

Good to Know:

**Mentoring First Gen Students
for Career and Life**

Mentorship allows the best of what we have learned and the lessons along the way, to be shared and passed to the next generation. For First-Gen students, there are many important topics to discuss.

Professional mentors can really make an impact on First-Gen students especially when considering that First-Gen students are the very first among their family to attend college and to have the goal and vision of a career that they have not seen pursued in their own family. In comparison to their peers, many First-Gen students do not have built-in role models and examples in their personal life to lean on and learn from, thus the incredibly valuable bond that a mentor can build and a void that they can fill. Consider mentorship as a powerful opportunity to build a valuable relationship with your protege and a community of students and future business leaders who also value and support a multitude of different backgrounds and experiences.

What do First-Gen proteges want from their mentor? Many are not quite sure. However, as the mentor, you can guide the conversations and communications by considering what is important to the average First-Gen student.

- First-Gen students value building a community and relationships. So, getting to know your protege is important, finding commonalities and relatability.
- First-Gen students experience a knowledge gap and may have a hard time ***knowing what they don't know***. They may not initiate questions, so it is good to consider a list of

important “topics” to lead early conversations until you get to know your protege.

- Sharing qualities and characteristics of effective personal communication: eye contact, listening well, walking with confidence, maintaining good posture, etc. are so vital in preparing First-Gen students to make a good impression.
- Helping First-Gen students develop their professional skills such as resume and cover letter writing, elevator pitch, and interview and communication etiquette. The Business Career Center in Smeal can assist with all of this and as a mentor it would mean a lot to look over their resume, make suggestions, give feedback, and share praise.
- Sharing personal and professional experiences to support and provide insight into resources, career exploration, and professional development. Small details along the way can be very meaningful in helping First-Gen students grow and build the confidence to market themselves for jobs.
- Listen to your protege before giving your own opinion. Advising your protege on best practices. Serving as a support system, resource, and guide for your protege. Suggesting possible courses of action and helping them think through and act on concerns.

Serving as a mentor, you can have major positive impact, provide an amazing learning opportunity, and guide a First-Gen student to possibilities they did not know existed.

Professionals who choose to serve as a mentor can pass down their wisdom, knowledge, and know-how and share strategies for success with their proteges. Mentors can also inspire First-Gen students with their presence as relatable examples of success, both personally and professionally.

Articles related to First Gen students and Mentoring:

Sources:

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