

CSM Umoja Community

Mentoring Handbook



Nkonsonkonson
"Chain Link"



Nkonsonkonson (“Chain Link”)

Adinkra symbol for unity and human relations and is a reminder that we have a responsibility to contribute to the community and that it is in community that we find strength.

Umoja Community Mission

Umoja (a Kiswahili word meaning unity) is a community and critical resource dedicated to enhancing the cultural and educational experiences of African American and other students. We believe that when the voices and histories of students are deliberately and intentionally recognized, the opportunity for self-efficacy emerges and a foundation is formed for academic success. Umoja actively serves and promotes student success for all students through a curriculum and pedagogy responsive to the legacy of the African and African American Diasporas.

The Umoja Practices

From the Umoja Community Education Foundation

1. **Raising “Intentional & Deliberate”:** In Umoja we deeply value intentional and deliberate purposefulness. We should know why we are doing what we do; nothing should be random. This does not mean that learning and teaching is all pre-determined, proscribed, or pre-scripted. We are claiming here that we need to raise our capacity to be intentional and deliberate while creating “live learning” spaces and programs. Doing so helps our faculty engage a conscious dialogue informing their practice and choices, and helps us engender in our students a similar conscious dialogue about their practice and choices.
2. **Ethic of Love—the Affective Domain:** When practitioners move with an ethic of love they touch their students’ spirits. Moving with an ethic of love means having a willingness to share ourselves, our stories, our lives, our experiences to humanize and make real the classroom. This leveraging of the affective—emotion, trust, hope, trauma, healing—moves the discourse deliberately as an inroad to the cognitive domain. Approaching one’s practice with an ethic of love implies a holistic approach – Body, Mind, Spirit.
3. **Manifesting:** How does the student re-pro-duce what you do in class with their friends, family, and community? Students should be able to put into practice what they’re learning in your class. They should intentionally bring their learning into the community and share with family, folks that support them, friends who could benefit and be edified by the Umoja consciousness. The practice of manifesting intends to make sure that all of what we do in our programs is applied, connected, and relevant to the students’ lives, and that the learning manifests inside the identity—spirit and mind—of the students. The question: “How is this manifesting in a way that is helping them survive in their daily lives?” – is part of the consciousness of all Umoja practitioners and in turn a part of our students’ consciousness so they can take their learning with them outside our campuses.
4. **Umoja Counseling: Affirming, Integrated, Intentional–** Umoja counseling is intentional and deliberate. It transcends the school environment and helps to empower students to make positive changes in their lives and the lives of their communities. We seek out the student, not waiting, immediately exploring what is going on with our students. Seeking out our students and not waiting holds our students close, keeps them in school, believing in themselves, each other and the Umoja program. To do best by our student’s accuracy and wisdom matter. Umoja counseling has no walls, no time clock; dialogue is open and responsive, based in building relationship. There is a communal dimension to Umoja counseling.
5. **The Porch:** To say at all times “What Is Really Going On Here,” a learning environment should be open, respectful, playful; there should be argument, dissection and revision. It should be personal, political and philosophical. The porch can often be candid and sometimes even painful. Storytelling is privileged and sometimes song breaks out. Porchtalk invites humor, noise, sometimes unruliness. A classroom with such honesty and visibility can produce frustration and also acceptance. Needless to say, trust is at the foundation of a porchtalk learning environment and trust has to be earned, modeled, practiced, openly reflected upon, and revisited. Porchtalk is intentional; for example, the instructor looks for an opportunity to draw out, celebrate and dignify the quieter students, so all the voices in the room make up the porch. The porch is a place where our students safely communicate and advocate for themselves.

6. **Live Learning:** Live learning is risky; it is freewheeling and open. The instructor yields control of meaning and understanding in the classroom while keeping a keen eye on learning as it is emerging. Live learning implies that the learning experience is generative and performative. In a live learning situation, the exact content and learning experience are not known before the class session begins. Surprise and original language burst out all over the classroom; the instructor facilitates and culls the learning that is happening. Live learning intentionally captures and documents learning in real time. It is a way of having a discussion that really flies, while focusing the insight, capturing it on boards and in notebooks, so the discussion does not disappear after the students leave the class session. It is democratic and analytically rigorous at the same time. Live learning demonstrates to the students through their own words that language is powerful; ideas and texts are rich and can be made their own. Most importantly live learning demonstrates to the students that they are smart, deep.
7. **Language As Power:** When we recognize and validate the language that our students bring to the classroom—that which they create amongst themselves—our students open up to the power of language. We can help them to develop a sense of pride, ownership and responsibility in their own speaking and writing. By so doing, we can bring our students inside the conscious experience of wielding language, all types of language—academic, standard, Black English, theoretical. Our classrooms can be a multilingual experience which provides an impetus for our students to represent themselves while crossing bridges into other, unfamiliar language they are bound to encounter in their lives. When our students experience language as power, curiosity, playfulness and agency replace what might have been standoffishness and uncertainty.
8. **Tapping African American Intellectual, Spiritual, and Artistic Voices:** Informed by their distinct history, African Americans have created a unique African diaspora experience expressed through myriad intellectuals, artists and spiritual leaders. Umoja sees individuals like Phyllis Wheatley, David Walker, Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells Barnett, Robert Johnson, W.E.B. Dubois, James Baldwin, Maya Angelou, Alan Locke, Thelonious Monk, Malcolm X, Romaine Bearden, Aaron Douglas, Langston Hughes, Ra Un Nefer Amen, Cheikh Anta Diop, bell hooks, and many, many others as ancestral bridges—a way of reaching back while moving forward. The Umoja Community encourages our practitioners to continually mine the work of African Americans in the interpretation and construction of knowledge in our classrooms. We invite our students and ourselves to claim this richness that resides, so often, below the surface.
9. **Awareness of Connectedness to African Diaspora:** Umoja students are interconnected to African peoples around the globe. Umoja practitioners can facilitate an awareness of how students' actions impact all African people. This sort of practice intentionally traces the historical, political and cultural lines emerging from Africa. This practice encourages a global African consciousness in an effort to foster collective responsibility, empathy and self-awareness. This practice also actively asks that students join their voices and stories with the voices and stories of peoples across the diaspora. In this way, Umoja students will become aware of the diaspora and articulate their place in that experience.
10. **Community–Building Communal Intelligence:** Community is absolutely fundamental to an Umoja learning experience, for the students, the faculty, and the staff. Umoja practitioners intentionally call out and support students' talents in an effort to build community and self-esteem. By tapping the intellectual and social capital represented by our students, we build community and greatly enhance the meaning of our classrooms/offices. Beyond helping keep our students in school, building community causes students to be accountable to each others' learning. Communal intelligence implies that we teach a willingness to see your own suffering and that of your sisters and brothers and taking responsibility for it. Community transcends our courses and services and reaches into the "I am, because you are."
11. **Acceleration – English, Math, ESL, and Counseling:** The vast majority of our students begin community college in basic skills courses, and like many students, they often do not make it to transfer level English and Math. Students are warehoused. So often our students are taught from a deficit perspective; Umoja flips this and engages students from a capacity perspective. One way acceleration has been talked about is as a shorter pathway through sequences, moving students more quickly through basic skills to transfer level courses. Of course shortening sequences, when it makes sense, matters. Many Umoja instructors are working with new accelerated curriculum expressions. The Umoja Community recognizes that faculty must design and own the curriculum which they offer students and that local authorship and expression is fundamental to the success of accelerated curriculum redesign. Umoja encourages "deep acceleration", where faculty go beyond structural changes into questions of pedagogy, practice, student capacity and current theories around adult learning. Furthermore, Umoja asserts that counselors are integral to the success of any innovative curriculum and pathway being offered to students.
12. **Occupy Study Spaces on campus:** Studying in the Village—a dedicated, welcoming Umoja space where students study and spend time together—builds community and nurtures academic success. Designed by students and staff, the Umoja village is a sacred space that offers opportunities to increase exposure to historical and cultural experiences from the African diaspora. The Umoja village is an expression of and celebration of our students' voices and model for how students can approach their homework. Encouraging, even requiring, studying on campus works well with our students because it models, practices and affirms sustained and effective study habits for our students. We must positively and actively foster studying, deep concentration and creativity for our students to be successful in their academic pursuits.

13. **Mentoring:** “A wise and trusted counselor or teacher.” A major reason students drop out of college is due to feelings of isolation or alienation. Mentoring is a practice that allows students to make a more personal connection with someone who can offer support, guidance, and encouragement while dealing with the challenges of managing school and life. Many Umoja programs offer mentoring for students in a variety of formats that may include faculty and staff mentoring, mentoring from the community and peer mentoring.
14. **Mattering:** Mattering is intersectional – cultural, social, political, civic, spiritual. Given the years of institutionalized educational inertia, which often includes potent doses of failure and disaffection, we are being asked to create learning experiences that reclaim mattering and give agency to our students as matters. It matters what we teach; we must take a risk to include content that fuses suffering, identity and freedom. Mattering increases context while making choices about what is urgent. As matters students’ experiences and perspectives become a critical resource to the knowledge and analyses emergent in the class and in the program.
15. **Umoja as a Power Base:** Umoja Community programs use their infrastructure, their resources, and their community as a model for Black achievement across the campus, state and nation. The dearth of ideas regarding Black student success calls us out to participate actively and openly in the analysis and decision-making about how to reverse the tide. We share awareness with our students of their shoulders being leaned upon by their brothers and sisters, their mothers and fathers and many others. Our students, as leaders, are trained and empowered to engage faculty, administrators and staff alongside and on behalf of their peers to voice their desire to achieve their educational dreams and goals. Our students, as leaders, are empowered to partner with faculty in the spirit of dual commitment – “I commit to you, you commit to me.” When we embrace our position, Umoja becomes more than a program; it is a privilege that will be leveraged, a power base from which action and commitment to success for historically under resourced students and others.
16. **Encircling Diversity:** Encircling diversity affirms my “I am” as we stand in a place where we feel embraced and connected to everyone and empowered to rebuke all forms of cultural domination of any kind. Encircling diversity brings about a fully-present student and challenges the community to make justice and freedom a primary question; in MLK’s words, Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” When we encircle diversity, we are more than merely tolerant, we seek deep understanding and celebration of the way someone different than ourselves speaks, thinks, imagines, and becomes. When we encircle diversity, we acknowledge and appreciate our oneness and diversity becomes a resource, and a strength, to our Umoja community.
17. **Gifting:** Sharing what we learn honors and extends learning. Umoja students become teachers and pass wisdom as they gift their learning to their family, their community, their peers in the program, and at Umoja events. Preparing the gift of learning by collectively identifying what is most meaningful, what is necessary and why this learning gift matters is an act of grace that helps us become accountable to each other’s collective intelligence for purposes that uplift the community. Umoja practitioners believe that knowledge and practice are communal and meant to be freely gifted. When we give a learning gift, we become conscious and thoughtful about belonging to each other’s achievement; our students become one thousand wide and ten thousand deep.
18. **Everybody’s Business:** We are a village, acting in accord, and unafraid to be seen and heard as we do our work, leveraging every voice and source of information to do our best by our students. We gather and share information about our students. As Umoja professionals, we feel that including everybody in our distinct disciplines and work duties shares knowledge and builds commitment. In Umoja, a counselor is an English teacher, a Math teacher is in the history class, an administrative assistant is a tutor and everybody is a coordinator. We know what each other is up to, in an intimate, detailed way, so that we can support and reinforce each other. We cover and pitch in on each other’s work, even while we maintain our areas of expertise. When a program event or program need comes up, we all inquire and support. And particularly when it comes to our students, we all stay aware of their progress, their challenges and crises, and their successes.

Mission of CSM's Umoja Community Mentoring Program

The mission of CSM's Umoja Community Mentoring Program is to foster both self-efficacy and confidence in our Umoja students. It is through Kmonkonmonkon, or human relationships, that we can accomplish these goals. In many cultures, the bond between mentor and protégé is one that is steeped in tradition and sacredness. It is through this special bond, characterized by commitment, trust, and an ethic of love, that our Umoja mentors will help our students navigate the college's resources, develop their academic identities, and explore professional and career choices.

But the mentor-protégé bond is not always one in which the mentor simply passes wisdom and advice on to the student. Indeed, this type of bond is more paternalistic than one of mutual respect and growth. As such, the CSM Umoja Community Mentoring Program emphasizes relationships built on shared journeys and experiences. Mentors must recognize the uniqueness of their mentees and facilitate their growth accordingly.

Goals for CSM's Umoja Community Mentoring Program

Umoja Mentoring . . .

- Helps students develop and reach short- and long-term academic and career goals;
- Through encouragement and an ethic of love, provides a positive academic and professional environment in which students can grow;
- Builds students' self-efficacy and confidence in order to overcome obstacles and challenges;
- Broadens students' academic and professional horizons through goal-setting and career exploration;
- **Develops the whole student.**

What is a mentor?

A mentor is someone who guides the personal, academic, and professional development of another individual. The mentor is understanding and motivating, enhancing the mentee's vision of accomplishment.

As a key member of the mentee's support system, the mentor . . .

Boosts Self-Esteem

- Believes in the mentee
- Renews the mentee's self-confidence
- Reflects confidence in the mentee to others

Understands the Mentee's Dreams and Enhances the Mentee's Vision

- Believes the mentee's dreams are worthwhile
- Helps the mentee expand horizons
- Helps the mentee map out a plan of action for goals

Supports the Mentee's Educational and Career Goals

- Exposes the mentee to career professionals, administrators, and faculty, when possible
- Broadens the student's contacts on campus and in the community

Introduces the Mentee to the Educational or Business Structure

- Teaches the mentee the language of the academic (or business) community
- Helps the mentee become a part of that community
- Shares the philosophy and values of the community and its leaders
- Offers advice on developing and using a network of contacts within the community

Provides Advice, Guidance, and Support

- Supports the mentee's efforts
- Alerts the mentee to blind alleys and obstacles, and helps mentee redirect when necessary
- Provides pertinent school-related and job-related information when appropriate
- Advocates for the mentee, and instills a sense of self-advocacy in the mentee

Provides Encouragement and Perspective

- Encourages the mentee to achieve the goals s/he has established
- Provides perspective on how others see mentee
- Gives the mentee opportunities to assume additional responsibilities

Acts as a Role Model

- Models professional ethics and behavior for the mentee
- Stresses the value of confidentiality
- Encourages ethnic and cultural pride and displays ethnic and cultural sensitivity
- Expresses a positive attitude toward school, work, and the community

(Developed by Marcelino Saucido, Cerritos College)

Do's and Don'ts of Mentoring

What mentors ARE:

- *Advisors:* People with experience, who are willing to share their knowledge;
- *Supporters:* People who give encouragement;
- *Sponsors:* People who can provide information and helpful opportunities;
- *Models:* People who exhibit the traits necessary to be successful in the academic and professional world.

What mentors are NOT:

- Parents, financiers, social workers, or best friends.

What mentors SHOULD do:

- Understand the commitment of mentoring;
- Ask questions when they don't understand something;
- Be active listeners;
- Balance their lives and model this to their mentees;
- Take initiative – don't wait for mentee to contact you;
- Talk to other mentors;
- Say no to activities in which they cannot realistically participate.

What mentors should NOT do:

- Break commitments or promises with their mentees;
- Condone negative behavior;
- Be inconsistent;
- Become a crutch;
- Expect too much or too little;
- Take sides on personal or family issues, or attempt to resolve them;
- Criticize mentee's behavior or dress, or impose personal values on mentee;
- Preach, lecture, or talk down to a mentee;
- Discuss topics or issues that make mentee uncomfortable;
- Break confidentiality, except as required by District procedure or law.

What mentees SHOULD do:

- Keep a positive attitude and be willing to make positive changes in their lives;
- Be willing to accept feedback, accept help, and follow advice;
- Be willing to commit to a goal;
- Be open with the mentor about academic struggles;
- Be open with the mentor about life/work balance;
- Be willing to use campus resources the mentor may suggest;
- Respect the mentor's time and come prepared to all mentor/mentee meetings;
- Develop an action plan for their classes;

- Understand the importance of education and make it a clear priority in their lives.

What mentees should NOT do:

- Miss scheduled appointments with mentor;
- Fail to communicate honestly with mentor;
- Dismiss mentor's suggestions without considering or trying them;
- Be overly resistant to feedback.

(Developed by DVC Umoja Community)

CSM Umoja Community Expectations for Mentors

- All mentors must read through this handbook, and become familiar with the Umoja Community's philosophy and practices.
- Mentors should have consistent and sustained contact during the mentee's year in the mentoring program.
- Mentors are invited and encouraged to attend Umoja events and field trips.
- Mentors should maintain consistent dialogue with the Umoja coordinator, especially as issues with mentees arise (i.e. missing appointments, low engagement, lack of follow through, etc.)
- At least three face-to-face contacts and one job site visit.

Confidentiality and Trust

In order to build trust between a mentor and mentee, it is essential that a mentee's confidentiality be considered at all times. Though within the context of this program, mentors may discuss issues as they arise, but it is extremely important that mentors understand the importance of confidentiality in the mentor-mentee relationship. Besides personal information mentees may share that should not be divulged, their student records are considered to be private and legally-protected information, governed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. However, there are certain times when we are required as District employees to break confidentiality, and this should be discussed with the mentee in advance. These instances include threat or harm to self or others, child abuse, and elder abuse.

Suggestions for Initial Mentor/Mentee Meeting

- Establish rapport by getting some personal information: What is their home/work situation like? Siblings? How do they get to school? What was high school like?
- Discuss mentee's course load, workload, family obligations, etc.
- Discuss mentee's short-term and long-term goals.
- Discuss mentee's needs and expectations.
- Set ground rules for contact.
- Establish meeting schedule and exchange contact information (email, text, cell phone, etc.)

Suggestions for Subsequent Meetings

These are just suggestions. Don't feel obligated to do them.

- Call/text/email mentee outside of regular contacts;
- Grab a coffee;
- Go to Umoja Community events together (i.e. club meetings, field trips, etc.);
- Discuss time management and create a calendar;
- Go on college campus tours;
- Do scholarship and transfer research together;
- Help your mentee with transfer application personal statement;
- Help mentee connect with other local professionals and/or internships;
- Attend cultural or political events . . . or just grab lunch or see a movie.
- Hang out in the Village (watch TV, have a conversation, etc.)

Check-ins

- Remind your mentee of upcoming meetings or events.
- Ask questions and try to reach solutions together (rather than dictating them).
- Help mentees set realistic and achievable academic and professional goals.
- Ask mentees about their classes. Help them develop the "habits of mind" that successful college students utilize (i.e. using Learning Center, visiting professors during office hours, creating study groups, etc.).
- Ask how they are doing balancing work, school, family, extracurricular activities, friends, and stress.
- Suggest appropriate campus resources and visit them together.

(Adapted from DVC's Umoja Mentoring Handbook)

“The Soft Skills of Umoja Mentoring” (Courtesy of DVC Umoja)

1. Communicate skillfully
 - Listen to personal problems, but don't take on ownership of problem.
 - Pick up on subtle concerns mentees begin to articulate.
 - Notice small or gradual changes that seem significant.
 - Read verbal and non-verbal signals from mentees.
 - Listen without interrupting; listen for the sake of the mentee, not a discussion.
 - Listen for feelings associated with the situation.
 - Identify mentee's feelings and verify them through feedback.
 - Use “I” messages to confront an attitude, behavior, or plan.
 - Listen respectfully, without taking on the mentee's problem or giving advice too quickly.
 - Help mentees deal with small problems before they become large ones.

2. Build self-confidence
 - Trigger self-awareness.
 - Inspire and offer encouragement.
 - Encourage winning behavior.
 - Share your life experiences that relate to mentee's focus.
 - Set high expectations of performance.
 - Ask mentee's opinions; be willing to share some of your current struggles.
 - Praise, give pep talks, encourage growth and creativity.

3. Provide realism
 - Give candid feedback.
 - React honestly to ideas, plans, and proposals.
 - Critique progress – action items and follow-ups – empathetically but frankly.
 - Brainstorm ideas and strategies.
 - Share observations you might have about mentee's work.
 - Brainstorm back-up plans for their goals, in case Plan A fails.

4. Listen actively
 - Look at your mentee when s/he is speaking.
 - Ignore distractions around you.
 - Do not interrupt your mentee.
 - Listen for feeling and meaning rather than just words.
 - Be aware of non-verbal messages such as facial expressions, body language and tone of voice.
 - Withhold judgment of the mentee.
 - Search for understanding your mentee, not victory.
 - Set aside your own thoughts and feelings in order to listen.

- Paraphrase back what you hear your mentee saying.
- Be aware of what you do with silence.
- Encourage your mentee if s/he hesitates.
- Allow your mentee to finish what s/he is saying.
- Ask open-ended questions (that begin with What, How, and Why) not leading questions (that begin with Do/Don't, Is, Are, etc.).

CSM Indaba

Because Umoja is a transfer support program that targets some of CSM's most at-risk students, it is important to develop a support network that extends beyond the Umoja coordinators and counselor. Umoja students will take classes outside the program's Ethnic Studies and English courses, which makes open dialogue and cultural training necessary.

The Indaba, a Zulu term for a "tribal gathering, consultation, or council meeting" to discuss matters important to the community, is an integral part of the CSM Umoja model. It brings students, faculty, staff, administrators, and the community together to address the obstacles that many of our African American students (indeed, all students) face in higher education.

All mentors are encouraged to participate in Indaba gatherings. Please let the Umoja coordinator know if you would like know more.

