U-M SCHOOL FOR ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY
Formal Mentorship Program
Mentor Handbook
Fall 2023 - Winter 2024

Program Description

The purpose of the Formal Mentorship Program is to connect students with members of our alumni community and the Dean's External Advisory Board who will help coach them through career goals and advancement strategies, strategize with students on expanding their professional connections, and help them enhance their personal and professional skills. Research has shown that students are more likely to thrive after college and excel in their careers if they had a mentor as a student who supported them in their career goals.

Interested 2nd year Master's students, 3rd year Master's students, and PhD students can apply to participate in this program that matches selected students with an alumni mentor. SEAS staff do their best to match students' professional interests with a mentor who has experience in that field. Students and mentors can connect through email, phone, video chat, in-person (if possible), or whatever method is most convenient.

Program Goals for Mentors

- Further grow their connection with the SEAS community
- Engage with a current a SEAS student and share your professional experiences
- Support a student by offering insights into achieving career goals
- Contribute to the professional development and growth of a student
- Facilitate introductions to relevant professional network contacts

Program Goals for Students

- Build a professional relationship with a member of the alumni community
- Receive advice in career goals and advancement strategies
- Explore different career paths of interest
- Gain additional professional connections in their field
- Grow on a personal and professional level

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Program Components and Key Dates

- <u>Early September:</u> Student application process
- <u>Late September:</u> Mentor and mentee pairing process handled by SEAS staff
- <u>Early October:</u> Program orientation for student mentees
- <u>Mid October:</u> Mentor-mentee digital introductions by SEAS staff to share background info, resumes, LinkedIn profiles, etc.
- <u>October - April:</u> Mentors and mentees meet 4 or more times from introduction to graduation (via phone, video chat, or in-person if possible).
- <u>May:</u> End of year feedback survey

Sample Monthly Timeline of Mentee/Mentor Interaction

October
- Student applications are submitted in *September*, and email introductions are done by SEAS staff in October
- Have an initial meeting (can be phone or in-person) with your mentee. In this meeting, it is important to discuss expectations, goals, and communication preferences of the mentorship experience
- Learn about your mentee's background, experience and career goals
- Work with your mentee to develop a networking strategy
- Educate your mentee on the timeframe of job postings for different career fields

November/December
- Review your mentee's student groups, volunteering and other campus activities
- Work with your mentee to cultivate sources for informational interviewing
- Strategize about connecting with employers and alumni during winter break and early in the spring semester
- Discuss how to best take advantage of the SEAS in-person and virtual career fairs taking place during the winter term

January/February
- Share real world advice with your mentee about what to expect after graduating and what you wish you knew at the time
- Develop job search strategies

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- Discuss how to take full advantage of spring break by networking and interviewing with employers and alumni

March
- Conduct a mock interview with your mentee and provide feedback
- Discuss salary negotiation and what the mentee should expect in their sector of interest and location
- Talk about how you will continue to stay connected after the school year

Targeted Monthly Goals

The mentor and mentee should discuss their targeted monthly goals during their first meeting; doing so will provide guidance and direction for both parties. The <u>mentee</u> should be creating and setting these goals. The purpose of the mentor during this interaction is to guide the mentee in creating realistic, achievable goals and provide input when needed.

While the timeline is not set-in-stone, there are a few things that we recommend be addressed during the duration of the SEAS Mentorship Program...
- Review the mentee's list of student groups, volunteering and other campus activities
- Conduct a mock job interview and provide feedback
- Work on cultivating sources for informational interviewing
- Develop job search strategies
- Discuss ways to utilize LinkedIn, SEASnet, or other tools to connect with other alums and career professionals

What Defines a Great Mentor?

A SEAS mentor guides and advises their mentee through educational and professional experiences by sharing their own stories and expertise. This can be achieved by aiding the mentee in enhancing professional and networking skills by thoughtful and effective coaching.

A great mentor will...
- Provide honest insight about the mentee's career field of interest
- Discuss topics candidly
- Remain encouraging and friendly throughout the process
- Provide cover letter and resume feedback as well as interview preparation

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Mentors are **not expected** to be available for their mentee's at any time of day, offer a job, or initiate every conversation.

Initial Conversation

The initial conversation between the SEAS mentor and mentee is a great way to get to know each other and discuss what the mentee hopes to achieve throughout the year. Additionally, this is a great opportunity for both parties to exchange SNR/SNRE/SEAS stories and share their experiences during school.

Suggestions to help frame the initial conversation…
- Discuss expectations and goals for the year - utilize the monthly timeline as a framework for what should be accomplished and when
- Discuss communication preferences here forward
- Review the mentee's resume and provide feedback - give suggestions for clubs or memberships the mentee could be part of during their last year at SEAS
- Decide on the next meeting time and discuss topics of conversation for the next session

List of Mentorship Best Practices

- Have a clear understanding of your mentees goals for the program. They may need to give additional thought as to what they really need from you.

- Conduct your conversations with energy and optimism.

- Once you have established a relationship, attempt to determine the professional strengths and weaknesses of your mentee. There may be some areas, outside of their stated goals, where they may need some help.
  - Example: after several meetings it becomes clear that a mentee has a concern about public speaking. Several options are then suggested that could strengthen this skill.

- Be aware of your mentee's general stress or anxiety levels as driven by coursework, deadlines, job searches, etc. Support and encouragement are important. Letting your mentee know that they are not alone in their concerns can be helpful.

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- Use examples from your own professional experience regarding challenges or problems you have faced and how they were resolved. Sometimes your mentee may feel that they are the only one facing a particular problem, and when you share your experiences, it provides encouragement and strengthens the relationship.

- Come up with topics and activities to use as a starting point in conversations. For example:
  - Have your mentee devise a list of their personal priority attributes that they'd like to emphasize in their job search (i.e. take into consideration where they want to be in 5 years, project areas they are interested in, skills they have/would like to have, and work locations)

- Help guide students in exploring what type of employers they would like to work with. By providing a list of potential employers, you may be able to help students explore careers that they had not previously considered.
  - For a helpful list of employers, click here to view the 2022 SEAS employment report on our website.

- Suggest to your mentee that they create a "project management" approach to their job searches, starting with a detailed timeline and key tasks.

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