

The First Conversation Overview

The first conversation with your mentee can set the tone for the rest of your relationship. What should you talk about during your first meeting? Here are a few suggestions:

- Clarify expectations about the extent to which you will offer guidance concerning personal as well as professional issues as you work together to define learning objectives.
- Discuss and define common goals and focus.
- Discuss what you can offer: information, skills, experience.
- Decide how you will interact in the future.
- Discuss any questions or concerns.

Getting to know each other and establishing expectations for how you both plan to build your partnership are two critical activities that begin at your first meeting. You may wish to use the following questions to guide your initial conversation.

Get Acquainted (Help the Student Understand your Background)

- What is your professional experience?
- What do you enjoy most about your current position?
- How long have you worked for UNT?
- Where did you go to school?
- Where did you grow up?
- How do you spend your time away from work?
- What are your interests and hobbies?
- What are some of your favorite places to go in Denton?

DO's

- Motivate, inspire and encourage your mentee.
- Develop a balance between challenging and supporting your mentee. Each student will be different, and a larger amount of support may be necessary for younger students.
- Be patient and build trust (uphold the core values of privacy and confidentiality).
- Ask questions and give feedback.
- Encourage goal setting and achievement of those goals.
- Offer alternative perspectives. Encourage self-directed reflection, analysis and problem solving.
- Establish boundaries with your mentee.
- Take the time to familiarize yourself with career resources relevant to your industry. These resources can supplement your personal resources.

DON'Ts

- Simply provide solutions, but instead advise or identify resources to assist the student to make their own decisions.
- Assume responsibility for the student's academic or career success.
- Offer "personal" counseling or life coaching that is not related to professional or personal development.
- Neglect agreed commitments without explanation.
- Hesitate to contact your mentee if you have not heard from him/her for a while.