



**MENTORING
GUIDELINES
FOR NEW GRANTEES**

January 1999

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on being selected as a member of the AACC/Microsoft *Working Connections* national project.

Your experience and skills as a team member of a Mentor College or Connections College make you a valuable resource to this project. Faculty and administrators at community colleges across the country will benefit from your knowledge of information technology (IT) curriculum development, faculty development, and outreach to underserved populations and business/industry.

These guidelines have been prepared to help you participate most effectively in the mentoring process during the *Working Connections* project. They will serve as the basis for the mentor team meetings that precede the project conferences, the work time during the project conference, and also the mentor-mentee relationship during the course of the project. The guidelines set out responsibilities, beginning with the preparations to be undertaken prior to the national *Working Connections* project meetings, including your role at such meetings, at subsequent site visits, during your work with other *Working Connections* team members throughout project, and some evaluation and reporting expectations.

We are very pleased to have your participation in the AACC/Microsoft's *Working Connections* project and look forward to working with you to integrate the service learning methodology in the curricula of the nation's community colleges.

This guidebook is adapted from a work prepared for AACC's *Advancing the Humanities* projects in the early 1990s. Much appreciation is due Oscar Lopez of Richland College, TX, Gail Robinson and Nan Ottenritter of AACC, and to staff and mentors in several AACC projects for their observations and recommendations.

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January 1999

THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

A successful mentoring experience relies on a reciprocal relationship. This is a point that participants in previous AACC mentoring projects have emphasized again and again. Mentors receive as much as they give. In “institutional mentoring” projects such as *Working Connections*, mentors bring to a project team another viewpoint, a sounding board, an outside voice; they also take back as much to their home colleges. The following DOs and DON'Ts are based on experiences of other AACC mentors and project teams.

DO

- ✓ Agree at the start about the mentor-mentee team’s preferred mode of communication (e.g., phone, e-mail, fax).
- ✓ Meet when people are most receptive (e.g., early in the semester).
- ✓ Listen to stakeholders. Keep communication open.
- ✓ Share ideas with the entire *Working Connections* project team (e.g., via the listserv).
- ✓ Have face-to-face meetings early in the project.
- ✓ Be collaborative with all stakeholders.
- ✓ Encourage input from local and college advisory groups.
- ✓ See people as resources.
- ✓ Recognize your own assets.
- ✓ See the mentor as a catalyst.
- ✓ Address cultural issues.
- ✓ Emphasize the team concept.
- ✓ Use critiquing to improve projects.

DON'T

- ✓ Make goals too general.
- ✓ Assume needs.
- ✓ Ignore stakeholders.
- ✓ Ignore critics.
- ✓ Be adversarial.
- ✓ Assume the mentor has every answer.
- ✓ Forget community building.

MENTORING THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT

The project's mentoring process relies on a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities, including information-sharing and conscientious follow-up.

AACC STAFF	MENTORS	MENTEES
<p>Remember your assets.</p> <p>Communicate regularly by phone, fax, mail, e-mail.</p> <p>Respond to information requests from mentors and mentees.</p> <p>Manage and participate in listserv.</p> <p>Participate in the mentor meeting, project planning conference, and annual evaluation conference.</p> <p>Be a sounding board for mentors and mentees.</p> <p>Make occasional site visits to mentee colleges.</p> <p>Offer ideas for project improvement to mentees.</p> <p>Share project management strategies and resources.</p> <p>Advocate for the <i>Working Connections</i> goals.</p> <p>Submit quarterly financial reports to Microsoft.</p> <p>Submit midyear, year-end written reports to Microsoft.</p> <p>Celebrate achievements.</p>	<p>Remember your assets.</p> <p>Communicate regularly by phone, fax, mail, e-mail.</p> <p>Respond to information requests from other mentors, mentees, and AACC staff.</p> <p>Participate in listserv.</p> <p>Participate in the mentor meetings and annual project conferences.</p> <p>Be a sounding board for mentees.</p> <p>Host site visit by mentees and visit mentee colleges.</p> <p>Offer ideas for project improvement to mentees.</p> <p>Share mentoring and project implementation strategies and resources.</p> <p>Advocate for the <i>Working Connections</i> goals.</p> <p>Submit semi-annual financial reports to AACC.</p> <p>Submit site visit and year-end reports to AACC.</p> <p>Celebrate achievements.</p>	<p>Remember your assets.</p> <p>Communicate regularly by phone, fax, mail, e-mail.</p> <p>Respond to information requests from other mentors, mentees, and AACC staff.</p> <p>Participate in listserv.</p> <p>Participate in the annual project conferences.</p> <p>Communicate with mentor and AACC when problems or challenges arise.</p> <p>Host site visit by mentor and visit mentor college.</p> <p>Work with mentor and <i>Working Connections</i> advisory panel to improve project.</p> <p>Share project implementation strategies and resources.</p> <p>Advocate for the <i>Working Connections</i> goals.</p> <p>Submit quarterly financial reports to AACC.</p> <p>Submit quarterly and year-end reports to AACC.</p>

BEING A MENTOR: GENERAL GUIDELINES

The purpose of this section is to identify the various functions mentors will perform for the *Working Connections* information technology (IT) project.

A. Understand the mentor role.

See yourself as part of the larger whole. You will serve the project both as an individual and as part of the national *Working Connections* Mentor Team.

Mentors fill many roles. Primarily, you are a facilitator of learning. Your job is to help people learn from their day-to-day experiences, including their successes and failures. You may, at different points, be asked to take on such concretely defined roles:

- .. expert
- .. facilitator
- .. change agent
- .. learner

Who or what determines the role you will play at any given moment? The most obvious answer is the *need* of the mentee college. These needs include those of the project director and personnel, as well as other identified key players in the larger project (administrative leaders, student leaders, students, faculty, *Working Connections* advisory panel, business/industry and community members, etc.). Like any good leader, know the pulse of the project and be able to provide appropriate support. Also appreciate the change process and know that the needs identified in the first month of the project will not necessarily be present in the sixth month. Be prepared to change hats as needed!

One hat you will wear is that of *expert*. Communicate your expertise through direct (instruction, technical assistance) and indirect (storytelling) means. Also see yourself as part of a team of experts. No one person can have all of the answers, yet a great deal of wisdom can be found in a team. Give freely of your experience and encourage project personnel to consult with other mentors as necessary. To be helpful, let others know your areas of expertise and interest and try to learn the same about them. Recognize that often your expertise will lie in the area of resources—you can help your mentee to connect with other “experts.”

The *facilitator* role is probably the most delicate. In this role you help the project director and key players manage the process of change. You help to set a tone of safety and manageability for the project. You help people manage their differences and make decisions in a way that allows the project to progress. You coach the project director in leadership skills. You can start the dialogue, be a gentle devil’s advocate, and help build consensus.

The role of *change agent* really involves all of those skills and tasks, yet takes them to a larger “systems” level. As a change agent, you bring visibility and credibility to the project. Be sure to meet with key players when you conduct a site visit (these could include presidents, trustees, department chairs, or business/industry/community members). Be the motivator, cheerleader, carrier of hope, and the person who connects the project endeavors to a larger picture. Never forget that change—even change that is perceived as good and is welcomed—is stressful. People in the midst of change often appreciate your support.

Finally, you will be a *learner*. Most mentors find they learn just as much, if not more, from their mentees than they contributed or imparted. Take back to your own college the lessons learned from your mentees.

The ability to identify, perform, and move among the different roles is at the heart of mentoring. The complexity of being a mentor of the change process goes beyond playing a most complex, strategic game. Mentoring not only has a multitude of variables, but also involvement in the lives of colleagues and students. It brings us face

to face with the mission of the institution. Carry out your mission well. Remember that you are invaluable and are part of a larger support team for the *Working Connections* project.

B. Help each mentee see itself as part of a whole.

- 1. Your mentee colleges are part of a national project.** Thirteen distinct programs have been selected as mentees in the *Working Connections* project. This does not mean, however, that each always is to be treated as a completely separate entity or idea. A primary goal of the AACC project is to disseminate information about all *Working Connections* programs and hold them up as examples for other community colleges interested in helping solve the IT workforce gap. The mentees can learn from each other's programs, as well as share valuable information and experience.
- 2. The mentor team concept also is crucial.** By the end of the initial planning conference, each project director should feel comfortable and confident enough to call any one of the five mentor teams, or other project directors, for assistance or advice. Although each mentor will have responsibility for specific colleges, and will make a site visit to each of them, the mentors will also work as a team to help mentees reach solutions. There is no need to reinvent the wheel each time a problem arises.

C. Help each team to think through the objectives identified in its proposal.

The *Working Connections* project aims to strengthen IT training programs through faculty development, partnerships, and outreach. While a mentor does not require proof of the need for the proposed plan, it is helpful to discover how seriously the identified objectives are taken. An early discussion can help clarify the context of the goals, objectives, and action plans that will be refined at the conference.

Ask about the needs the project will address, but focus on assets that the community, the college, and its team bring to the project. Discuss other things that might concern the IT staff and faculty. Explore with the team the college's environment for faculty/staff development, student support services, and community relations. Where there are genuine needs, consider the following questions with your team.

- 1. Have the goals and objectives been completely and correctly identified and succinctly stated? Do they relate directly to the mission statement?**

Helping teams to consider all factors may be the most useful contribution you can make. The project director may have overlooked in the proposal some key points that would tie the objectives more closely to the mission statement. You may need to assist your team in refining or rewriting its objectives. Clarity is crucial.

- 2. Does the action plan address the objectives?**

Understand how each team connects its plan with the identified objectives. Pressing this relationship now may prevent disappointment later, if the plan does not address the most significant features of the objectives. As surprising as it may seem, you may find that the proposed plan has little, if any, potential for addressing the objectives identified. If the objectives are genuine and team members are serious about achieving them, then some serious discussion needs to take place at the outset regarding expected outcomes.

3. Are there alternatives that should be considered?

You do not have to accept responsibility for redirecting a team's action plan, or even recommending a preferred course of action. However, if you can help the team to consider alternatives, even if it rejects them, you will be performing a valuable service. Often the best way to do this is to share examples of what others have done. Draw upon your own experience or project, as well as others with which you may be familiar. Usually our enthusiasm for our own projects blinds us to the merits of alternatives; these may become more important as mentees encounter difficulties with their plans. Having some fall-back alternatives is important; this will require some preparation and research on the part of the team.

D. Assess the feasibility of the plan.

Your role will be to lead the project directors and key project staff through those discussions that make something "doable" or "not doable." This is an important stage of mentoring, particularly since it often helps to identify overlooked steps in implementation. It is truly the rare plan that is ready to go forward without gaining comments from others and preparing the institutional climate. The following are some items to consider.

1. What resources will be required?

Frankly, many good ideas are beyond the resources of the college to implement; the team needs to consider what its plan requires and how readily these requirements can be met. Sustainability is key to the success of the proposals, so you will need to look carefully at cash as well as in-kind funding, and how dependable the sources are.

Guide the teams away from making their plans entirely grant dependent. Remember that there is a good reason for the matching funds requirement. If everything they expect to do requires outside funding, then there is a good chance that the project will not be sustained. Help the team blend activities that depend on institutional as well as outside funding. That way something will go forward regardless of outside funding, and the momentum will not be lost.

2. How much institutional support do you have?

In some cases projects may be of interest only to the members of the team. Considering ways to broaden and develop support, even convincing project staff of the necessity of the project, is important. *Try to ascertain how much faculty and administrative support exists, and how much support exists from other members of the college community concerning the Working Connections goals.* Try to find out how institutional support has been measured and/or encouraged to date, if at all.

3. How much community support do you have?

Solid partnerships with local businesses, community organizations, and individuals are vital. If strong business, industry, and community support is not sufficiently evident from a college's proposal, query the project director about anticipated support. You must also be assured that the opportunities for collaboration are appropriate and sustainable. With work, business, industry, and community support should increase by the end of the first year of the project, leading to increased opportunities in coming years.

4. What is the history behind this college's initiative?

If the proposal does not make this clear, try to get a sense of the context and history of IT programming, business and industry partnerships, faculty/staff development in IT, and workforce development for underserved populations at the college. Are there other important efforts or directions currently underway or being planned? Have there been recent projects aimed at strengthening the *Working Connections*

goals? Are there critical points of resistance or nonsupport that have been active in the past and could reasonably be expected to be problematic for this plan?

5. What impact can the plan realistically be expected to make?

In order to construct a viable plan, it helps to ask the project director to speculate on the very best that could come from it, as well as the very worst. This will clarify expectations among the team members themselves and will help them to build in additional steps to protect the plan from failure. It could also lead them back to consider the mission statement, objectives, and impact on the community, participants, and institution. Ask the team to consider the state of the IT program if this project either fully succeeds or completely fails. This should prepare the team for the next stage in your mentoring.

E. Clarify the steps necessary to advance the project.

At this point in the mentoring process you will be building on the information and insights gathered in the above steps. While some of the steps may have been resolved in earlier discussions or may not be appropriate to individual teams or their plans, you should consider the following as critical steps in helping to establish or improve your mentee's *Working Connections* program.

1. Consider the state of IT programming at the college and the problems and opportunities before the faculty and administration.

In some instances this might require the team to return to its college and get more input from other faculty or groups, or even to reconsider its objectives. This may already have been accomplished and the team will be on target in its identification. If the team members cannot make such an assessment themselves, it will be difficult for a mentor to know, at least until the campus site visit takes place.

2. Put the plan in context and consider alternatives.

Do not be afraid to have a team reconsider aspects of its plan, particularly if team members can identify a more desirable and/or more feasible direction to pursue. On the other hand, genuine innovation or improvement is tough work. It is easy to give up when formidable obstacles exist, but it is not desirable to have the team throw in the towel completely. With luck, major alterations in the plan will not be necessary; by putting it in context and considering alternatives and modifications, the plan will be strengthened.

3. Develop support from groups and individuals; prepare the climate for change.

Developing an IT program is not just a paper task; it is a people project. Those who are most likely to be affected, either through need for their involvement or by the consequences of the implementation, must be consciously wooed. The teams ought to strategize how they will prepare the climate, including the spectrum of individuals and groups, for the objectives they are trying to achieve.

4. Develop a specific action plan that details activities, timelines, products, and outcomes.

This is one of the target outcomes of the *Working Connections* project conference for all the teams. However, while it serves as a conference goal, it should not be rushed to completion, and should not satisfy the project directors' expectations only artificially. It is possible that the final action plan will not be completely fine-tuned until after the first site visit by the mentor.

5. Attend to those processes that make an action plan successful.

There are many ways to succeed and many ways to fail in developing new *Working Connections* programs; fortunately, some of these are common and obvious. It would not hurt at all to share some of your own observations about what helps and what hurts. Things like expecting that everyone on campus knows about the new *Working Connections* effort, not expecting to have to alter any part of the plan, or believing that all the original supporters or players will remain in place throughout the development are all errors that can be easily identified. Some helpful hints on the process are in order, and simply asking teams to focus on process issues is worthwhile.

F. Serve as an advocate for the *Working Connections* goals and objectives.

Your selection as a mentor is based upon your college's experience and achievements. You have been recognized as representative of a program that is knowledgeable about and advocates for the *Working Connections* objectives. You need not justify this selection; it is implicit in your participation and your role in this project. Don't feel like you must have every answer; consider yourself a resource to another institution. You are serving as another voice, a role model for successful implementation. You are a valuable resource due to your experience. Do not be self-effacing regarding your talent or experience. You have the skills to perform this role very well, even if you have not done so before.

Essentially, you should see yourself as offering the following services:

- Coaching the discussion and planning process of your mentees during the project conference
- Providing encouragement to the teams and others involved in the *Working Connections* project throughout the months ahead
- Advocating for the integration of the *Working Connections* objectives during your campus site visits
- Networking with other colleges and organizations that support the *Working Connections* objectives
- Helping collect information that will assess the institutional climate for IT on your designated campuses
- Providing the teams with resources such as information, suggestions, and exposure to other IT, faculty staff development, workforce development, or business/industry partnership programs on a regular basis
- Listening to project directors' frustrations and facilitating progress at their colleges. underserved populations at the college.

MENTOR
HINTS FOR A SUCCESSFUL MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

1. **Communication.** Telephone your new mentee project directors before the initial project conference to begin some of the tasks listed earlier in these guidelines.
2. **Care.** Demonstrate concern for your teams and their projects. A caring attitude is essential for developing rapport and confidence.
3. **Balance.** Listen, question, and respond. Too much passivity is as ineffectual as too much direction. Seek a balance that is acceptable to you and the project directors.
4. **Universality.** Get beyond your own situation and experiences by taking a larger point of view. Refer to the expertise and experiences of other mentors. Share what is pertinent from your experience, but be sensitive about over-relating what you have done at your college. Be aware of the significant differences in types of institutions, resources, or maturity of programs involved in *Working Connections*.
5. **Optimism.** Beware of taking on the mentee's institutional problems. Remind the project team that it is responsible for change and/or innovation. If faced by persistent complaints about lack of progress, have the team list those things that can contribute to change; do not reinforce their despair.
6. **Flexibility.** Be systematic but not rigid. Consider these guidelines as points to be considered, but not as a step-by-step instructional manual. Have a general plan of what you want to see happen at each stage, but be adaptable.
7. **Politics.** Remember that nearly every curriculum-related project is political at heart. History, factions, people, and power relations have more influence on curricular matters than reason, merit, or justification. Consideration of real politics is unavoidable and should not be treated as irrelevant gossip.
8. **Process.** Help your college teams consider not only the "what" of their activities, but also the "how." Think about community building, relationships, and making everyone a stakeholder.
9. **Content.** Although negotiating the process of institutional innovation and implementation is important, keep the content objective in view. Your knowledge will remind everyone of the reason for all the project activities. Remember the overriding AACC and Microsoft project goals: to develop and improve community college education and training programs in information technology that respond the 21st century needs by featuring: local business/industry partnerships, IT curriculum development, workforce development for underserved populations, and faculty/staff development, and to increase the number, quality, and sustainability of these programs among the nation's community colleges.

BEING A MENTEE: GENERAL GUIDELINES

The purpose of this section is to identify the various functions project directors or team members will perform for the *Working Connections* project.

A. See your team as part of a whole.

1. **Your college is part of a national project.** The institutions selected as grantees in the *Working Connections* project together represent a broad-based program with a range of models for implementing IT programs. One of AACC's primary goals is to disseminate information about all programs (including yours) and hold them up as examples for other community colleges interested in strengthening their IT programs. Team members at the *Working Connections* Colleges will learn from each other's programs and can share valuable information and experience.
2. **Consider your *Working Connections* advisory panel as part of your team.** Each of the *Working Connections* Colleges has a *Working Connections* advisory panel to review the progress of the project. Although the panel is not technically a part of the mentor-mentee relationship, it will provide valuable stakeholder feedback to the project and should be viewed as part of the team.
3. **Your mentor is also part of a team.** The *Working Connections* Mentor Team concept is crucial. By the end of the project conference, each project director should feel comfortable and confident enough to call any one of the mentors, or other project directors, for assistance or advice. Although each mentor will have responsibility for specific colleges, and will make a site visit to each of them, the mentors will also work as a team to help mentees reach solutions and share them with the entire *Working Connections* project team, thereby eliminating the need to reinvent the wheel each time a problem arises.

B. Think through the objectives identified in your proposal.

An integral part of the *Working Connections* proposals is the attempt to address real business, industry, community, faculty, and student needs through IT programming. Reconsider the need for your proposed plan, the seriousness with which to take the identified objectives, and the degree that your timeline is realistic. Discussions with your mentor will help clarify the context of the goals, objectives, and action plans that will be refined at the project conference.

Think about the needs the project will address, but focus on assets that your community, college, local businesses, and team bring to the project. Discuss other things that might concern the IT staff and faculty. Explore the college's environment for faculty/staff development, student support services, and community relations. If there are genuine problems or potential roadblocks, consider the following questions with your mentor.

1. **Have the goals and objectives been completely and correctly identified and succinctly stated? Do they relate directly to the mission statement?**

Your mentor can help you consider all factors. Some key points may have been overlooked in the proposal that would tie the objectives more closely to the mission statement. If so, feel free to ask your mentor to help your team refine or rewrite its objectives, or develop a mission statement. Clarity is crucial.

2. **Does the plan address the objectives?**

Understand precisely how you connect your action plan with the identified objectives. Pressing this relationship now may prevent disappointment later, especially if the plan does not address the most significant features of the objectives. If the objectives are genuine and team members are serious about achieving them, then some serious discussion needs to take place at the outset regarding expected outcomes.

3. Are there alternatives that should be considered?

Your mentor may help you consider alternative courses of action. Be open to them. Usually enthusiasm for our own projects blinds us to the merits of alternatives; these may become more important if you encounter difficulties with your plan. Having some alternatives is important and may require some preparation and research on your part.

C. Assess the feasibility of the plan.

Your mentor will lead your team through those discussions that make something “doable” or “not doable.” This is an important stage of mentoring, particularly since it often helps to identify overlooked steps in implementation. It is the rare plan that is ready to go forward without soliciting and incorporating comments from others and preparing the institutional climate. The following are some items to consider.

1. What resources will be required?

Frankly, many good ideas are beyond the resources of the college to implement; the team needs to consider what its plan requires and how readily these requirements can be met. Sustainability is a key part of the proposals, so you will need to look carefully at cash as well as in-kind funding, and how dependable the sources are.

Plan on how to make your plans entirely grant independent. Remember that there is a good reason for the matching funds requirement. If everything you expect to do requires outside funding, sustaining the activities may be difficult. Think about blending activities that depend on institutional as well as outside funding.

2. How much institutional support do you have?

Often, applications for grant-funded projects appear to have a narrow base of support; in some cases the projects may be of interest only to the team members themselves. Consider ways to broaden and develop support. Figure out how to involve people who may be severe critics of the project and address their concerns. *Try to determine the level of support you have from your faculty and administration, and how much support exists from other member of the college community for the Working Connections objectives.* You cannot assume that the rest of your college feels as strongly as you do about your project. Try to find out how institutional support has been measured and/or encouraged to date, if at all.

3. How much community support do you have?

Solid partnerships with local businesses, community organizations, and individuals are vital to the success of the *Working Connections* program. If strong business, industry, and community support is not already evident from a college’s proposal, your mentor may query the project director about anticipated support. You must also be assured that the opportunities for collaboration are appropriate and sustainable. With work, business, industry, and community support should increase by the end of the first year of the project, leading to increased opportunities in coming years.

4. What is the history behind this initiative?

If the proposal does not make this clear, clarify for your mentor and team members the context and history of IT programming, business and industry partnerships, faculty/staff development in IT, and workforce development for underserved populations at the college. Are there other important efforts or directions currently underway or being planned? Have there been recent projects aimed at strengthening the *Working Connections* program objectives? Are there critical points of resistance or nonsupport that have been active in the past and could reasonably be expected to be problematic for this plan?

5. What impact can the plan realistically be expected to make?

Speculate on the very best—and the very worst—that could come from the project. This will clarify expectations among the team members and also protect the plan from failure. It could also lead you back to consider the mission statement, objectives, and outcomes. Consider what the program will look like if this project either fully succeeds or completely fails. This will help prepare you for the next stage in the mentoring process.

D. Clarify the steps necessary to advance the project.

At this stage you will be building on the information and insights already gathered. While some issues may have been resolved or may not be appropriate to individual teams or their plans, you should consider the following as critical steps in helping establish or improve the *Working Connections* IT model at your institution.

1. Consider the state of IT programming at the college and the problems and opportunities before the faculty and administration.

In some instances this might require the team to get more input from other faculty or groups, or to reconsider its objectives. If the team members cannot make such an assessment themselves, it will be difficult for a mentor to know until the campus visit takes place.

2. Put the plan in context and consider alternatives.

Do not be afraid to reconsider your plan (not necessarily your goals) altogether, particularly if you identify a more desirable and/or more feasible direction to pursue. On the other hand, genuine innovation or improvement is tough work. Major alterations in the plan should not be necessary; by putting it in context and considering alternatives and modifications, the plan will be strengthened.

3. Develop support from groups and individuals; prepare the climate for change.

Developing a IT program is not just a paper task; it is a people project. Those who are most likely to be affected, either through need for their involvement or by the consequences of the implementation, must be consciously wooed. Strategize how to prepare the climate, including the spectrum of individuals and groups, for the objectives you seek.

4. Develop a specific action plan that details activities, timelines, products, and outcomes.

This is one of the target outcomes of the *Working Connections* project conference. However, while it serves as a conference goal, it should not be rushed to completion, and should not artificially satisfy the project directors' expectations. It is possible that the final action plan will not be completely fine-tuned until after your mentor's site visit.

5. Attend to processes that make an action plan successful.

There are many ways to succeed and many ways to fail in developing new programs; fortunately, some are common and obvious. Share with your mentor some of your own observations about what helps and what hurts. Things like expecting that everyone on campus knows about the new *Working Connections* effort, not expecting to have to alter any part of the plan, or believing that all the original supporters or players will remain in place throughout the development are all errors that can be easily identified. Think about "people issues"—e.g., working together, being inclusive in the project, managing conflict, and motivating and leading people.

E. See your mentor as an advocate for the *Working Connections* goals and objectives.

Your mentors are valuable resources, with experience in many of the same areas that your project will address. However, don't expect your mentors to have every answer. Instead, take advantage of the opportunity to have the thinking of someone who can look at your institution from the outside. Some solutions may be obvious to a mentor that you may miss because you are too close to the problem. In other cases, an outsider's observations may lend more credibility to your own views.

Make the most of a mentor's willingness to serve as your project consultant. Help your mentor help you to lobby on campus for your *Working Connections* goals, and to network with other colleges and organizations working in this area. Advise your mentors on the best way to assess the institutional climate for *Working Connections* on your campus.

**PROJECT TEAM
HINTS FOR A SUCCESSFUL MENTORING RELATIONSHIP**

1. **Communication.** Talk with your mentor prior to the project planning conference and regularly thereafter.
2. **Respect.** Show appreciation for your mentor's expertise and experience, and get an understanding of the IT program at the mentor's institution.
3. **Preparation.** Be prepared for mentor meetings or site visits. Listen, question, and respond. Too much passivity is as ineffectual as too much direction. Seek a balance.
4. **Universality.** Be open to the other points of view and appreciate the "big picture" of the *Working Connections* project nationally. Since every college is different, there will be no single perfect model.
5. **Optimism.** Don't expect your mentor to know how to fix every problem for you. Be open to change or innovation and to new strategies, if necessary. Look for solutions.
6. **Flexibility.** Have a general plan of what you want to see happen at each stage, but be adaptable. Change is inevitable.
7. **Politics.** Be realistic about history, factions, people, and power relations that can affect your project positively or negatively.
8. **Process.** Think about community building as you develop and implement your project. Relationships are important to its longevity and sustainability. Make everyone a stakeholder.
9. **Content.** Remember the overriding AACC and Microsoft project goals: to develop and improve community college education and training programs in information technology that respond the 21st century needs by featuring: local business/industry partnerships, IT curriculum development, workforce development for underserved populations, and faculty/staff development, and to increase the number, quality, and sustainability of these programs among the nation's community colleges.

PROJECT CONFERENCE: MENTOR ROLE

The project conference is an important component of the *Working Connections* project for both setting goals and building a national project team. It is critical that mentors and team members work efficiently and effectively throughout the three-day period. The following guidelines should help you plan your work.

A. Advance preparation.

- 1. Read carefully the proposals submitted by your new mentees, and be familiar with the goals and activities planned by the other colleges.**
 - a. Record your reactions, questions, and preliminary impressions for future reference.
 - b. Make notes regarding what more you would like to know.
 - c. Identify the tasks that each team could accomplish prior to the planning conference.
- 2. Contact your assigned project directors by telephone before the conference.**
 - a. Establish personal rapport with the project director. Identify areas of expertise that may be useful to the *Working Connections* Colleges as a group.
 - b. Clarify issues you see in the proposal and seek answers to any questions you have.
 - c. Assign preparatory tasks: give the project director questions you would like to have answered at the conference.
 - d. Encourage strongly that the project team meet at their college as a group prior to arriving at the conference. Make sure all key individuals are aware of their roles in the project and understand how their project fits with the other *Working Connections* Colleges.
- 3. Be aware of resources and activities.**
 - a. Send in advance or bring appropriate handouts from your institution (e.g., articles, syllabi, guides, bibliographies) to the conference as sample resources.
 - b. Think about planning the agenda for your site visits to your mentee colleges and for their visit to your college. Consider the pros and cons of making and hosting the visits early in the project.

B. Conference role.

- 1. Start from your preparation.**
 - a. Check to see if you have a correct understanding of the mentee's project, its objectives, and action plan.
 - b. Ascertain the understanding and position of key participants. Try to get a feel for points of disagreement, as well as agreement.
 - c. Review pertinent materials that you may have received prior to the conference.
 - d. Have project directors clarify their expectations of the conference and of you, as one of their mentors.

2. Clarify activities at the conference.

- a. Be clear about the “team approach” to mentoring in this project.
- b. Establish a clear goal for project teams to accomplish by the end of the conference.
- c. Remind project directors that their conference product is an action plan that they will pursue over the months ahead.

3. Strengthen your role.

- a. Use other mentors or project staff as appropriate.
- b. Do not be afraid to challenge project directors to come up with solutions to their own problems. You can advise, clarify, and suggest, but you cannot solve institutional problems for them.

4. Establish what will happen after the conference.

- a. Clarify how you want to work with each team after the conference and throughout the project. Determine the best way to communicate with each other—telephone, mail, fax, and/or e-mail.
- b. Set up a schedule for your mentoring site visit; indicate what will take place and what you expect to accomplish:
 - ◆ agree that a formal agenda for your campus visit will be developed and confirmed in advance.
 - ◆ decide who you should meet at the college.
- b. Set up a schedule for the project directors’ visit to your campus; indicate what will take place and what you expect to accomplish. Consider the pros and cons of hosting the visit early in the project:
 - ◆ agree that a formal agenda for the campus visit will be developed and confirmed in advance.
 - ◆ decide who the project directors should meet at your college.

- d. Make certain that you and the project director are in agreement as to what will happen next, including how and when to submit reports to AACC (details will be distributed at the conference).

PROJECT CONFERENCE: PROJECT TEAM ROLE

The planning conference is an important component of the *Working Connections* project for both setting goals and building a national project team. It is critical that mentors and team members work efficiently and effectively throughout the three-day period. The following guidelines should help you plan your work.

A. Advance preparation.

1. Re-read your proposal, and be familiar with the goals and activities planned by the other colleges.

- a. Make notes about how you think your mentor can assist you.
- b. Identify the areas that you think need to be strengthened.

2. Communicate with your mentor before the conference.

- a. Identify areas that your mentor and project team have in common, as well as those that complement each other.
- b. Get a feel for the mentor's own institution.

3. Be aware of resources and activities.

- a. Send in advance or bring appropriate handouts from your institution, (e.g., articles, syllabi, guides, bibliographies) to the conference as sample resources or as items that may need revising.
- b. Think about planning the agenda and the timetable for your mentor's site visit to your campus. Consider the pros and cons of hosting the visit early in the project, even prior to finalizing your action plan.

B. Conference role.

1. Start from your preparation.

- a. Be cognizant of key people on your campus who could affect—positively or negatively—the project's implementation and ultimate success.
- b. Review pertinent materials that you received prior to the conference.

2. Clarify activities at the conference.

- a. Be clear about the team approach in this project.
- b. Establish a clear goal for the project team to accomplish by the end of the conference.
- c. Remember that your conference product is an action plan that you will pursue over the months ahead. It may need further refining following the *Working Connections* conference, and perhaps after an early site visit by your mentor. It should, however, be completed fairly soon as it provides direction for the year's activities.

3. Establish what will happen after the conference.

- a. Agree with your mentor how best to work together after the conference and throughout the project. Determine the best way to communicate with each other—telephone, mail, fax, and/or e-mail.
- b. Set up a schedule for the mentor’s site visit; indicate what will take place, and what you expect to accomplish:
 - ◆ agree that a formal agenda for your campus visit will be developed and confirmed in advance.
 - ◆ decide who at the college your mentor should meet.
- c. Set up a schedule to visit the mentor’s college (the mentor’s home institution is responsible for planning and hosting a visit from its mentee colleges)
- d. Make certain that you and your mentor are in agreement as to what will happen next, including how and when to submit reports to AACC (details will be distributed at the conference).

MAKING A SITE VISIT TO THE MENTEE COLLEGE

The following guidelines are provided to help make campus site visits as effective as possible (see sample agenda on the following page).

A. Prepare for the visit.

- 1. **Mentor.** Prior to working with the project director on the agenda, get an update on the project team’s progress and any problems or concerns. Clarify the principal purpose of the visit and any special needs you see. Determine the optimal time to visit, according to the mentee’s project needs and schedules. Try to determine how best to help the project at this point. Is an advocate needed? A liaison? A bridge builder? Does the team need advice on their plan? A resource person for the faculty? Leverage with some person or group? Ask the project team to send in advance any related documents that have been prepared since the conference. ***Mentors must be sure to see and approve the agenda before the visit.*** The site visit is a critical part of this project; it must be carefully and most effectively structured.
- 2. **Project director.** You are responsible for creating the agenda. Confer with your mentor prior to developing a draft, and then collaborate on the final version. It is important to have time scheduled with everyone the mentor wants to meet with. Remember that the visit is a chance for your mentor to see your project in context.

B. Set up the schedule.

- 1. **Schedule mentor time** with the project director and key project staff. Make certain that the visit includes sufficient time to meet with the project team to talk specifics. Mentors should avoid being captured by one member of the team. It is especially important not to be viewed as an advocate for one faction or person.

2. **Assemble a larger group of faculty and others** who will be affected by the action plan. The occasion can be used by the mentor to promote the project with them. Talks with students and community people involved in the project would also be helpful.
3. **Schedule meetings with administrators**, including academic and student services offices and the college's CEO.
4. **Meet with business, industry and/or community representatives**, advisory panel members, trustees, or support services organizations.
5. **Advocate for the *Working Connections* IT model.** The mentor role carries considerable stature. The project team should use to its advantage the fact that its mentor is serving as a representative of AACC. In building the site visit agenda, consider how best to promote the importance of the *Working Connections* IT model across the campus, and not just with particular faculty. An all-campus address by the mentor is appropriate, if the mentor and team are comfortable doing that. Mentors can report on the types of plans other community colleges are developing to strengthen their IT programs, or on the importance of the *Working Connections* IT model in community college programs. In any case, mentors should be as visible as possible during the site visit, and the project director should do whatever is necessary to help.
6. **Invite an AACC or Microsoft staff person** to accompany you if there are particular challenges to be dealt with or addressed. Keep this in mind if you need assistance.

C. Follow up afterward.

1. **Mentor.** Keep notes on your meetings and evaluations. Develop a timeline to reflect next steps that must be taken. Be mindful of reporting: send the project director your observations and suggestions within two weeks of your visit, and a report of your visit to AACC also within two weeks of your visit while it is fresh in your mind. Use the site visit report form in the appendix. Don't forget to send thank you notes.
2. **Project director.** Keep notes on any follow-up information requested by your mentor or anyone on campus. Send the information as soon as possible, preferably within a week of the visit.

SAMPLE AGENDA FOR A ONE-DAY* SITE VISIT

8:00 am – 9:00 am	Mentor meets with project director and team members to review in detail the day ahead.
9:00 am – 9:15 am	Brief introductory tour of campus.
9:15 am – 9:30 am	Mentor meets with college president.
9:30 am – 11:30 am	Mentor meets with faculty to review progress on implementing the college's action plan.
11:30 am – 12:00 noon	Mentor meets with dean(s) to discuss next steps.
12:00 noon – 12:30 pm	Mentor meets with vice president to enlist senior level college support for action plan.
12:30 pm – 2:00 pm	Lunch with faculty, staff, <i>Working Connections</i> advisory panel, and others. Mentor delivers luncheon address to all attendees on their college's role in this nationwide project.
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm	Mentor visits on-campus <i>Working Connections</i> classes in progress and meets with students involved in the program.
4:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Mentor meets with project team members to debrief and arrange for their next communication.
6:00 pm	Dinner with key participants, including community representatives.

* NOTE: Many mentors prefer a two-day site visit, and like to include meetings with community partners and allow more time for informal conversation and feedback from participants, etc.

MAKING A SITE VISIT TO THE MENTOR COLLEGE

The following guidelines are provided to help make the mentee project directors' visit to the mentor campus as effective as possible.

A. Prepare for the visit.

1. **Mentor.** Remember that the visit is a chance for your mentees to see your project in context. Consider incorporating the project directors' visit with an existing activity or event, such as a faculty development workshop or advisory panel meeting. Give the project directors a chance to speak at this event; people on your campus can learn from the mentees, and vice versa.
2. **Project director.** Think about areas in your own program that may be lacking, and for which you could pick up helpful tips from the experienced practitioners at your mentor's institution.

B. Set up the schedule.

1. **Schedule time** between the *Mentor College* team and the *Connections College* team members.
2. **Assemble a larger group of faculty and staff** who have been affected by the mentor college's program. Talks with students and business, industry and/or community members involved in the program may also be instructive.
3. **Schedule meetings with administrators**, such as academic and student services deans, the college's CEO, and board members, if appropriate.

C. Follow up afterward.

1. **Mentor.** Keep notes on your meetings and any follow-up information requested by your mentees. Develop a timeline to reflect on next steps that might be taken to enhance your mentees' programs as well as your own.
2. **Project director.** Keep notes on your meetings and any follow-up information you requested. Meet with your *Working Connections* advisory panel upon your return home, to share helpful information learned at the mentor institution. Don't forget to send thank you notes.

EVALUATION AND REPORTING

A. *Working Connections* project activities.

Mentor and mentee perspectives on the project conference activities, college plans and progress, and campus visits are critical information to the management and assessment of this project. They will serve as the basis for articles in the *Community College Journal* and the *Community College Times*, as well as for AACC's reporting to Microsoft.

1. **Be aware of the overall evaluation plan, which includes several components:**
 - a. **Mentor-mentee site visits** will gather qualitative data on the institution as the project gets underway. The college team and mentor will coordinate the details of this process. Mentors will report on their mentees' progress in writing to AACC; see the appendix for site visit report forms and samples.

- b. **Written quarterly and year-end status reports** will be used to collect and report challenges, successes, progress, and anecdotal evidence of program growth.
- c. **A project management grid** will be used to clarify activities and outcomes. The format will document progress and will serve to supplement the written midyear and year-end project status reports. This grid will be distributed at the project conference.

2. Be familiar with reporting requirements.

Evaluation and status reports are an important part of your responsibilities as a mentor or a mentee. The reports should reflect thoughtful and thorough assessments of your activities in a timely fashion. Special reporting forms, which AACC will provide, have been carefully designed to gather the information and assessments that AACC needs to report the project’s accomplishments to the nation’s community colleges and to evaluate the project’s success. Copies of the reporting forms and a timeline will be included in the project conference notebook. Reports for which you are responsible are as follows:

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

MENTOR TEAM LEADERS	PROJECT DIRECTORS
Site visit report 2 weeks following each campus visit	Revised action plan and timeline
Report 2 weeks following hosted site visit by mentee project directors	Quarterly project status report, including Project Management grid
Year-end evaluation report of mentees’ progress in meeting objectives and update on best practice tools and services	Year-end project status report, including Project Management Grid
Quarterly financial reports	Quarterly financial reports
Final report	Final report

B. Travel reimbursement.

AACC will reimburse *Mentor Colleges’* team leaders and second team members for travel expenses related to project meetings, and for one *Mentor College* team member to attend site visits. Requests for reimbursement should be submitted to the AACC project coordinator within two weeks of the trip, using the AACC Travel Expense Form (appended). Note the details on AACC’s approved travel agency, reimbursable expenses, and receipt requirements.

AACC PROJECT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Project Activities

- Q: What are some strategies I can use to recruit new faculty to participate in my project?
A: Post a query on the project listserv; consult with your mentor.
- Q: Where can I obtain sample syllabi?
A: Post a query on the project listserv.
- Q: May I submit sample materials to AACC *Working Connections* staff?
A: Yes. Your materials will help other colleges that are incorporating the *Working Connections* IT model on their campuses. You should submit any guides, syllabi, brochures, etc., to the project coordinator.
- Q: How can I get ideas for who would make a good community partner?
A: Post a query on the project listserv; consult with your mentor.
- Q: Where can I get ideas for readings or curriculum materials for students?
A: Post a query on the project listserv; consult with your mentor.
- Q: How can I get training or technical assistance for my project personnel?
A: Your mentor is your primary source for technical assistance, and can provide training on the site visit. Other assistance will be provided by Microsoft; guidelines will be provided at the project conference.
- Q: What do I do when we get press coverage?
A: Send AACC a copy of the article (or video, if possible) and announce it on the listserv.
- Q: May I write an article about my program for outside publications?
A: Certainly. AACC staff write about the national project on a regular basis in the *Community College Times*, the *Community College Journal*, and the *AACC Letter*, but welcome your contributions as well. If you are interested in writing collaboratively with someone else in the national project, put a query on the listserv.
- Q: How do I inform the project team about a useful website I discovered?
A: Post it on the project listserv. Contact the project coordinator, who will post the address on the *Working Connections* Web site.

Project Management

- Q: May we change goals or objectives in the middle of the year?
A: Consider such changes carefully, and consult with the AACC project coordinator or project director.
- Q: What happens if I send my written or financial reports to AACC past the deadline?
A: AACC must compile all grantee reports into a larger report to the Microsoft Corporation in a very short time period. If you have trouble meeting report deadlines, talk with the AACC project coordinator at least a few days before the deadline.
- Q: Who do I contact if I need to change team personnel; e.g., if the project director or second team member is no longer part of the project?
A: Notify the AACC project coordinator or project director.
- Q: What do I do if campus politics create problems for my project?
A: Consult with your mentor.
- Q: How do I deal with skeptical or adversarial administrators or faculty?
A: Consult with your mentor.

- Q: May a mentor visit an “unassigned” college?
A: Yes, as long as it doesn’t replace the regular mentor site visit, and all four parties (mentee college, both mentors, and AACC) agree.
- Q: May a mentee team member visit another mentee college?
A: Yes. In fact, AACC encourages such visits.
- Q: May we link our college’s Web site to AACC’s?
A: Absolutely. We strongly encourage two-way links on the Web. AACC’s *Working Connections* section is located at www.aacc.nche.edu/initiatives/connections/index.htm. It has links to several other sites that you may find useful.

Project Finances

- Q: Who do I call when I have budget questions?
A: The AACC project coordinator or project director.
- Q: May I move money from one budget category to another?
A: Probably. Contact the AACC project coordinator or project director before making any changes.
- Q: Do I need to keep financial records on my project?
A: Yes. You will need to send expense summaries to AACC on a regular basis, as required by AACC’s auditors.
- Q: May I use federal funds as part of my college’s required match?
A: Yes, as long as they are not used as match for any other project.
- Q: What expenses will AACC cover while I’m traveling on project business?
A: AACC will cover travel expenses for project conferences for the *Mentor Colleges’* team leaders and second team members, and for one *Mentor College* team member to attend site visits. Read the guidelines on the AACC Travel Expense Report Form (appended). Use of rental cars must be approved in advance. If you have further questions, talk to the AACC project coordinator.

Project Conferences

- Q: Should I book my own hotel room?
A: No. The AACC project coordinator reserves all participant hotel rooms in one block and maintains a rooming list. Any needs or changes should go through the project coordinator.
- Q: Should I book my own airfare?
A: It depends. Mentor team leaders and second team members should always book their travel through AACC’s travel agency, Metro World Travel (JC Gardner 202/728-4040, jcgardner@wrldtrvl.com). *Connections Colleges’* project directors and second team members are free to use any agency they choose.
- Q: Is it all right to bring extra college team members to conferences?
A: Generally AACC welcomes additional team members. Your college will have to pay for their accommodations, meals, transportation, and possibly additional materials. Be sure to check with the AACC project coordinator to make sure the hotel and meeting site can accommodate more people.
- Q: May I share a hotel room with my team member to save money?
A: Yes. Be sure to notify the AACC project coordinator well in advance of the conference, so that hotel arrangements will be correct upon your arrival.
- Q: May I photocopy information in my conference notebook to distribute to people on my campus?
A: Yes, as long as any copyrighted material is credited and used only for educational purposes.

Project Listserv

Q: Who should be on the AACC project listserv?

A: AACC project staff, mentor team leaders and their second team members, project directors and their second team members. Exceptions may be made for consortia grantees.

Q: Is it appropriate to put more people from my college on the project listserv?

A: Generally not, but don't hesitate to ask the project coordinator. AACC's project listservs are limited to a small number of participants who are working together. You may want to start a college-wide listserv on your own campus or simply create a group or list in your e-mail address book. Feel free to forward relevant information from the AACC project listserv to your campus group.

Q: What kind of information is appropriate to send to the listserv?

A: Project updates; news or exciting things that have happened on your campus; questions about project reports or requirements; announcements of upcoming conferences and funding opportunities; general or specific "how-to" questions; day-to-day management questions; conference follow-up questions or information; questions about troublesome situations or new activities. In general, any information that will benefit the majority of the national team or that will help build relationships.

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APPENDICES

- .. Mentor to Mentee College Site Visit Report Form
- .. Mentor College Hosted Site Visit Report Form
- .. *Working Connections* Mentor Team Guidelines
- .. *Working Connections* Request for Mentor Applications
- .. AACC Travel Expense Form



Site Visit Report Form
Mentor College to Class of 2000/2001 College

College _____

Grant Number _____

Project Director _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

Phone (____) _____ **Email** _____

College Visited _____

Date of Visit _____

Person(s) Making the Visit (name and title):

In 3 to 5 pages, address the following:

- 1. Primary goal of the meeting and assessment of how well that goal was met, including the mentoring relationship.**
- 2. Analysis of the project's progress in meeting all four *Working Connections* objectives.**
- 3. Special successes to date.**
- 4. Special challenges to date.**
- 5. Recommendations.**

Attach site visit agenda and itinerary (if different from agenda), including names of individuals and groups that participated in site visit discussions.



Site Visit Report Form Mentor College-Hosted Site Visit

College _____

Grant Number _____

Project Director _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ Email _____

College Visited: _____

Date of Visit: _____

Person(s) Making the Visit (name and title)

In 3 to 5 pages, address the following:

1. **Primary goal of the meeting and assessment of how well that goal was met, including the mentoring relationship.**
2. **Description of sites, staff, students, products, services, etc. that were part of meeting.**
3. **Special successes.**
4. **Special challenges.**
5. **Recommendations for future hosted site visits.**

Attach site visit agenda and itinerary (if different from agenda), including names of individuals and groups that participated in site visit discussions.

AACC/Microsoft *Working Connections* Mentor Team Guidelines

1. Mentors will:
 - a. Commit to AACC's team approach for this project.
 - b. Communicate regularly by phone, mail, fax, and e-mail with mentee colleges, other mentors, and AACC project staff to share ideas and help solve problems as needed.
 - c. Contribute to the development of periodic reports and articles produced by AACC.
 - d. Provide technical assistance to, conduct, and report on at least one site visit per mentee college.
 - e. Host and report on visits from assigned mentee college teams.
 - f. Help develop and participate in project meetings.
 - g. Help develop and participate in AACC-sponsored conference sessions, as needed or appropriate.
 - h. Submit year-end reports on mentee progress and mentor institution faculty/staff development to AACC.
 - i. Submit semi-annual and year-end financial reports to AACC.

2. AACC will:
 - a. Award mentor institutions with renewable grants of \$20,000-\$30,000, not to exceed \$110,000, to design best practice tools or services, and to provide or enhance opportunities for incorporation of the *Working Connections* IT models on the campuses of up to five mentee colleges.
 - b. Cover travel costs for the mentor team leader and second team member to attend project meetings, and travel costs for one mentor team member to attend site visits.
 - c. Provide professional development opportunities for the Mentor Team.

3. AACC Contacts:

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Working Connections Project Director
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