Key Mentor-Supportive Practices,
Based upon 3 Years of Research on the UH Writing Mentors Program
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1. Require an intake interview with the mentor for all students

Intakes should ideally take place in the first 1-2 (or 3) weeks of the semester.
Mentors learn about students’ writing backgrounds and interests and create a foundation for future conferences. They build rapport, explain their role, and answer any student questions.

2. Require/Reward Consequent Writing Conferences with the Mentor Throughout the Semester

Build writing conferences into your syllabus as an important part of the course.
Include a written policy / consequences for missed conferences.
A recommended number of required writing conferences per student is 3-4.

3. Think Hard About Conferencing Cycles so that Mentors Experience a Steady Stream of Students Rather than a Boom/Bust Scenario

Consider building a mentor conference into major writing assignments.
Find a way to get students meeting with mentors about their writing early in the semester.
Help students to experience mentoring at various stages of assignments: in the brainstorming/ topic selection phase, during research, during drafting, and during revisions.
Previous mentors have observed that portfolio systems tend to facilitate regular, meaningful conferences and continued revision.

4. Make Your Grading Practices and Expectations for Assignments as Transparent and Explicit as Possible

Consider employing some combination of the following: using a rubric, listing specific “criteria for success” on assignment sheets, and/or availing students of multiple examples of successful student papers.
When mentors know what the instructor values in an assignment, they can coach the students much more effectively.

5. Build in Regular Meta-Discourse with the Mentor

Schedule a regular time to discuss with the mentor conferencing trends, concerns, observations, expectations, etc. (Weekly conferences work well for some instructor-mentor pairings, while other pairs have preferred to touch base for a few minutes before or after class.)

6. Consider Giving Your Mentor a Teaching Role, However Limited

Consider reserving a day or two for your mentor to teach the class. (Under normal circumstances, MA mentors should teach no more than 1 full week of class.)
Consider building up to a full class period of teaching with some smaller, scaffolded teaching opportunities: i.e. involving the mentor in daily announcements, having the mentor lead a 10-minute mini-lesson on a specific issue, splitting the class in half for an activity and asking the mentor to take half of the class, etc. . .
If the mentor does teach a lesson, provide specific feedback: offer your observations on the lesson’s strengths and areas for improvement; help the mentor thing through such issues as pacing, student involvement, and performance.
Call on your mentor as a substitute teacher if the need arises. (Not to be abused.)