Qualities of a Peer Mentor

Mentoring needs to be more than “just another job” in order for it to be successful. Certain qualities are needed to help and successfully communicate with students: proactivity, flexibility, enthusiasm, leadership, and professionalism. These are values required of a Mentoring for Success Program employee.

Being More than Just a Tutor

Signing up for a peer mentor does not guarantee that a student will pass a class. As a mentor, the focus is not on teaching course material, but on fostering good study habits and learning techniques. The goal is to prepare students not only for their assigned classes, but for current and future challenges. By developing life skills, students become ready to be successful for their college careers and beyond.

Proactivity

Students often do not seek out help when they need it. A good mentor must be proactive. If a student is slow to respond, send reminders; following up with phone calls demonstrates commitment and sincerity. Coming prepared to meetings and adjusting them to meet students’ needs, meeting in places conducive to study, and keeping track of and managing events in a calendar are all examples of proactivity.

Flexibility

In order to accommodate and serve as many students as is possible, a mentor must be flexible both in schedule and in mind. Some students can only meet once or twice a week. Some students may benefit more being tutored in a group. Being able to reasonably accommodate a variety of students with different schedules and learning styles is necessary. Moreover, a mentor needs to recognize that students have different needs – some study techniques and environments may work better for some than others. Flexibility is critical to effective mentoring.

Enthusiasm

Part of the job of a peer mentor is to help students become enthusiastic about school and learning, and to help to develop a positive attitude toward challenges. Enthusiasm is infectious: a mentor must show enjoyment and a positive attitude while mentoring. That enthusiasm is likely to spread to the student.

Leading by Example

A mentor should have goals for the student, but no solid expectations. Some Mentoring for Success Program participants are only a short step away from high school and may not be completely ready to begin living on their own. Expecting a student to have an instantaneous transformation from the maturity of a high school student to that of a college student is unrealistic. It is up to the mentor to set the example and demonstrate how to be a successful college student.

Professionalism

Being a Mentoring for Success Program peer mentor is more than just helping out students: a mentor’s professional cultivation is also important. A Mentoring for Success Program peer mentor must be able to communicate politely and respectfully with the program director and other program employees, maintain accurate documentation, and attend all program meetings. The program provides mentors with valuable experience working and behaving professionally, at times simulating real-life environments, in order to prepare them for their work environments after college.
A Mentoring for Success Program peer mentor serves as a role model to students. This includes displaying the kind of professional skills and behavior that can help students gain valuable life skills and become more employable after graduation. As with any other professional job, formal writing and compliance with the policies and procedures set forth by employers are an integral aspect of being a Mentoring for Success Program peer mentor. The following chart breaks down how the hours are distributed in a typical work week of a peer mentor:

Further clarification of duties:

- **Mentoring**: Helping students develop the skills they need to live a healthy college life. Mentoring can include referring a mentee to various resources on campus (e.g., Writing Center, Counseling Center, etc.), teaching good study habits, etc.

- **Tutoring**: Assisting students with curriculum planning by providing supplemental help beyond course materials. Tutoring can consist of clarifying and expanding on concepts, creating session plans (i.e., practice math problems, practice quizzes), etc.

- **Communication**: Checking and responding to WMU email, setting up appointments, updating Webmail Plus calendar, etc.

- **Participation**: Participating in the Mentoring for Success Program forum online, participating in discussions during staff meetings, sharing your suggestions and ideas for program improvement with the program director and other program staff, etc.

- **Documentation**: Updating the student database activity logs, developing ISPs with students, maintaining student sign-in logs, tracking reward points, filling out time sheets, etc.

- **Attendance**: Attending bi-weekly performance review meetings with the program director, staff meetings, DMA activities, etc.

- **Miscellaneous**: Session planning, handling student cancellation/no-shows, other duties as required by the program, department, funding agency, etc.