

The alumni community of St John's is in a unique position to support the growth of current students and recent graduates, as well as the broader alumni community. Formal and informal mentoring schemes have always been central to the role of the Women's Network, which has catalysed some mutually enriching and very successful mentoring relationships.

Here we reflect on the mentoring between Andrew Tiernan (matriculated in 2000) and Angelika Love (matriculated in 2011) who met when Andrew attended his first



Women's Network Steering Group meeting. During the meeting, Andrew offered to support a nascent mentoring initiative, and (with typical Germanic directness) Angelika immediately picked him up on the offer. They met for coffee the next day, agreed to frame their discussions around leadership, and began communicating via weekly 'musings' on email, interspersed with monthly telephone calls or, when in the same country, face-to-face meetings.

Three years later, the mentoring relationship continues to flourish, surviving long periods when Angelika was in Germany or Andrew was overseas with the Army. The pair have become firm friends for life; Andrew's daughters call Angelika and her husband Ed 'Aunty Angelika' and 'Uncle Eddie'. Angelika recently completed her DPhil. Her decision to leave academia, the courage and focus it took to freelance throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and her burgeoning commercial career have been catalysed in part by discussions with Andrew. Angelika has also benefitted from other opportunities and introductions facilitated by her mentor.

# Top Tips for Mentoring

Meet in person at the outset to establish a rapport

Establish an agreed level and method of engagement, encouraging a written record of conversations - they are useful for later reflections and augment the impact of verbal exchanges

**Empathy,  
Empathy, Empathy**

Share personal experiences and stories where possible - they can catalyse the most memorable and useful insights

Be prepared to learn, re-evaluate, and change

Find a theme that underpins the conversations (ours was leadership)

**As a mentor, be humble**  
Recognise that you do not have all the answers. Often, it is more effective to ask the right questions than to provide the answers.

Understand one another's language and adjust your own language to meet in the middle

Respect one another's pressures and allow the relationship to ebb and flow around personal and professional events

**Make it fun**  
Meet over coffee or food where possible!