

ASK THE MENTOR

By Amy Ruberg

“Me, a mentor?” That was my first thought in August 2008 when I was invited to join the new Women of Excellence mentoring program. After all, I was between careers. I wondered what I had to offer. The Office of Career Services reassured me that it had resources and guidelines to help me along. A few encouraging emails later, I signed on and selected my mentee, sophomore Jenna Steiger.

After a brief online exchange, Jenna and I met on campus at Ryan’s Pub for an introductory dinner. I think I was as nervous as she.

Initially, we spent time getting to know each other. I learned about her family, major, activities and career goals. We also set short-term goals for Jenna to begin building a résumé, continue getting good grades and leadership experience, and researching internships.

I took notes during dinner and sent a follow-up summary email with well-wishes. We were on our way—she to work on her résumé and I to learn about mentoring and career development in today’s economy. We agreed to communicate monthly by email to continue to get know each other and to meet again in the spring for review.

In the process, I learned how to mentor and why it helps students succeed.

My goal was to help Jenna go from competent to confident by building her academic and professional skills, along with her confidence and poise. She did well. I also became more competent in mentoring and more confident in my abilities. I relied on the resources, professional development and networking programs offered by Xavier. I also learned about new social media skills, such as LinkedIn.

Sure, Jenna and I had our awkward moments but we always kept communication timely, sincere and focused. Jenna is now a senior, with a major in communications and minors in theology, gender and diversity, and peace studies. She seeks to put her faith in action by working with a non-profit organization. I am grateful to Jenna for her faith in me as well.

I heard a great quotation at a recent job-recruiting conference and it helps explain why mentoring is important: “Your major only takes up one line of your résumé—learn how to fill in the blanks.”

I believe that helping students “fill in the blanks” is our job as mentors.

I hope our story encourages you to consider becoming a mentor. You, a Mentor? It’s been a great experience. Let me send you an encouraging email . . .