Mentors are English MA students (and in some cases, PhD students) whose primary duty is to help every English 100 student in your course do as well as he or she can. In the Spring 2009 semester, we will have 14 mentors assisting faculty in courses.

We have support from the Chancellor's office for this pilot initiative through spring of 2010, and we hope that our documentation of its successes will enable us to garner support thereafter. You can learn more about the initiative (and, by the way, find some links to writing support that you might use as part of your syllabus by clicking on "Mentors' Resources") at the mentoring website: http://www/english.hawaii.edu/mentors/

In matching faculty with mentors, we solicit information from each party to help us achieve the best working partnership. The web site above enables you to glean quite a bit about how mentors and faculty work together, and the comments below fill in some details. Although it might seem as if working with a mentor constitutes more effort on your part, most faculty to date have found that the time saved by having this extra teacher coaching students individually, along with the rewards of seeing better writing in English 100, more than offset the time you will devote to working with your mentor.

Here are some additional details:

Mentors log each conference with students on a standardized form, and we meet with them regularly in roundtables to troubleshoot and share ideas for further development. We also will solicit mid-term and end-of-term evaluations by students, and evaluations by students, mentors, and faculty at the end of the term. This documentation is focused on the mentoring initiative and not on any section of English 100 per se. We need the documentation to make our case for further funding to the Chancellor, and we also use the documentation for research publications as per our university IRB guidelines that assure anonymity to all involved.

Mentors attend all classes and take notes, both to model note-taking for students and to capture details on lesson content that can support their follow-up with individual students. In addition to attending all classes and taking notes on how they might help individual students perform well on assignments, in many cases mentors have helped faculty run in-class discussion groups, manage peer review, and in some cases try their hands at teaching a class session. For instructional faculty, mentors have thus provided valuable assistance in the classroom, all the while helping us renew and adapt practices (not to mention manage to connect with eighteen-year-olds). For mentors, this initiative offers them invaluable classroom experience as well as the benefit of witnessing an experienced instructor's knowledge and pedagogical practices.
Mentors are NOT TAs in the traditional sense—they do not grade, nor should they record your grades or function otherwise in any way that makes it seem that they are evaluating students. They SHOULD be integrated as much as possible into responding to students' writing—and to the many other aspects of the writing process that can help students move toward full authorship. In fact, our experience in previous semesters has revealed that the most successful mentoring has emerged from strong faculty-mentor coordination that begins even while the syllabus is taking form.

Please complete the attached e-har-mentoring form and return it to me at your earliest convenience. Holly Bruland and I will begin matching instructors and mentors by the beginning of next week so that we can indicate on Banner which sections are mentored, enabling you to anticipate students in your section who are aware of its special configuration.