it to get in touch with professors?
8. Do you live on campus or off?
9. How is the social life?
10. How safe is the campus?
11. What do you do for fun on weekends?
12. How is the food?
13. How do you like having a roommate?
14. What do you like best about Rensselaer?
TWELVE STRATEGIES FOR AN EFFECTIVE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

1. **Positive Attitude**: Encourage your mentee to approach life and goals with enthusiasm and to be accepting of self and others.

2. **Valuing**: Encourage your mentee to examine beliefs and ideals in an effort to establish personal values and goals.

3. **Open-Mindedness**: Encourage your mentee to keep an open mind to ideas.

4. **Interrelations**: Make the interactions between yourself and your mentee situations of sharing, caring and empathy.

5. **Creative Problem-Solving**: Encourage your mentee to use creative solving process.

6. **Effective Communication**: Encourage your mentee to be an attentive listener and an assertive questioner.

7. **Discovery**: Encourage your mentee to be an independent thinker.

8. **Strengths and Uniqueness**: Encourage your mentee to recognize individual strengths and uniqueness and to build on them.

9. **Confidence**: Assist your mentee in developing self-confidence.

10. **Awareness**: Stress that an individual be aware of the environment, be intuitive, be problem-sensitive, and be ready to make the most of opportunities.

11. **Risk-Taking**: Encourage your mentee to be a risk-taker and to be an active participant, rather than a spectator.

12. **Flexibility**: Share with your mentee the importance of being flexible and adaptable in attitudes and action, looking for alternatives, and seeing situations/persons from different perspectives.

TEN TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE MENTORING

1. **Maintain Regular Contact.**
   Mentors should assume they are the givers in the relationship. Consistent contact models dependability and builds trust. At least weekly contact is recommended, but twice a month is expected.

2. **Always be honest.**
   Trust and respect are the foundations on which mentorship is built.

3. **Avoid being judgmental of a mentee’s life situations.**
   Acceptance without conditions communicates that your concern comes without strings attached.

4. **Avoid excessive gift giving.**
   And don’t do for a student what she can do for herself. Your greatest gift is to help a person discover his/her own solutions to the problems.

5. **Don’t expect to have all of the answers.**
   Sometimes just listening attentively is all people need.

6. **Help your student access resources**
   and expand support networks. Discuss the importance of maintaining positive relationships.

7. **Be clear about your expectations and your boundaries.**
   Set up ground rules and communicate them.

8. **Avoid being overwhelmed by your mentee’s problems.**
   Remain calm and dispassionate to help your mentee solve problems.

9. **Respect confidentiality.**
   Good friends do.

10. **If the relationship seems to stall, hang in there.**
    Contact program director if problems or concerns arise.

Source: Mentoring Myths and Tips
Nancy Henry, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
DO’S AND DON'TS OF MENTORING

Do’s
• Do be friendly, honest, positive, informative, and upbeat.
• Do tell your mentee about your experiences.
• Do offer to get together.
• Do exchange telephone numbers and email addresses.
• Do tell her about the fun side of RPI life. College isn’t all work and no play.
• Do give her a personal campus tour after she gets her schedule.
• Do discuss male/female ratio and explain that she doesn’t have to feel intimidated by the large numbers of men. The women here are powerful and offer community!
• Do reassure her that it is safe here.
• Do tell her that there are people here to help if she has a problem: Counseling Center, Learning Center, Writing Center, Tutors.
• Do talk about what to bring and what not to bring.
• Do discuss dorms and roommates.
• Do give information about clubs, organizations, and sports.
• Do ask about her family.
• Do ask about her interests.
• Do offer help with the campus computers – explain RCS, e-mail, the Internet.
• Do offer to help with the telephone system – setting up voice mail, access codes, etc.
• Do offer to help with purchasing books.
• Do show her the library and how to use it.
• Do take her to campus events, both informative and fun – activities fair, movies, special lectures.
• Do talk about what Troy is like – ask about her concerns.
• Do introduce her to the network of women on campus: Greek life, Society of Women Engineers (SWE).
• Do introduce her to your friends.

Don’ts
• Don’t be negative.
• Don’t scare mentee about academics, social life on campus, etc.
• Don’t pressure mentee.
• Don’t be her mother.
• Don’t wait for her to ask questions.
• Don’t end conversation too quickly.
• Don’t complain.
• Don’t ignore her.
• Don’t intimidate her.
• Don’t push yourself on her.
• Don’t forget to make first contact!
**Suggested Activities and Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Date/Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduce yourself – call or correspond with your mentee</td>
<td>Summer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greet mentee on move-in day (if possible)</td>
<td>August 24</td>
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<td>Help her buy books or loan her your old ones</td>
<td>August 30-September 3</td>
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<td>Help familiarize her with campus computing system</td>
<td>August 30-September 3</td>
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<td>Accompany her to the Activities Fair, Field House</td>
<td>September 2, 6 to 9PM</td>
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<td>Invite her to the Ice Cream Social, Mother’s, Union</td>
<td>September 8, 8 to 9:30PM</td>
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<td>Discuss adding or dropping courses</td>
<td>Month of September</td>
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<td>Call her after her first test</td>
<td>Day of first test</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invite her to the Pumpkin Design Party, Mother’s</td>
<td>October 21, 8 to 9:30PM</td>
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<td>Invite her to the Mentor Program Thanksgiving Dinner, Russell Sage Dining Hall</td>
<td>November 19, 5 to 8PM</td>
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<td>Invite her to Mentor Program Brunch, Mother’s</td>
<td>December 5, 1 to 2:30PM</td>
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<td>Invite her to Massage and De-Stress Session, Ansell Lounge, Jonsson Engineering Center</td>
<td>December 13, 7 to 9PM</td>
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<td>Schedule Finals Week study breaks</td>
<td>December 15-17; 20-21</td>
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<td>Invite her to attend Big Red Freakout! (buy tix early)</td>
<td>February 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invite her to Valentine Cookie Decorating, Mother’s</td>
<td>February 8, 8 to 9:30PM</td>
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<td>Invite her to become a mentor to a first-year student</td>
<td>April 5, 6 is mentor training</td>
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<td>Invite her to participate in Design Your Future Day</td>
<td>April 16, 9AM to 3PM</td>
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<td>Schedule Finals Week study breaks</td>
<td>May 9-13</td>
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<td>Offer to meet for a meal – out or in the dining hall</td>
<td>Anytime</td>
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<td>Offer to take her shopping</td>
<td>Anytime</td>
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<td>Invite her to a meeting for a club you belong to or one that both of you are interested in joining</td>
<td>Anytime</td>
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<td>Have a women’s movie night (can do with other mentor/mentee pairs)</td>
<td>Anytime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invite mentee to RPI sports events</td>
<td>Anytime</td>
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