The rewards of mentoring in the profession of civil engineering are immense — for both mentors with practice experience, management skills or a technical expertise and protégés eager to learn and gain insight. Great civil engineers can and need to be constantly developed and nurtured through effective and ongoing mentoring and training programs to ensure the vital transfer of knowledge.

Mentoring Tips & Strategies Guide for ASCE Protégés has been developed as a starting point and reference for our ASCE protégés who are entering a mentoring relationship (whether online through eCareerMentor or in-person using other ASCE mentoring resources) and for those already engaged in a mentoring relationship through ASCE and wanting to expand its career development value.

ASCE's mentoring programs and resources (www.asce.org/mentoring) are designed to help all civil engineers share their aspirations, questions, and insights with each other. A variety of tools are available that provide guidance toward achieving career and personal goals.

The differences between mentoring and e-mentoring
The use of technology is what sets e-mentoring apart from traditional mentoring programs. ASCE’s e-mentoring program is conducted via the Internet through ASCE’s eCareerMentor secure Web site. While ASCE’s eCareerMentor shares the goals of face-to-face mentoring — establishing a trusting, nurturing, positive relationship between the mentor and protégé — it greatly expands the opportunity for ASCE members from across the globe to find a mentoring relationship that is ideally suited to each participant’s career goals.

Your greatest responsibility in the e-mentoring relationship is to yourself. Make sure that you are doing everything you can to get as much as you can from your relationship with your ASCE eCareerMentor. The more you invest in this relationship, the greater the returns.

Understanding Mentoring: A Two-Way Journey
Mentoring —is fundamentally a two-way relationship. Whether it happens online, in person, over the telephone or some combination of any of these means of communication, to achieve success, you and your mentor must understand that it requires both of you to make your mentoring experience a positive and effective one.

For your part, discuss the following with your mentor to jumpstart your discussions:

- What have I done in my past that makes me a better civil engineer?
- What are my strengths and weaknesses, personally and professionally?

For more information or if you have questions about ASCE mentoring programs, contact careers@asce.org or visit www.asce.org/mentoring.
What is my current professional situation? Do I like what I am doing and where I am heading?
What do I see in my future as a civil engineer?
Am I doing the work that is leading me to what my future in civil engineering should be?
What am I currently involved with that utilizes my civil engineering experience outside of work within my community?
Am I an active ASCE member and active in other professional/community organizations that could further benefit my career/personal growth?

Why become an ASCE Protégé?
First and foremost, being a protégé is intended to help you grow professionally as a civil engineer. The experience may also help you to grow in many other aspects of your life. A mentoring relationship is a way to learn more about yourself, your career opportunities and the world around you. The extent of your growth and level of your learning is really unlimited.

As a protégé, you can create or revise your personal vision, develop a plan to achieve your goals, improve upon your weaknesses, and overcome your challenges with the support of another individual — your ASCE mentor. A personal career vision can be long term or short term — looking one, two, five or twenty years down the road. By working with a mentor, you can achieve greater clarity into your future in civil engineering and set forth on the unique path to achieving your vision.

What a Protégé Should Look for in an ASCE Mentor
The best mentoring connections are most often those in which protégés select their mentors themselves. Further, e-mail connections are proving helpful for people in different geographical locations. Here are some tips on what to look for in a mentor.

The most important consideration is finding someone you can respect, both personally and professionally. If you know of someone who has accomplished things that you admire as a civil engineer and hope to achieve yourself, ask that person for guidance. The person should also be someone you could trust to discuss sensitive career issues with confidentially.

Determine how a mentor could best help you, and what you wish to learn. Set specific learning goals, whether they are tactical (learning how a particular civil engineering skill is done) or strategic (learning what and why a particular technical skill or field of expertise is important). Also set a specific time period to achieve your goals.

If your goal is to advance to a certain level of civil engineering, you might seek someone at that level. Keep in mind the path to advancement may have changed since that person was at your level.

Look for someone who is patient and has the time to go over your goals and work with you on a career development plan. A mentor is someone who not only listens and gives ideas but also supports your aspirations and encourages you to accept challenges, overcome difficulties and motivates and inspires you to reach your full potential as a civil engineer.

Look for someone who is genuinely interested in people, and civil engineers and the advancement of the profession, in particular. The best mentors are people who have a genuine desire to help others and know how to effectively communicate, actively listen, resolve conflict and give appropriate feedback.

11 “To-Dos” with your ASCE eCareerMentor

**DO...**
- Brainstorm exciting career options.
- Discuss interesting civil engineering projects from history.
- Work on your resume together.
- Practice answering questions often asked during civil engineering job interviews.
- Ask about your mentor’s favorite part of his or her job then the least favorite.
- Discuss how your mentor landed his or her job. What kind of training was required?
- Explore the ASCE website together for ways to get more out of the Society experience.
- Inquire if your mentor had an internship or job during college.
- Find out where your mentor sees the future of civil engineering heading. Where are the big opportunities?
- Talk about national and international infrastructure needs and the role of civil engineers in improving living conditions.
- Review recent journal articles on technical subjects from ASCE’s Civil Engineering magazine and other publications.

**6 Protégé “Don’ts”**

**DON’T...**
- Ignore your mentor’s e-mails.
- Agree to do something you don’t want to do.
- Wait for your mentor to initiate the first communication.
- Avoid discussing problems with your mentor.
- Expect your mentor to solve your problems or give you the “right” answer.
- Ask your mentor to set personal or professional goals for you — that’s something you should work on together!
Seek someone who takes pride in the civil engineering firms and organizations that they have worked for or been affiliated with over the years, such as ASCE. Mentors who can articulate and appreciate the unique missions, visions, and values of the key organizations they’ve contributed to are often better able to help protégés identify the types of organizations and career opportunities that will deliver the greatest career satisfaction and align with your unique personal and professional values and goals.

Desirable Personal Traits of ASCE Protégés
A successful mentoring relationship not only depends on the characteristics of the mentor, but also on the characteristics of the protégé. The following are some of the personal qualities that many of ASCE’s most successful protégés possess:

Maintain a positive attitude: This is the most important trait for an ASCE protégé to possess because it is a bright and hopeful attitude that can help you succeed. A protégé with a poor or “defeatist” attitude will not move ahead — the first “bump in the road” will jar this person off course. An optimistic protégé is more likely to tackle difficulties and to stay on course. You should not be afraid to fail.

Be eager: An ASCE protégé has a strong desire to learn new skills and abilities, or a desire to develop existing skills and abilities. A protégé seeks educational and/or training opportunities whenever possible to broaden his or her capabilities. A protégé strives to elevate his or her level of technical skills and professional expertise to gain a greater mastery of the job.

Be a team player: An ASCE protégé must learn how to be a team player to contribute as much as possible to the mentoring relationship. To do this, a protégé should:

- Initiate and participate in discussions
- Seek information and opinions
- Suggest a plan for reaching goals
- Clarify or elaborate on ideas
- Try to ease tension
- Be fair when giving praise and criticism
- Accept praise and criticism agreeably
- Follow through on assignments
- Take time to reflect on the experience or what you learned

Listen with an open mind: An ASCE protégé must be able to ask questions — but also be willing to listen to the answers and point of view being offered by the mentor. If you don’t understand a particular answer or disagree, discuss any confusion or difference of opinion. Listening to understand develops trust in the mentoring relationship. Always be respectful of your mentor’s input and read and listen to his or her responses to your ideas and questions with an open mind. In summary, as Covey aptly wrote, “Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”

What is a Mentor?
A mentor provides listening and sounding board insight in a casual manner — whether that’s done online via e-mail, over the telephone, in person, or via other forms of communications. They go out of their way to help protégés set important goals and foster the development of skills to reach their goals. In ASCE’s formal mentoring relationships, such as those established through eCareerMentor, the mentors have an ongoing, specific commitment to help protégés reach specified goals in a planned manner over a certain period of time.

What is a Protégé?
An ASCE protégé is the recipient of support from an ASCE mentor, who provides direction and coaching to promote success in the protégé’s professional life as a civil engineer. As a protégé, you must be able to identify what you need and from whom you need it. Mentors may focus on your area of technical expertise or interest, or be from your geographic area, or share other interests, such as a focus on engineering projects in developing communities around the world. A protégé must take responsibility for his or her own development and have realistic expectations and appreciation of those who serve as mentors. If you are a protégé, be well prepared before engaging with your mentor and think of ways you might offer assistance so that it is mutually beneficial for both.
Go beyond your comfort zone: An ASCE protégé must be willing to travel from “safe harbor” into the seas of uncertainty. This means that a protégé must move beyond tasks that he or she has mastered and accept new and more challenging experiences. This can be difficult for you because this means giving up the known for the unknown. With each new assigned task, you may ask, “Can I really do this?” You must be willing to take chances. In fact, a mentor should encourage appropriate risk taking.

Common Challenges in Mentor-Protégé Relationships
These days, life can get so busy that both protégés and mentors can find it difficult to find the time and energy to invest in creating the most successful mentoring partnership. This is the single greatest challenge most protégés will face in their professional development in general — setting aside the time and viewing it as a top priority in their advancement as a civil engineer.

At times, protégés are unsure of what they want and don’t know how to conduct a productive conversation with a more seasoned civil engineer. If you find yourself in such a circumstance, it’s best to be upfront about the situation with your mentor. Ask your mentor to share some stories about their careers or past challenges that they’ve overcome. As they address these kinds of questions, you’re very likely to find a theme or issue that you can relate to help build upon the discussion.

Begin your mentoring relationship with the expectation of doing everything that you have committed to doing. The challenges of having a helpful and enjoyable mentoring relationship can be overcome if both parties establish ground rules and set expectations during the initial meeting — whether online, on the telephone or face to face. Both the mentor and protégé must agree to be respectful of each other’s time and discuss needs for confidentiality and other “basics” as to their rules of engagement.

Protégé Tip: After the initial meeting with your mentor, create a brief 6-month or 12-month “Mentoring Statement of Intent” that spells out a few “rules of the road” that you and your mentor have mutually agreed upon as to how you’ll approach your mentoring relationship. This written document will serve as a guide to you and your mentor over time and help resolve any conflicts or clarify any questions that might arise along the way as your relationship evolves. Some recommended items to include in this written “Mentoring Statement of Intent” are:

- Schedule of times to meet (days, times, etc.)
- Initial duration of mentoring relationship (3, 6 or 12 months)
- Appropriate means of communications (e-mail, phone, face-to-face meetings, other)
- Topics of specific interest (5-10 topics to help jumpstart discussions)
- Confidentiality

It’s important to try to establish focused goals as upfront in the relationship as feasible. This will help shape and guide your interactions from the start as well as minimize the risk of engaging with the wrong person as a mentor. There are some excellent civil engineers with superb experience that simply might not be the right match for your personal career goals or goals of the mentoring relationship. Try to establish what these goals are early on.

As stated earlier, everyone’s time is limited these days and everyone’s time is valuable. Respect each other and each other’s time. It’s the golden rule of successful mentoring.

Explore the Internet with Your ASCE eCareerMentor
The Web is an ideal tool and offers a tremendous variety of information that you can explore with a mentor in a distance learning format. Some of this information is useful for investigating career options around the world. Some of it is “big picture” thinking while other Internet research can be highly specific about organizations or projects of interest to you and your mentor.