

Mentor Communication Guide:

Tips for Creating Successful Mentor-Mentee Relationships

Communicating with your mentees can be tricky sometimes; especially if you are experiencing a low response rate. Hopefully this guide will help you approach the question: “What steps would you take if your Mentee becomes unresponsive to emails and communications?”

Make Yourself Approachable

In order to establish good communication with your mentees, you first need to secure an accessible, more personal, laid back means of communicating. Emails serves great if you already know your mentees will always check their emails, but that might not always be the case. Instead, create a Facebook group, Slack or text group chat.

Also, put yourself in their shoes. Think about how intimidating it might be for a first year to be paired up with a grad student. While you also want to be a guide, teacher, and a resource, you also want to be a friend. That is how you will be able to help your mentees beyond the scope of academics.

How do you become friends? Share personal experiences. Share some of your mistakes. And remember, it takes time. Winter and Spring Quarters usually are the most overwhelming for undergraduate students and they start to disconnect. Be patient, persistent and positive in your approach.

Give Personal Space

The JUMP program focuses on the growth of its members through mentorship. It is not required for graduate mentors to have to investigate the whereabouts of their mentees if they are not communicating. This means that you do not need to contact friends, family, professors, or the police if your mentee is not responding. Remember that college offers certain freedoms for growth and development and you do not want to take such freedoms away from your mentee. If your mentee feels comfortable, they will share with you what has kept them busy or challenges they have faced; that is why the “Make Yourself Approachable” is so important (and sharing your personal mistakes and failures normalizes and validates their experiences, so they do not feel alone).

Understand Your Group

From the first day you meet your mentees, you should be getting to know them. Get to know what they are interested in, what their priorities are, or what their major insecurities about college are. This will help you plan your meetings with mentees, how to best contact them, and

take into advantage that you know your group to keep them interested in your mentorship and the great things you have to offer. In addition, the sooner you create a sense of community within your group the better.

Now the Good Stuff: Reaching Out

When contacting your mentee, it is good to keep some things in mind: try to understand why they may be unresponsive (e.g. Finals or Midterms season), show that you care, and “you get what you put into it.”

- It can be hard for freshmen to adjust to college. With the quarter system priorities change quickly, and it can be hard to keep up. When you contact your mentee, acknowledge these common struggles.
- JUMP is not a job or obligation, however, it is a commitment that both mentors and mentees make. Show that you are committed to your mentees by giving them opportunities to learn from. Let them know when they can study with you, have 1:1s with you, or maybe even join you for a gym session (once you get to know your group you will know how to cater specifically to their interests)
- Yes, being a good mentor is a big commitment. All of the above are just suggestions; there are many different ways that you can encourage your mentee to continue communicating with you. It is up to you to determine how much time you are willing to put into being a mentor. Sometimes it is easy to start of by asking “what is something one is bound to do?” Everyone’s got to eat at some point, study, distress, or go grocery shopping. If it is hard to get your mentees to make time to meet with you, take that factor way. Just remember that it will also take your time to engage with them.

Sample Emails:

Be Intentional: Hi Friend, Just checking in. Let me know when you’re free to connect. Hope the quarter is going well.

Be Specific: Hey! Want to grab a cup of coffee at CUPS today/tomorrow?

Be flexible: I haven’t heard from you in while/ or you missed the last meeting, there’s a JUMP Meeting/Lounge coming up, let’s go! If not, keep me posted on your availability. Hope to hear from you soon :)

Hope this helps , we appreciate your commitment to helping our students feel welcome, included and grow. You can always contact the JUMP Coordinators for guidance or more suggestions at jump@eng.ucsd.edu.