

Frequently Asked Questions Prospective Mentors

a. What is a mentor?

Mentors are positive role models, good-listeners, advocates and guides. Mentors develop a trust relationship and help the mentee develop skills for academic success, problem solving, emotional and social growth.

b. Would I be a tutor?

Mentors are matched with a Talmadge middle school student (grades 6-8) who is experiencing personal, social, and/or academic challenges. In other words, the children in this program have a variety of needs. Some may have low grades and need help with academics, while others need help in other areas. Mentors are encouraged to help mentees develop problem solving skills that can be applied to a variety of challenges. You will not be a tutor, but it is likely that your mentee will need help with academics.

c. What type of kid will I mentor?

Talmadge middle school students (grades 6-8) who are experiencing personal, social, and/or academic challenges participate in the program. Teachers nominate students who they feel would benefit from working one-on-one with a mentor.

d. What sorts of things will I do with the kid that I mentor?

Each mentor and mentee selects how they will spend their time together. Typically each meeting includes time spent catching up since the last mentoring session, visiting teachers, looking over the mentee's planner, working on assignments, and **having fun**.

e. What type of training will I receive?

All mentors receive training on the stages of mentoring relationships, goal setting, and communicating with teachers and parents. Additionally, since mentors are mandatory reporters, they receive training on recognizing signs of physical and emotional abuse and neglect. Additionally, mentors receive ongoing training January through June as they attend regular mentor meetings.

f. How will being a mentor help me?

The mentoring program allows Western students the opportunity to make a difference in the community, gain real world experience in the domain of helping others, while earning college credit. Mentors have found their experiences mentoring helpful for gaining admission to graduate school, and they report feeling more prepared for entering the job market at graduation compared to students who have not participated in the mentoring program.

g. What is challenging about being a mentor?

- Scheduling time with your mentee can be difficult. Mentors are required to meet with their mentees 4 hours a week, with most of those hours occurring between 3:00-4:30 pm. As a college student, sometimes it is challenging to schedule classes, other work, and activities around mentoring time.
- It is also hard to bond with your mentee and connect in the first couple weeks. Some mentees are shy and don't have much to say. Others are outgoing but difficult to motivate towards work.
- Working with the mentees' family can be frustrating at times. The values of the mentor and the family may be at odds and under those circumstances it may be challenging for the mentor to quietly support the mentee without passing judgment on the family.
- It is challenging to keep up with the mentee's schoolwork, especially when they are behind in their classes or if they do not do work at home or on the weekend.
- It was very challenging to work with someone who was depressed and had a very negative outlook on life.
- Although it is ok to have high expectations about what you can achieve with your mentee, try not to take it too personally when those high expectations don't develop as planned.
- Goal setting and planning can be challenging, especially if the mentee is not interested or motivated to improve.

h. What is rewarding about being a mentor? Former mentors say the following...

- I really felt that my mentee looked up to me as a role model and looked forward to me coming everyday. I loved the support of her family and the support of some staff members. Make sure to collaborate with teachers and have a positive attitude when addressing them about your mentees issues and they will be more than happy to help!
- I really enjoyed how close my mentee and her family and I got. Sometimes communication is difficult but since the program has ended I still hear from my mentees family.
- It was so rewarding to see just the smallest improvements in the mentees behavior, academic performance or attitude. For me it was rewarding just to see my mentee smile and laugh for a change. It was rewarding knowing we were making a difference

in someone's life, even if we were not performing a miracle.

- Mentoring was a rewarding experience in so many ways. Giving somebody something to look forward to, in a case where they otherwise usually dread every aspect of going to school is fantastic. Being able to encourage and witness somebody set goals and strive to improve themselves on several aspects is really a great experience. Positive feedback from parents and teachers who notice a change is also very rewarding. Some aspects of mentoring are challenging but I found it very much worth the effort. I think this is a great program and am very thankful I got the chance to participate. I would recommend this program to anyone who might be interested.

i. What do mentors wear at Talmadge?

Mentors are expected to dress as a teacher might dress when on the Talmadge campus. Additionally, mentors are expected to follow the **Talmadge dress code**.

j. Where does mentoring take place?

All mentoring takes place on the **Talmadge Middle School** campus in Independence Oregon. On the Talmadge campus mentors and mentees often spend time together at the library, in classrooms, or in the school gym. Mentors receive a tour of the Talmadge campus at the start of mentoring. The mentoring program prohibits mentors from taking mentees off campus.

k. What is the time commitment for mentoring? Will I be able to fit it into my class schedule?

Mentors are expected to schedule **4 hours of mentoring at Talmadge Middle School** each week. The specific hours scheduled are up to the mentor and mentee. Mentoring time needs to be scheduled to start immediately after school (at 3:00 pm), and most mentors schedule time Monday through Thursday afternoons. The most typical mentoring schedule is two days a week from 3-5 pm. Mentors need to have at least 2 afternoons per week open from 3:00 pm on to be able to set up a mentoring schedule at Talmadge. **Additionally, mentors are required to attend mentoring meetings scheduled once every two weeks.**

l. How do credits work? Can I apply my mentoring credits towards the Psychology major or minor?

Students who participate in the WOU-Talmadge Middle School Mentoring Program must enroll in 4 credits of Psy 410 Mentoring I for Winter term, and 4 credits of Psy 411 Mentoring II for Spring term. All credits are taken for P/NC. The 4 credits earned in Psy 410 Mentoring I can be applied towards general upper division credits necessary for graduation from WOU. The 4 credits earned in Psy 411 Mentoring II **CAN** be applied towards either a Psychology major or minor.