



PUENTE

MENTOR
TRAINING
HANDBOOK

The Puente Project is co-sponsored by the University of California
and the California Community College Chancellor's Office

A WORD FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Congratulations!

You have chosen to become a valuable team member of the Puente Project. Since 1981, our mission has been to *increase the number of students from underserved communities who transfer and enroll in four-year colleges and universities, earn college degrees, and return to their communities as leaders and mentors.*

Our Puente mentors are professionals from business, government, educational and other career sectors. Puente students have indicated that they have gained greater life skills and confidence to succeed academically due to the mentors who have volunteered to spend time with them.

Alongside our Puente Counselors and Writing Instructors, Puente mentors have helped thousands of students succeed in their educational and career pursuits.

We hope that this handbook will serve as a guide for mentors to define and clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

Welcome to the Puente familia!!

Julia Vergara

PUENTE PROJECT PROGRAM COMPONENTS

WRITING

The writing component includes a developmental writing course followed by a college transfer-level English composition course. Students enroll with the same Puente instructor for classes over one academic year. These classes provide a supportive and stimulating environment for students through the curriculum which integrates Mexican American/Latino and other multicultural literature in combination with a variety of writing exercises.

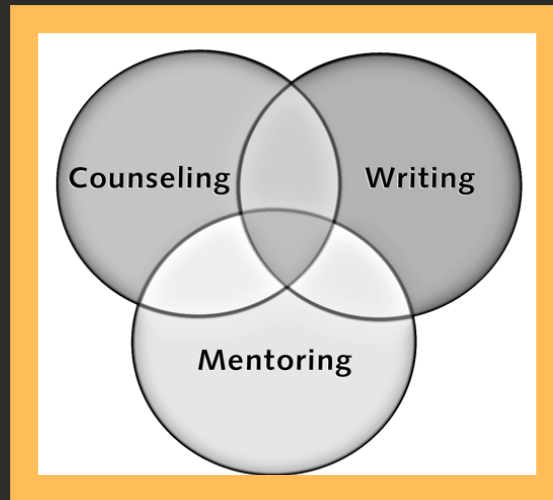
COUNSELING

The counseling component includes an assigned Puente counselor who works closely with Puente students to help them identify career goals, develop short and long term educational plans, and navigate their preparation to four-year colleges or universities. The counselor also teaches a course in personal development.

MENTORING

The Puente team members (counselor and writing instructor) match the Puente students with mentors from the local professional community. Three out of four Puente community college students have parents with no college education. Mentors serve as role models of academic and professional success to these students. They are trained volunteers who offer ongoing encouragement for students and provide a vital link between the local community and the college campus.

WHY MENTORING?



While the success of a student is often gauged by performance in the classroom, we know that there are many factors outside of the classroom that affect a student's persistence in college. As some students struggle through their courses, often balancing demanding home lives and jobs as well, it is important that they feel a sense of belonging and a connection not only to their teachers but to the wider community.

The Puente Program was created in response to the needs of these students, many of whom are first-generation to attend college, who need extra support to navigate the college system. Many of these students, additionally, find skills such as professionalism, leadership, and communication a challenge, making it more difficult to seek out services, and to excel in their classes. There are a number of practices which aid in helping students on both fronts—the very best of these is the simple idea of mentorship.

Puente is unique among college transfer programs by offering personal one-on-one mentoring by local professionals who graciously volunteer 15-18 hours during the academic year.

Our Puente mentors support the Puente counselor and English instructor by motivating Puente students to build the social and cultural capital they will need for their future success as college students and career professionals.

WHAT SHOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT PUENTISTAS?

- Most are first-generation to attend college
- Their educational aspirations usually increase after their first semester in Puente
- They are becoming writers and scholars
- They are starting to realize their potential as leaders
- They are beginning to internalize the concept of mentoring and giving back to their communities



As Mentors You Can Help Students:

- Address factors that challenge college completion
- Explore career options
- Gain networking skills
- Increase their knowledge about college
- Learn about how to pay for college
- Develop study skills/time management/goal setting



WHAT TO EXPECT AS A PUENTE MENTOR

ATTEND THE MENTOR TRAINING

Puente requires that mentors attend a formal training in order to acquaint themselves with the overall program, learn more about our student population, meet other new and experienced mentors, and to insure that they understand the program expectations.

ATTEND THE PUENTE MENTOR MATCHING EVENT

Your Puente team will schedule a mentor matching event where you will meet your student and spend time getting to know each other. This is an ideal time to share contact information and schedule your next meeting.

AGREE TO SPEND AT LEAST 15-18 HOURS WITH YOUR MENTEE

While this is just a minimum standard, mentoring time can include group mentor activities, phone calls, text messaging, video sessions, as well as 1:1 in-person activities with the mentee. Plan with your mentee how often and what types of activities you would both enjoy!

PLAN THREE TYPES OF ACTIVITIES THAT YOU WILL DO TOGETHER

Social: Attend a movie, baseball game, museum, play, etc.

Professional: Invite your mentee to visit your workplace, or attend a professional conference or event together.

Academic: Take a college tour.



HELP YOUR STUDENT COMPLETE THEIR MENTOR ASSIGNMENT

Your student may be required to complete an assignment on their mentoring experience which requires them to interview you about your own journey as a college student and a professional. Please participate but do not help them write their paper!

ATTEND THE PUENTE END OF YEAR EVENT

Most campuses host a celebration at the end of the academic year. Join your mentee to honor their accomplishments!

MENTOR GUIDELINES AND CODE OF CONDUCT

Do

remember that the mentor-mentee relationship has an initial phase. Decide at that first meeting how you would both prefer to communicate (e.g. phone, email, text).

Do

try to take the first step in planning activities but also ask your mentee to help make decisions. Discuss similar interests as well as using this as an opportunity to encourage them to try new experiences.

Do

consult with the student about any activity costs. Many come from low-income families so be mindful of activities that may be unaffordable. You can assist with paying but are not required to do so.

Do

know your limitations. Problems that your mentee may share with you regarding substance abuse, molestation, and physical abuse are best handled by professionals. Please contact the Puente counselor immediately.



Do

encourage your mentee to aspire to complete their educational goals. Assist in making the connection between their actions of today and their dreams and goals of tomorrow!

Don't

try to be a teacher, disciplinarian, or a therapist. Experience demonstrates that it is counterproductive to assume roles other than a dependent, consistent adult. Think of ways to solve problems rather than lecturing or telling them what to do.

Don't

drive your mentee unless you have proper car insurance. If you choose not to drive, choose places that the student will be able to provide their own transportation to.

Don't

use alcohol, tobacco, or drugs of any kind with your mentee. Even if the mentee is over the age of 21, mentors and mentees should not use these substances during their planned activities.

HELPFUL QUESTIONS FOR INITIAL MEETING



NOT SURE WHERE TO START? HERE'S A FEW CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR YOUR FIRST MEETING AND SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSIONS:

- How often would you like to meet?
- What is your preferred way to communicate? (phone, text, email, etc)
- What do you expect from this relationship?
- Presently, what are your academic goals?
- What plans do you have for reaching your goals?
- How can I assist you in carrying out your goals?
- Have you visited any universities?
- What are some of your personal goals? (time management, job search, campus involvement, balancing school, career and family)
- What are your plans for meeting these goals and how can I help?
- What careers are you interested in?
- Have you heard about internships?
- Would you like to learn about professional networking and how it can help to achieve your goals?
- What do you like to do for fun?
- Favorite hobbies, sports teams, music, movies, books, etc?

OF COURSE ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS ALSO OFFER YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE ABOUT YOURSELF AS WELL!

QUALITIES OF SUCCESSFUL PUENTE MENTORS



Puente mentors make the time commitment to be with the Puente student for the academic year. While it is understandable that emergencies arise, mentors are asked to make sure that they will have the time and availability needed. Ending the commitment early could be detrimental to the student who may feel that their mentor "gave up" on them.



Puente mentors show respect to the students as individuals and their ability to make their own choices in life. While the mentor may not always agree with the student's choices, it is important for the student to know that they have someone they can talk to.



Puente mentors often help simply by listening, asking thoughtful questions and giving mentees an opportunity to explore their own thoughts. When people feel accepted, they are more likely to ask for and respond to good ideas.



Puente mentors recognize that relationships take time to develop and that communication is a two-way street. Puente students usually are new to the concept of mentoring and may have never met professional adults who are willing to spend time with them. Patience is necessary especially with those students who are shy or do not respond immediately to attempted communications.



Puente mentors recognize that community college students need caring role models who can share the skills needed to succeed: role of networking, hard work, and commitment.



Puente mentors remain open to the possibility that they can also learn from their mentee! The concept of "reverse mentoring" affirms the idea that the mentor-mentee relationship can be mutual and offer the mentor the opportunity to learn new skills, gain additional knowledge regarding issues around educational equity, further the mentor's understanding of issues that students currently face, and to assert the critical role they play as agents of change.

WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

If after completing the Puente Mentor training and reading through this handbook you feel you are ready to volunteer as a mentor, please confirm with the Puente team at the community college program you wish to join for further instructions.

However, if you feel that you are unable to make the commitment at this time, but would like to support the program in other ways, know that your local Puente team can still use your help! Other possible ways to support include:

- Job site visitation
- Classroom Career Panel speaker
- Financial support
- Donations of services or products (e.g. printing, facilities, tours, food, office/art supplies, T-shirt production, etc.)

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

Visit our social media pages:
website: thepuenteproject.org



Sign up for our statewide Puente Mentor newsletter for mentoring information, tips, and general program updates.
Click here to sign up: <https://forms.gle/d85Dw8kn7o4bxSYH6>

Thank You For Making A Difference!!