Mentoring Conversation Starters

Mentors: Ask your Mentee to take this self-assessment indicating what she/he has mastered as a strong practice and which could be developed or improved. Take it yourself and share your areas for improvement with your mentee. Have a conversation about how to improve and build upon these best practices.

Mentees: Use the following best practices list to reflect on your work habits, identity, and experience as faculty to start a conversation with your mentors. Share what works well and what you still need to develop or improve. Identify a few in category 1 or 2 to work on this next semester.

Instructions: Rate yourself on each of the following
(1-Need to learn new habits and strategies; 2- Need to strengthen good habits; 3- I have strong consistent good habits)

Communication
___Listening to others (for details / for understanding / for empathy / to provoke my thoughtfulness)
___Asking questions when I do not understand something or want to learn more
___Asserting a viewpoint in a constructive way with peers/ students / others
___Participation in decision-making groups in active, productive, & engaged ways
___Taking time to build appropriate social relationships with peers (in discipline and outside of discipline)
___Signaling to others my availability and presence (e.g., in office during office hours; responsive in timely ways to phone messages/emails; participating in events, meetings, gatherings; taking time to celebrate others' accomplishments; availability to students, faculty peers, other stakeholders for conversations about mutual interests)
___Communicating with others when a due-date becomes untenable
___Managing my information load (devoting appropriate time to appropriate channels/senders)
___Developing routines for managing routine communication (e.g., student emails with similar /same requests; solicitations for reviews; administrative reporting requests)
___Discerning the appropriate channel (e.g., email vs phone vs face-to-face) for different content of communication (e.g., info briefing / discussion / addressing concerns or conflict / answering focused questions)

Work Routines and Time Management
___Maintaining a work routine throughout the week (including healthy breaks and time to enjoy non-work activities)
___Routinely weighing "asks" for my time (reviews, committees, advising, etc.) against goals /progress/expectations before responding
___Capable of saying "no" (or negotiating timing/form) to asks that are not realistic or that will not likely support my success as a faculty member
___Scheduling my work to maintain an appropriate balance dedicated to research, instruction, writing, advising, & service
___Keeping track of schedule, tasks, due-dates
___Taking time for healthy breaks, eating meals, enjoying a full life

Accessing /Building My Resources for Support
___Spending time with senior colleagues to seek advice, build relationships
___Spending time with peer colleagues to compare experiences, build support network
___Getting to know and build positive relationships with Department and College staff
___Knowing when to check in with Department Chair for advice/guidance
___Knowing who / when to check in with college points of contact for various needs/questions
___Familiarizing myself with UTSA resources for instruction, research, training /development
___Routinely monitoring key sources of UTSA information
___Learning about UTSA as an institution
___Learning about trends and challenges in higher education (reading Chronicle /Inside HE etc)
___Seeking peer review of drafts of my work (conference papers/articles/chapters/proposals)
___Locating and making use of professional organizations/associations for faculty in my
      discipline or in higher education generally

Goals, Planning, and Calendar-Management
___Setting realistic goals for myself
___Forecasting my own long-range career goals and detailing experience, training, mentoring,
      practice that I need to get there
___Seeking input from mentors and department Chair on my goals and timetable
___Planning my scholarly work –timelines on various projects/interim deadlines for long-term
      projects/reverse calendaring from submission deadlines
___Assessing my progress towards goals for myself

Developing and Defining My Scholarly Identity
___Defining the contours of my scholarly identity and my areas of focus/expertise
___Articulating my scholarly focus and the importance of my work to my discipline(s) / to
      varied audiences for my scholarship
___Distinguishing the unique contribution that I bring as a scholar (what do I bring to my
      scholarly collaborations / to my department / to my discipline(s)/ to my partnerships)
___Identifying the practical/engaged/outreach dimensions of my scholarly work and integrating
      non-HE stakeholders into my scholarship and instruction
___Developing ways to make relevant my scholarly focus to my students (UG and grad)
___Locating and reaching out to scholars at UTSA who share some of my scholarly interests

Managing My Stress
___Taking lengthy periods of days /weeks for a vacation from my scholarly workload
___Taking frequent email-off days (at least once a week)
___Blocking time for creative play; exploring ideas; and living the life of the mind that is
      unconnected to an immediate project/deadline/task
___Attending to my body-mind connection with exercise, fresh air, purposeful relaxation
___Engaging positive people in positive talk and fun
___Acknowledging my stress and feelings related to uncertainty and heavy workload
___Sharing my anxieties with a safe mentor or friend who is a good listener
___Taking time to celebrate accomplishments and sharing pride in achievements/growth
___Doing something above and beyond for someone else who needs support
___Picking a few items on this list to improve, working on it, & celebrating progress