Fifty Ways to Add Your Mentor
(w/ apologies to Paul Simon)
Derived from end-of-term evaluations and roundtable discussions
UH Writing Mentors, F09/S10

1. **Represent the mentor on the syllabus.** Include specific information about your mentor on the syllabus, including her or his stipulated roles, what the mentor is or is not expected to do (no grading, ever), contact information. Make it clear what the attendance policy is for conferences.

2. **Integrate mentor conferences into the syllabus.** Integrate a required mentor conference into each major writing assignment or think of some other way to keep the students working regularly with the mentor in order to avoid a deluge/drought conferencing pattern.

3. **Collaborate.** Ask your mentor to review your representation of roles and expectations and revise as necessary. Seek input, as mentors are developing their own ideas about teaching, too.

4. **Schedule meta-talks.** Set aside time during the semester for meta-talk about the class, i.e., not just about specific students or assignments but also to touch base about the evolving role.

5. **Support the intake interview.** Make it clear to students that the intake interview is important, valued, and required.

6. **Suggest self-identified goals for the course.** Ask students to identify a handful of concrete goals for the course, in collaboration with the mentor. Mentors can use these goals periodically in conferences with students.

7. **Make the long view a part of your first class meetings.** For many students, this class may be their first in college. For some, the first in college for anyone in their family. Help them see how this vital work in English 100 really is laying a foundation for their future as a writer. Stress that the mentors share this orientation and want help students glimpse their futures as writers.

8. **Refer to the mentor as part of specific activities.** Integrate references to the mentor at specific and propitious points in the syllabus.

9. **Refer to the mentor in class as a writer.** Students appreciate mentors' abilities to speak to them both as fellow students and as a more experienced writer. An occasional comment from you acknowledging this expertise bolsters the mentor's authority.

10. **Make the mentor a library guide.** Stipulate one of your mentor's roles as a liaison and guide to the libraries. In addition to the workshop (if you organize one through this revived service), direct students to work one-on-one with the mentor in increasing information literacy (one of our FW Hallmarks). Mentors should help students develop this literacy both virtually, using Voyager, and literally, by voyaging on foot with a student or students to Hamilton.

11. **Make the mentor a UH Mānoa guide.** Consider writing activities that would position the mentor as a guide to college life, both generally and specifically to our campus.

**UH Writing Mentors, August 2009 Workshop**
12. **Brainstorm writing transfer.** Discuss with the mentor those aspects of assignments that you imagine could easily transfer to writing in other courses or in later workplace writing.

13. **Let the mentor guide portfolios.** Consider positioning the mentor as a guide to helping students begin a writing portfolio—3D or electronic—that they will add to in future semesters. (Consider attending the workshop on using portfolios in teaching writing to be offered by Nedra Reynolds through the Center for Teaching Excellence in the fall.)

14. **Let the mentor orient students to WI courses.** Consider positioning the mentor as a guide to the Writing Intensive courses they will later take, so that part of the mentor’s scope of activities might include previewing such courses with students and brainstorming about preparing for them.

15. **Plan the mentor's in-class persona.** Mentors can role model in class by taking notes and participating. Plan in advance what you each see as optimal participation.

16. **Let the mentor lead small groups.** Mentors can be valuable members of small-group discussions, judging when to add a comment and when the group dynamics are ok.

17. **Let the mentor model peer review.** Helping students learn how to give productive and supportive review takes practice, and mentors can help you model such review.

18. **Call on the mentor each day for announcements.** Set aside a minute or two at the beginning and/or end of class for the mentor to “advertise” for conference signups, apprise students of scheduling changes, or other events/resources that might be of interest to students.

19. **If you’re standing in front of your class, wondering whether the students understand what you’ve been explaining, call on the mentor to paraphrase your main points or to ask clarifying question.** Sometimes hearing an explanation from a different voice, in different words, can be all it takes for an explanation to become clear to students. The mentor is also able to ask clarifying questions that students may have not yet articulated or may be reticent to ask.

20. **Ask the mentor to strategize aloud in class.** After presenting students with a complex assignment, ask the mentor how he/she might begin to approach it. Just hearing how the mentor breaks down a complex task into steps might help students feel less intimidated and get started sooner.

21. **Convey the mentor's value as assignment barometer.** The most often noted topic in mentoring conferences for F07 was reviewing and explaining the assignment. The mentors' job is not to critique the assignment, but if s/he sees a pattern of misunderstanding, to convey it to you. If you revisit the assignment in class, acknowledge the mentor's help.

22. **Let the mentor run an in-class workshop.** If you and the mentor choose, provide some points in the schedule of activities where mentors are running the class. The activity should include NO grading, but if properly planned, it can signal in yet another way the mentor's value.
23. **Let the mentor run an out-of-class workshop.** If you already know of recurrent problems for specific assignments in the past, schedule out-of-class workshops that the mentor will run so as to teach to several students at once.

24. **Require cover memos for assignments.** Require students to include commentary on their composing processes, including work with the mentor, for finished assignments. Stress that the memo is to help you and the mentor understand students' composing processes. Share the memos and your observations on them with the mentor.

25. **Plan mentor activities at all stages of writing.** To counter students' perceptions that mentors' roles are primarily to "edit," integrate the mentor's work into brainstorming and drafting stages, too.

26. **Require students to compose their personalized editing checklists.** Teach them to compile it with the help of the mentor and to use it systematically to catch their own errors.

27. **Give the mentor copies of graded student work.** The mentor can then review your comments and build off of your suggestions in one-on-one conferences. Mentors who are familiar with the instructor’s grading practices and expectations can better steer students toward success.

28. **Allow students to revise essays after receiving an initial grade and/or comments.** Mentors can help students interpret and apply your comments to their revisions. One way to set up this policy is to give students a limited “revise and resubmit” window, allowing resubmission only if certain criteria have been met: for example, meeting with the mentor, changing at least 25% of the essay’s content, writing a cover memo that documents revisions. Some instructors have found that averaging the resubmitted paper’s grade with the paper’s initial grade motivates students to submit their best work at each stage of the process.

29. **Add the Mentor to your MyUH Page.** Enable your mentor to receive class announcements and send emails to students. For directions, see item #10 at


50. **Assign a Diagnostic Essay.** In the first weeks of class, assign students a diagnostic essay. Set up an appointment to discuss perceived strengths and weaknesses in student writers with your mentor. Strategize for how the mentors can individualize instruction and/or offer workshops in problem areas in response these diagnostics.