

Roadmap for the Coaching Relationship

1. Relationship Building
2. Goal Setting
3. Refining the Goal and Making a Plan
4. Feedback and Reflection
5. Ongoing Coaching

1. Relationship Building: establishing trust

The initial meeting is one of the most important conversations you will have with your coachee. Take time to get to know each other a little bit.

Who are you? Who am I? Tell them a little bit about yourself and your own leadership journey. Ask them why they applied to the program. Ask them what they hope to get out of the program year.

Why are we here? It is important for you to emphasize that they should be thinking about a *leadership* learning goal to work on for the year which will really be the foundation for the coaching relationship. Take some time to talk about how you each define leadership.

Ground rules: Together set some ground-rules for how the two of you want meetings to work. How often to meet? Where? What is a realistic amount of time to spend at each meeting? (At least one hour is recommended.)

Prompting Questions:

What did you think about the LPI tool? Which of the 5 Practices seem most relevant to you? The least?

Tell me a little bit more about the activities you are involved in. What motivated you to get involved? To stay involved?

Say more about the role(s) you play in those groups/organizations/activities. What has given you the greatest sense of accomplishment? What does this tell you about yourself?

You will soon finish with an MIT degree and hopefully the sense that you have developed leadership skills. If the next two years included real growth and opportunities for leadership development, what would they look like?

2. Goal Setting: identifying a focus area

The students are asked to identify specific Leadership Learning Goals for the year. The LPI Tool should provide a foundation upon which they can focus.

Example focus areas include learning to:

- Project more confidence and express ideas and opinions more assertively
- Speak in public with greater inspiration and conviction
- Clarify roles and responsibilities within a group/ team and manage conflict productively
- Motivate others more effectively
- Delegate tasks and empower others to step up
- Develop/improve a specific (professional) relationship
- Set priorities and hold the group to task

Prompting Questions to Identify the Focus of the Goal:

Based on the LPI tool, what did you learn about your strengths? Your opportunities for growth?

Which of the practices are you most comfortable with? Why? What can you do to use more frequently a practice for which you scored lower?

What leadership skills do you specifically want to develop during your undergraduate experience? What do you want to be better able to do? What experiences might help you get there?

3. Refining the Goal and Making a Plan: making a the goal meaningful and actionable

In order for a goal to be actionable, it needs to be broken down into specific and measurable pieces. Set time boundaries for achieving these pieces and check back regularly about how they are going.

Prompting Questions for Refining the Goal and Making a Plan:

What is it about this goal that is inspiring and exciting to you? Is it meaningful and important to you? Is this goal really useful to you right now?

You want to accomplish X so that... what? What do you hope to get out of accomplishing this goal?

How will you know when you've achieved your goal? What does "success" look like? By when do you want to see progress/results?

What are the tactics and things you are going to actually do in order to achieve the goal? What steps do you need to take? Brainstorm a list and put them in order of action with a date by when then will be accomplished.

What are some obstacles you need to overcome?

What is your next specific action?

(NOTE: You may be able to help them by role-playing a difficult conversation they have coming up, mapping out an agenda with them, or practicing a new task or skill, such as facilitating a meeting.)

4. Feedback and Reflection: learning from experience

The purpose of this program is for the student participants to apply their learning within whatever context they so choose (a student group, athletic team, group project, service activity, etc.) You will obviously not be able to see them in action, so an important skill to highlight is asking for feedback. It is rare at MIT for students give and receive feedback with peers or faculty/staff advisors about what they are learning, how they are leading or participating in a group, and/or their communication styles.

Prompting Questions:

Who do you trust to give you honest feedback about how effective you were at something?

Do you feel comfortable asking your peers for feedback?

Who else can you get feedback from about your goals and development plan?

Another critical piece of this experience is for the students to consider the value of reflective practice. At a place like MIT, there is usually very little time and space for systematically examining what is being learned or articulating the knowledge or questions that have come out of their experiences. Having dedicated time and space to stop and think about what they are learning through their experiences is not something they are used to doing. Use some of your time to talk with them about the importance of reflection.

Prompting Questions:

When you finish a project or major program/activity, how do you process what you learned? Do you stop and think about what you did well and what you might do differently next time?

How and when do you find time to process experiences you have had and learn lessons from them?

5. Ongoing Coaching: the coaching conversations

At each coaching session, check in with your student about their goals. Use active listening skills, ask motivating questions, and try to suspend judgment. Keep in mind this will be an iterative process and new behavioral goals may come up as time goes on. That's okay! Remain flexible and help your student process and reflect on their learning.

The Coaching Conversation:

1. Listen first
 - a. Identify the coachee's agenda
 - b. Let go of your own agenda or judgment/advice-giving
2. Create Space and Ask Motivating Questions
 - a. Allow the coachee to find his/her own solutions
3. Maintain the focus
 - a. Hold the coachee's goal or topic in mind
 - b. Redirect if necessary, "how does this relate to your goal/agenda?"
4. Follow-up & feedback
 - a. Ask, "From this conversation, what will actions will you take in the coming days/weeks to meet your goals?"

If the goal-setting presents a significant obstacle for your student, or if the coaching sessions feel redundant, try one of the other two kinds of coaching we discussed at training:

Situational Coaching

If there is a leadership-related topic that your student/coachee wants to talk about that is "hot" it is perfectly appropriate to use the session to coach her/him on that. Have them identify a challenge they have faced recently or will face in the near future (in a leadership context). Ask them to describe the actions they took and have them reflect on the effectiveness of their actions. How might they modify their behavior next time? Where else can they try it again?

Reflective Practice

Use the coaching time to reflect on the concepts learned in the workshops and networking sessions (or the CCLP program overall thus far). Have they observed any of these concepts or ideas in the groups, organizations, experiences, etc.? Brainstorm ways that they can apply or practice these things in their daily leadership work and activities. Provide space for reflection on a specific challenge or situation they have ahead.