

FEMALE COACHING MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Program Overview & Mentorship Timeline

This program increases the representation, depth of knowledge, and advancement of female coaches in cross country and track and field — at every level, including volunteer and graduate assistant positions — and builds accessibility across the industry.

Why It Matters

Women in academic and athletic professional settings face real personal and professional challenges. Formal mentoring — career guidance paired with personal, psychological, and social support — is critical to the success of new and mid-career coaches. With women and minorities still underrepresented in collegiate athletics, deliberate mentoring and role modeling matter.

A mentor outside someone's own workplace makes it easier to discuss challenges without judgment and to learn practices from other institutions. Cross-level, cross-industry mentoring beats the one-sided view of a single program.

Goal

Pair coaches 1:1 for year-round mentorship, learning, and reflection — not a single event. Exceptions: a mentor may take on 2+ mentees, mentor a cohort together, or keep a past mentee while adding a new one to the same cohort.

Who Qualifies as a Mentor

- Mentors aren't expected to know everything, be an expert in every area, or meet every mentee need.
- Mentors orient mentees to their coaching system (Division, NCAA, NAIA, JUCO, Club, High School, etc.) and give perspective on situation-specific questions.
- Mentors share best practices and lessons learned the hard way.
- Mentors keep all discussions confidential and give supportive, constructive feedback.
- Final candidates are selected for reliability, communication, demonstrated interest and passion for the cause, varied perspective, and strong recommendations.

Who Qualifies as a Mentee

- Open to graduate assistant, assistant, intern, full-time, and part-time coaching positions.
- Five years of coaching experience or less.

Program Benefits

For the Mentee	For the Mentor
Individual recognition and specific, situation-based feedback — tailored to your circumstances, not just program resources.	Practice articulating your "why": decision-making rationale and coaching philosophy.
Third-party feedback across every role you hold — leader, mentor, coach, recruiting coordinator, operations, communicator, disciplinarian, AT/compliance liaison — and how you balance them.	Satisfaction of developing a colleague and contributing to organizational climate change.

For the Mentee	For the Mentor
Best practices for hard skills (technique, execution) and soft skills (communication, group management), plus alternative methods to reach the same goals.	Outside-perspective feedback and a network of FCMP-program colleagues.
Zero professional repercussions for discussing choices or mistakes, plus insight into the formal and informal rules for advancement.	Improved retention and reduced attrition of new and mid-career coaches.
Reduced stress through psychosocial support.	Increased self-esteem and satisfaction from supporting new and mid-career coaches' success.

Responsibilities

Mentees

Respect your mentor's time, experience, and perspective. Keep an attitude of gratitude and match your outreach frequency to both parties' day-to-day commitments.

Mentors

- Listen and ask powerful questions.
- Listen for understanding — suspend judgment.
- Let the mentee decide what's right for their situation.
- Maintain privacy and integrity; violating this damages the relationship.
- Be willing to field occasional "panic situation" check-ins from your mentee.

Suggested Talking Points & Timeline

These are starting points, not requirements — skip them, adapt them, or go further based on what your mentee needs. Communicate as often as it's useful. Use whatever platform works for you both: Zoom, phone, WhatsApp, Skype, in person, text, Google Chat, etc.

Communication 1 — September

- Compare backgrounds, work environments, and athlete demographics. Discuss who helped or hindered you as a female coach.
- Talk through your recruiting and culture-building process — what factors shape the culture you cultivate?

Communication 2 — October

- Balancing time and responsibilities.

Communication 3 — November

- Discrimination experienced as a coach or athlete — gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion.
- How to report behavioral misconduct (for yourself or an athlete) and what that process looks like at different institutions.
- Handling tough situations — discipline, reporting, mental health — when strong support structures (athletic training, nutrition, sport psychology, academic advising) aren't in place.

Communication 4 — December

- Mentor offers one professional growth opportunity for the mentee to pursue this year, plus patterns to watch for as athletes move from freshman to senior year.
- Potential in-person connections — with you or other coaches.

Communication 5 — January

- How you build a travel schedule and choose competitions.

Communication 6 — February

- Personal boundaries or policies you use to avoid burnout and retain mother-coaches and coaches facing financial hardship.
- Managing office politics.

Communication 7 — March

- Cultural methods you've adapted based on program, recruiting shifts, or athlete level.

Communication 8 — April

- Navigating tough conversations with support staff — administration, sports medicine, strength coaches — to meet your event-area and competition needs.

Communication 9 — May

- How you build and deliver race plans for championship meets.
- What you'd change in training design, team culture, and recruiting next year based on this season's results.

Communication 10 — June

- Applying to new positions: interviewing, resume review, and your own mobility experience.
- Language for championship settings and preparing an athlete's mind and body for post-season vs. pre-season.