



**The Weissman Center for Leadership and the Liberal Arts  
The Speaking, Arguing, and Writing Program  
122 Porter Hall**

**Suggestions for Faculty to Make the Most of Your SAW Mentor**

**The Most Common Mentoring Roles**

- Conducting one-on-one sessions with students outside of class to discuss individual writing or speaking projects
- Facilitating small group discussions or writing/speaking-related activities in class
- Holding workshops in or out of class on writing/speaking-related topics
- Assisting the professor to facilitate whole-class discussion

**Expectations and Clear Communication**

- Establish prior to the start of classes a clear set of goals and expectations upon which both you and your mentor can agree. Keep a copy of your expectations worksheet on hand to use as a reference throughout the semester.
- Be flexible. Just as the needs of a class often evolves over a semester, so too might the goals and needs of the mentorship. Keep the lines of communication open so that you and your mentor can revise plans when necessary.
- Be a mentor to your mentor. Keep in mind that this is a learning experience for your mentor as well as your students; provide constructive feedback by letting your mentor know what areas she could improve *and* what she has been doing particularly well.
- Keep in contact regularly and help your mentor to feel comfortable coming to you with questions. Come to an agreement early on about how the mentor will approach you if she has a problem or how you will address a situation if one of you is uncomfortable with how the semester is progressing.
- Remember that your mentor is not a “mini professor” but a peer to your students; if you understand that her role is to take advantage of the learning opportunities unique to the peer dynamic—not to imitate or replicate the expertise of the professor—you both may have greater satisfaction with the work that is accomplished.

## **Introducing Your Mentor to the Class**

- Be sure to introduce your mentor to the class and explain clearly what the mentor's role will be.
- Considering including the mentor's role and contact information on your syllabus.
- Make clear to students that the mentor is different from a TA. While a TA is often responsible for teaching course content and assigning grades, mentors are a resource for helping students to develop their writing and public speaking abilities.
- Determine with your mentor the expectations of and process for students to receive assistance from the mentor. Will students be required to work with her or will such sessions be optional? Are there specific assignments that will receive the greatest attention? How and when should students contact her to arrange a session?
- Mentors tend to be extremely generous with their time and sympathetic to their peers. Ask your students to request the mentor's help through the process you have established and with a reasonable amount of advanced notice. Students should be instructed not to approach the mentor when she is "off duty" in the dining halls or dormitories to plead for last-minute help.
- Encourage your students to take advantage of the resources offered by the mentor, and remind them to respect her time as well so that she does not become overwhelmed (mentors are only able to work 10 hours per week). Remind your students that assistants in the SAW Center are also always available to them for help with their writing and speaking.

## **Successful Mentorship for Student Assignments**

- Provide your students with written assignment sheets for all speaking and writing projects. This will be an invaluable resource for both your mentor and your students.
- Prior to any significant writing or speaking assignments, find a time to meet with the mentor to be sure she is clear about your expectations of the students. This might include logistical criteria such as paper length and citation style as well as broader criteria such as specific questions that the paper should address, preferred strategies for organization, and overall purpose. Inform the mentor of the relative weight these criteria may hold.
- Take advantage of your mentor's perspective as a student. Consider revising the assignment sheet to clarify expectations for students as a result of your conversations.
- Please do not ask your mentor to participate in the formal evaluation of students' work.

## **Successful Mentorship for Whole-Class Activities**

- Meet with your mentor to collaboratively devise creative ways in which the mentor might assist your students. Consider the following ideas:
- Have the mentor hold a workshop for your class on an aspect of writing or speaking that you would like your students to develop (e.g. introducing quotations). The mentor can supply relevant handouts and hold the workshop at a time that is convenient to everyone.
- Have the mentor assist in facilitating class discussions. Share with her the goals of the discussion and topics you wish to cover and let her help to steer the conversation in this direction. You might also consider having a mentor lead a workshop in class on how students can develop strategies for successful class participation.

### **Things to Keep in Mind**

- Your mentor's work should be focused solely on providing speaking and writing support for the students. Please do not request her assistance as an office or classroom aide. She is not responsible for making photocopies, recording grades, getting coffee, running errands, or other such tasks.
- Your mentor should be given advanced notice regarding any activities you will ask her to facilitate in or out of class so that she has adequate time to prepare. Please do not put the mentor in the position to have to make decisions on the spot about participation in an activity.
- The majority of the mentor's 10 hours per week should be spent working with students in or out of class. If you are asking the mentor to read the course material along with the students, consider selecting only the most pertinent readings or sections for the mentor.
- Your mentor is not an editor. She is not responsible for students' final written products or speeches. She will work with your students' to develop transferable writing and speaking strategies, some of which will manifest in the project at hand, some of which will be evident over time.

### **Additional Resources for Faculty**

- Please visit the SAW Program website ([www.mtholyoke.edu/go/saw](http://www.mtholyoke.edu/go/saw)) which contains faculty resources available for download.
- The Coordinator of SAW, Laura Greenfield, is always available as a resource for faculty and is eager to develop relationships across the disciplines in order to collaboratively devise speaking and writing support for all students. Whether you have broad questions about negotiating the writing and speaking components of your course, more specific questions related to your work with your mentor this semester, or ideas to share about teaching writing and speaking, her door is always open. Email: [lgreenfi@mtholyoke.edu](mailto:lgreenfi@mtholyoke.edu) / Phone: x2173 / Offices: 117 Porter Hall and the SAW Center in Williston Library.