

Guidelines for Building Mentoring Efforts in your American Inn of Court

American Inns of Court Mentoring Models

The American Inns of Court has developed several mentoring models for Inns to adapt, implement, and maintain mentoring programs of their own.

A Keystone Activity

Mentoring is a time honored legal tradition and a cornerstone of the American Inns of Court. The American Inns of Court Professional Creed states a goal of upholding “the highest standards of excellence in professionalism, ethics, civility, and legal skills” and attaining “the highest level of knowledge and skills” in every member’s practice area.

Every Inn should strive to have a robust and comprehensive mentoring program that continues to elevate the legal profession. That does not mean that every Inn’s program will look the same—there are many ways of doing things and different personalities will dictate what does or does not work within the culture of your Inn. Try new things and remember that mentoring can come from many different places.

Purpose of Mentoring Model Programs

The purpose of the American Inns of Court mentoring models is to make it easy to start or elevate existing mentoring efforts in local Inns.

Ease of Use

Mentoring models are proven approaches for Inns. Each one uses a straightforward format of administration, operation and scheduling which can be adapted to meet the needs and personalities of individual Inns.

Frequency & Intent

Elevating mentoring in your Inn takes thoughtful consideration and planning. The two main elements that determine whether or not your Inn is engaged in one-off mentoring activities or has a “formal” mentoring program are:

- **Frequency:** How often does the mentoring activity occur? Does it happen “whenever” or at particular intervals determined by the Inn?
- **Intent:** Is it a planned mentoring-focused event or a by-product of another Inn activity (like a pupillage team developing educational content or Inn meeting dinner)? Is there Inn-wide evaluation of the activity?

Here are some additional elements that can help you recognize whether or not your Inn already has a formal program or is instead engaged in some meaningful mentoring activities.

ELEMENTS OF MENTORING	FORMAL PROGRAM	STAND ALONE ACTIVITIES*
Inn-wide commitment to mentoring	X	
Intentional, deliberate, purposeful	X	X
Included in the Inn’s strategic plan for the year	X	
Written statement about mentoring included in Inn’s policies and procedures, strategic planning documents, or other “published” commitment to fostering mentoring in distributed Inn documents	X	
Executive Committee involvement (even if delegating to a committee of Inn members)	X	
Formalized matching of Inn members in mentor/mentee relationships (can look different depending on needs of Inn members **)	X	
Offered on an Inn year basis	X	
There is active member participation (if you have a program but no one does anything, it doesn’t count)	X	
There is accountability or follow-up (evaluations, surveys, check-ins)	X	X
Efforts contribute to a High-Quality Member Experience (members are aware of mentoring intention and are satisfied)	X	X
Feedback is incorporated into annual Inn planning efforts	X	
Opportunities created, prompted or offered by the Inn	X	X
One-off or periodic offerings		X

There is often “incidental” mentoring that happens as a result of the meeting of pupillage teams formed for the creation of education programs, or during the social hour of a standard Inn meeting. While it is important—and encouraged—for this to happen, it is not quite enough to ensure that mentoring is occurring at a meaningful level within the Inn.

Inns are encouraged to engage in some effort that is intentionally focused on mentoring, with mentoring both the impetus and purpose for the effort. Some Inns have incorporated purposeful mentoring into every aspect of their Inn (administration, outreach, education, networking, social, etc.); while they may not have a traditional mentoring “program,” their intent to provide mentoring opportunities for their members is clearly communicated to the members, deliberately planned, and frequent.

Some Inns are poised to move their mentoring efforts and activities into a robust mentoring program simply by tweaking what they are doing and adding an evaluative component. There is no need for a monumental overhaul to what an Inn is already doing; simply increasing both the intent and the frequency of the Inn’s mentoring activities will move the Inn forward.

As always, it is important to find what works for your Inn—what is the culture of your Inn, the personality of your members? What works for one Inn may not work

for another—it is important to take a creative approach to mentoring in order to find the model that helps your members feel satisfied with their Inn membership. To assist Inns in their efforts to elevate mentoring, we have developed four mentoring models that are a good foundation on which to build or improve mentoring:

- Traditional Mentoring Pairs Model
- Small Group Mentoring Model
- Mentoring Activity Focused Model
- Affiliated Mentoring Model

* *Examples of stand alone activities include mentoring moments at Inn meetings; Inn meetings focused on mentoring topics; planned and coordinated member-to-member interactions—coffee, happy hour, etc.; planned and coordinated “field trips” to court, presentations, etc.; and networking events that build in aspects of purposeful mentoring.*

** *Many Inns have successfully implemented 1:1 pairs of a Master and Pupil or Associate; these pairings are often considered the ideal and are frequently linked to the most formal of mentoring efforts; however, that is not the only way to do things. Many Inns have tried small groups of three to four people and found that arrangement to be effective for their Inn.*

Be bold. Be creative. Be successful.

Have a story you want to share? We want to hear it!
Have a question about mentoring? We’re here to help answer it!
Running out of ideas? We’re here to help!
mentoring@innsocourt.org

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