

MENTORING 101

As I look back at my many personal and professional life experiences, I realize that I have a lot to be grateful for. I have had the opportunity to interact with many outstanding and professional people that have shaped my leadership style, character and general purpose to enhance career development. I would consider all of these interactions as mentoring opportunities and I have expanded my thoughts for future personal and professional endeavors.



Sean T. Frazier



I define a mentor as someone who models positive behavior and also provides one-on-one interaction that supports the mentee and assists them with the development of their own skill set to the highest possible level. This definition by all means is not from any dictionary, but is from my life experiences and is also the basis on which I mentor young people seeking career development.

As I mentioned, I have been fortunate to have interacted with a number of great people whom have mentored me. The four primary mentors that I credit much of my success, as well as the framework that I use in mentoring others include: My mother, Mrs. Felicia Frazier; Dr. Shari Clarke, vice president for multicultural affairs at Marshall University; Jim Livengood, director of athletics at the University of Arizona; and Barry Alvarez, director of athletics at the University of Wisconsin. All of these individuals have played a significant role on how I have approached decision making, process information, develop strategic thought, and sustain effective communication. The knowledge that I have gained from their direction and guidance have helped me to outline the important elements of a mentoring relationship.

A key element of mentorship that I have adopted is the process of having the mentee "self discover" to find his or her own passion. Passion triggers motivation, which sustains a work habit that leads to success. I firmly believe that if you have a passion for a particular project or career focus, it will serve you well because your work habit will be consistent and the future outcomes will be successful. I can remember as a young boy in middle school, my mother would stress the point of being prepared for class and being the best that I can be in everything that I do. She often pushed me to self reflect about what I was most passionate about. Sometimes for me it was about money and other times it was about academic or athletics achievement. In any case, the one thing that was and is consistent about Mrs. Frazier is that she made sure that

my goals and objectives were in line with my passion.

Another key element of mentorship is what I call friend/relationship development. This is by far the most complex to master, mainly due to the fact that trust is often a main component of any solid relationship and most trustworthy relationships take time to develop. As a mentor, the ability to provide productive insight and direction to a mentee is going to be rooted on how well you understand and truly know the person that you are mentoring. This means that regular scheduled "face time" and communication is going to be necessary to adequately understand all of the issues that a mentee is going through. Also, it is extremely important for the mentee to actively participate in the process of keeping the lines of communications open with the mentor so that the relationship transitions from customer and client to friend and supporter.

The best example of a great mentoring relationship in my experiences is my relationship with Jim Livengood. Jim and I are great friends and we have shared a number of personal and professional experiences together. I was paired up with Jim back in 1999 while participating in the NCAA Fellows Leadership Development Program, which focuses on advancing women and minorities in senior level careers in athletics administration. The challenge is that the executive mentors are sometimes located in a different region or, in my case, a different state. I was at the University of Maine at the time and Jim was in Arizona! What made this mentorship work was that Jim, despite his hectic schedule, made himself available to me and as a mentee, I made sure that Jim got to know all about me as a person and as an administrator.

I have the pleasure of currently working with another mentor of mine, Barry Alvarez, who exemplifies this element of effective listening and communication. During the length of our relationship, Barry has mentored me on the finer points of effective listening and communication to help further my goals and objectives. Barry's professional track record of success as both a championship level football coach and leader of a BCS Big Ten athletics department speaks for itself; however, the way he clearly articulates his message and the way he listens to others around him so that he can move an agenda supports the reason why he is so successful. It is important to note that taking the time out to listen and to effectively communicate with your mentee is a major part of the mentoring process.

Thanks for this article to Sean T. Frazier, senior associate athletics director, University of Wisconsin and MOAA Treasurer.

The following are testimonials from two MOAA Board members on what being a part of the association has meant to them:

"Being a member of MOAA has expanded my network of professionals which has led me to interact with a very diversified group of individuals covering gender, ethnicity, age, professional backgrounds and life experiences. From any and all interaction, I have gained something professionally and/or personally. Personally, what I have enjoyed and appreciate the most about MOAA are the long-term relationships that have allowed me to be a mentor as well as being the recipient of mentoring."

- Alfreeda Goff, senior associate commissioner/chief of staff, Horizon League

"MOAA is an organization that has effectively met the career development, management and cultural unmet needs of many underrepresented professionals in intercollegiate athletics administration. Personally, MOAA has provided me the opportunity to lead, mentor and share my years of experience with others in a well planned and organized forum. For this I am very appreciative."

- Floyd Kerr, director of athletics, Morgan State University