Best Practices for Mentors

1. **Assess your mentoring skills**
   - Take an inventory of your skills that can help you identify areas of strength as well as skills that require attention. Take the time to reflect on how it felt to be starting out on your own academic professional journey. Think about the guidance that was the most helpful and less than helpful to you as you traveled your career path. Consider taking advantage of faculty development sessions to enhance mentoring skills.

2. **Start out right, with goal setting. Discuss the following goals with your mentee**
   - Set up the logistical issue of when, where and how frequently to meet
   - Listen to each other’s goals and expectations. Effective goals could be related to the completion of specific tasks, or more expansive such as regular appraisal of career progression.
   - This is an ideal time to express your goals for next steps and a discussion of boundaries.

3. **Begin with the right project**
   - Find the right project to build your mentee’s confidence with some early success.

4. **Live your professional standards**
   - Essential to an effective mentoring relationship are the values of trust and respect. It is vital that you serve as a role model for high standards of professionalism.

5. **Tune up your listening skills**
   - Ask probing questions and listen to the thoughts of a creative and highly motivated junior colleague. Resist the urge to act and make decisions for your mentee.

6. **Take an interest in your mentee**
   - Having someone at work that cares about you as a person and encourages your development is positively correlated to productivity. Care and concern for your mentee can be the key to helping them flourish.

7. **See your mentee’s path**
   - Find a dynamic balance between supporting and challenging your mentee. Encourage your mentee to always set and maintain high standards of practice, encourage the risk-taking needed for exploration of innovative and creative ideas, and help your mentee develop the persistence to reach difficult goals.

8. **Provide feedback that can be heard**
   - Among the most difficult arts of being a mentor is providing and receiving feedback. Take time to give credit where credit is due. When your mentee has some areas that need to be strengthened, carefully choose the time and place for this conversation.

9. **Share your network**
   - Developing a professional network takes time and years of practice, but you can accelerate the process for your mentee by making introductions. Always look for opportunities to strengthen your mentee’s network; offer a seminar invitation, propose sessions at conferences that include your mentee as a speaker, etc.

10. **Enjoy the mentoring ride**
    - Mentoring is one of the joys of academic life. Savor being proud of your mentees and remember that your mentees may turn out to be very special, life-long friends and colleagues. Engage in networking sessions with other mentors to share ideas and tips for success.

Adapted from The University of Utah: Top Ten Tips for Mentors