

# WHAT IS A MENTOR?

**men•tor:** A wise and trusted counselor or teacher. The term mentor comes from Greek mythology. When Odysseus was about to leave on his long journey, he assigned his good friend Mentor to be the guardian and tutor of his son, Telemachus.

Mentoring is an age-old tradition that frequently involves someone more senior who provides support, encouragement and guidance to the learner. Mentors are often experienced persons who go out of their way to help a mentee reach important life goals. An *informal* mentor provides coaching, listening, advice, sounding board reactions, or other help in an unstructured, casual manner. A *formal* mentor agrees to an ongoing, planned partnership that focuses on helping the mentee reach specific goals over a specified period of time.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Taken from *The Mentor's Guide*, Phillips-Jones, Ph.D., Linda. Coalition of Counseling Centers (CCC/The Mentoring Group), Grass Valley, CA, 2000.