Liberal Arts students have a wide variety of skill sets that employers seek in today’s economy. According to NACE’s Job Outlook 2012 Report*, the most sought skills are verbal communication skills, strong work ethic, teamwork skills, analytical skills, and initiative. In addition, Liberal Arts majors, by virtue of the content of their courses, develop the ability to approach problems and questions from a broad point of view.

The Liberal Arts Alumni Mentor Program matches you with a Liberal Arts graduate who can assist you with identifying and further developing your skills.

* National Association of Colleges and Employers
Welcome to the Liberal Arts Mentor Program!

The Liberal Arts Alumni Mentor Program offers current Liberal Arts students the opportunity to develop a mentoring relationship with successful and experienced alumni. Through this program, you have the opportunity to regularly interact with and learn from your mentor. You can ask questions about your mentor's field of study and career path, seek advice on your own career preparation (resumes, cover letters, graduate school versus full-time employment), etc. Your mentor may be able to offer you a job shadowing experience to observe a professional work environment and to ask questions of other professionals in a field of interest to you. The primary purpose of the mentoring program is to assist you with your professional education and development while connecting with alumni. In addition, you will make important connections between your academics and your professional experiences.

We are very happy you have decided to become a part of the program and look forward to your continued success.

Regards,
Career Enrichment Network and Alumni Relations Staff

Mentoring Overview

Mentoring involves the development of a dynamic, reciprocal, personal relationship in which a more experienced person—the mentor—acts as a guide to a less experienced person—the mentee. Mentors provide mentees with knowledge, advice, counsel, support, and opportunities in the development of the mentee’s career and personal life. Mentoring is an act of generativity, a process of bringing into existence and passing on a legacy.

Program Benefits

The core of mentoring is the personal relationship that develops between the mentee and the mentor, so there should be benefits for each. Typically the needs of the mentee are fairly concrete and easy to define, but the needs of the mentor are usually more personal and esoteric, yet equally important. It can be helpful to identify benefits for each party in the mentorship. As well, the mentorship itself should provide mutual benefits.

An example of a mutual benefit is: “To develop a relationship where we can each learn more about the evolving practice of law.”

Mentee Benefits Include:

- Building effective relationships and networks
- Learning more about yourself
- Having an experienced professional to talk with in confidence
- Getting advice on making the most out of your college education
- Getting advice on potential approaches to problems
- Finding career exploration and development resources
- Having an unbiased sounding board
- Gaining a role model
- Being challenged
- Hearing different points of view
- Friendship
- Enhancing your ability to enter and grow quickly in your job field and profession
- Showcasing leadership
Role of the Mentee

The role of the mentee is to be a true student, absorbing—and when appropriate—challenging the perspectives, knowledge, and life experience of his or her mentor. Mentees should demonstrate initiative by identifying goals, suggesting next steps, and asking for input. As a mentee you should be willing to responsibly try out your mentor’s suggestions or, in the event of a suggestion seeming unfit, discuss possible alternatives. Outstanding mentees frequently cultivate relationships with multiple mentors.

It is also important to think of your relationship with your mentor as an evolution. There will be a natural period of getting to know each other, when conversations might be devoted to making plans to talk, exchanging pleasantries, and asking general questions about each other. As time passes though, you and mentor will hopefully develop a comfortable relationship, in which you can talk about more specific aspects of your professional and academic life. Remember, each relationship is different and it is important to establish boundaries and expectations with your mentor early. For example, if you or your mentor is not comfortable talking about personal aspects of your lives, it is suggested that you talk about this in an early conversation.

Mentoring Process

1. *Commit:* Make a commitment to mentoring.
2. *Plan:* Establish an action plan as part of your mentee agreement/compact (found at end of handbook).
3. *Implement:* Connect regularly (in person, by phone, email, or Skype) with your mentor to implement your action plan and engage in developmental activities.
4. *Evaluate:* Track and evaluate progress on your action plan and adjust as necessary.

Program Expectations

- Meet your mentor at least once per month through the end of the school year in person or by phone or video-chat (Skype, etc.).
- After your 2nd or 3rd meeting complete a written mentorship agreement—a compact—with your mentor. Upload your completed plan to your Network Symplicity account.
- Complete program surveys. These brief, on-line surveys are an important monitoring and program quality tool and will typically be administered at the end of each academic semester.

Getting Started

A good way to begin your mentorship experience is by getting acquainted with one another. It is good to take an interest in your mentor’s professional journey in order to learn about what has helped to make him or her successful. If you feel comfortable, you may also want to take an interest in learning more about your mentor as an individual (i.e., likes/dislikes, hobbies, interests, etc.).

You will most likely develop many of your own questions and conversation starters as time goes by; however, below are a few that may be helpful:

- How did you choose Penn State?
- If you were a Penn State student again, what would you do differently?
- What is your greatest memory during your time at Penn State?
Were you involved in any extracurricular activities at Penn State?
What was your first job out of college and how did you get it?
What trade-offs have you made in balancing work and family as your career has developed?
What is a typical work day for you?
What aspects of your job take the most time?
What do you do most or find most interesting about your work?
What do you like least about your job?
What kinds of problems do you face? Find most difficult?
What education, skills and experiences are needed to enter your profession?
Is there a preferred major for this job?
Do you have any suggestions for internships, part-time jobs or campus and community activities that would enhance my ability to get a job like yours?
What are your hobbies, outside interests, volunteer activities, etc?
What types of employers would hire a person with your job title?
How is the job market in your field right now? Do you expect changes in the near future?
What is the current demand for employees in your field?
Are there any professional associations connected to your field that you would recommend?

Suggested Activities

- Review your résumé and cover letter together.
- Role-play telephone skills in anticipation of phone interviews.
- Conduct a mock interview.
- Review Career Enrichment Network resources and program offerings (i.e., workshops, LEAD, etc.) together and identify those which would be appropriate for you.
- Research summer jobs and internships and identify targets.
- Shadow your mentor for a day. Observe client meetings, staff meetings, or strategy meetings.
- Participate in a business meal.
- Keep a mentorship journal to record details of meetings, significant events, accomplishments, and insights gained.
- Discuss current events.
- Discuss a “case study” relating to your mentor’s work or professional development issues.
- Look for opportunities to grow and develop by asking for feedback, reflecting on experiences, and developing new skills and abilities.
- Maintain a clear sense of where you are going and track progress along the way.
- Openly discuss goals, challenges, and concerns with your mentor and inform him or her of progress made.

Communication Tips

Effective communications are essential to any healthy relationship and a mentorship is no exception. Be professional in all of your communications, whether it is through email, over the phone, via Skype, or in person.

A mentorship thrives on regular communication, and face-to-face meetings are the most effective way to communicate. However, that is often difficult because of geographic limitations, so communication by telephone is the next best thing. Another option is to connect on-line via webcam through iChat or free services like Skype, which can help make the conversation feel more personal. Telephone calls or
on-line video make it possible to have a dialogue where each party can listen (and see) and respond to each other.

At least one call a month has proven to be most beneficial for cultivating mentee–mentor relationships, and many pairs communicate more often. Establish a schedule to phone or Skype on a set day and at a set time so you both reserve that time and plan around it.

It is also a good idea to develop an agenda outlining what you want to talk about during your conversations. Many mentors are taking time out of their work day to talk with you, so you want to make sure you make the most of your time together. Also, remember that they are respecting your time as a student, so you should respect their time as a professional and come to the conversation prepared.

**Emails: Respond in a Timely Manner**

A simple agreement to acknowledge and respond to each other’s email communications in a timely manner is highly recommended.

For instance, you and your mentor may decide on the following:

- E-mails will be acknowledged within 24 hours.
- Response to content will be provided within 2-3 days.
- In instances when other obligations affect availability, mentors and mentees will notify each other.

This will differ for each mentor/mentee pair, but the most important point is that you both are comfortable with the agreement you have established.

Some general tips for communicating with your mentor:

- Ask questions.
- Be clear and specific about your needs.
- Be open and honest about your feelings.
- Recognize that each individual sees things from a different point of view.
- Accept and respect difference in opinions.
- Respect your mentor’s time and other obligations outside of your relationship.
- Maintain eye contact when meeting in person.
- Establish a mutual understanding of each person’s expectations at the beginning. This will mean working together, and clearly outlining a path for a successful mentor/mentee relationship.

**Tips for Email Introductions**

The ultimate purpose of mentoring is learning. Your mentor is someone who has taken an interest in you and has a desire to help you learn what you need to know in order to become as successful as possible in your professional career. However, sometimes it can feel awkward meeting someone new, especially an accomplished alumnus or alumna who is being introduced to you via email.

For students who are initially introduced to their mentors via email, we have put together some helpful notes to guide you in contacting and introducing yourself to your mentor. Please edit your message to suit your specific situation; the intent is to be professional while also sharing something of yourself in your communication. This is a skill you will be using over and over during the course of your professional career, so now is a great time to practice and develop it! If you have questions about contacting your mentor for the first time via email, do not hesitate to contact a Network staff member at...
Sample Email Introduction:

We encourage you to use your PSU email address for your mentor correspondence and to read and respond to your messages at least once a day. As you transition from life as a student to life as a professional, it also is a good idea to add a signature line to your email account to provide your contact information.

Your initial email to your mentor should follow this general structure:

Salutation (Dr., Mr., Ms. followed by last name),

Paragraph #1 – Brief introduction explaining the reason for your message and referring to your match through the Liberal Arts Alumni Mentor Program.

Paragraph #2 – Information about your major(s), classes, and extracurricular interests. Refer to an attached draft copy of your resume (if you have one) or some of the things you hope to gain from your participation in the program.

Paragraph #3 – Details regarding your availability, preferred contact number and email address, and a request to meet in person (depending on location), by phone, or by Skype.

Closing,
Your Name

A sample email introduction to your mentor might look something like this (please do NOT copy this sample – use it as a model to develop your own!):

“Dear Dr. Jones,

I was excited to learn I have been matched with you through the Liberal Arts Alumni Mentor Program, and I wanted to write to introduce myself and to schedule our first meeting.

I am a <insert major> major, and I will be starting my <insert semester> semester at Penn State this fall. My classes have been a combination of <insert a few subjects>, and outside of class, I am involved with <insert student orgs or things you like doing in your free time>. This summer, I am completing a volunteer/research/internship experience (select one) with <insert organization name>. I have attached a draft copy of my current resume, so you can learn a little bit more about me. I look forward to talking with you about ways I might improve my resume for future opportunities.

I am free on the following days/times, and I was hoping we could schedule a time to meet in person, via Skype, or by phone. I can be reached at abc123@psu.edu or by phone at 610-555-5555.

Tuesday, July 16 between 1:00 and 4:00
Wednesday, July 17 after 5:00
Monday, July 22 between 11:00 and 1:00

Could you please let me know if any of these days and times would work with your schedule?
Thank you for your willingness to mentor me, and I will be looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Jane Smith

Jane Smith
The Pennsylvania State University
B.A. in History (Expected May 2014)
Tel: 610-555-5555
Email: jxz5111@psu.edu

Sample Phone Introduction:

Most likely you will be contacting your mentor via cell phone, so we suggest finding a quiet spot with good reception for your call. Since many mentors may provide their office numbers, it is possible you will be speaking to an administrative staff member before you will be connected with your mentor. Be sure to introduce yourself and explain why you are calling, whether you reach a staff member or your mentor directly.

Keep your conversations professional, as this will set the tone for future correspondence. Since your mentor may be able to introduce you to prospective employers and professional contacts, you want him or her to know you are serious about your goals. You also want your mentor to be confident in your abilities if he or she is assisting you with your job and/internship search.

You may have to leave your name and number for your call to be returned. Please be sure not to take the return call if you are in some situation where you cannot talk freely (driving, at work, shopping, etc.). It would be better to let the call go to your voicemail (make sure your voicemail box is set up), and then you can return the call when you are in a more convenient location. Also be sure that your voicemail is professional; ensure that it clearly states your name and contains a polite message.

Your initial phone call to your mentor should follow the same general structure as the introductory email above. To ensure you remember all of the information you want to share during the call, you may want to make some notes of some of the information included in the email above—major, classes, interests, extracurricular activities, what you hope to get from the mentor program, etc.

A structure for your phone conversation could be:

Greetings and introduction.

Conversation starters regarding the weather, things happening on campus, how your summer is going, etc. You can also ask them questions as well, in order to establish a back and forth dialogue.

Share details about your major, interests, extracurricular activities, and what you hope to get from the mentor program experience. Ask a question or two about your mentor’s major during their student years, their current job title or organization, etc.

Share days and times when you are typically available to meet in person, by phone, or by Skype, and discuss your mentor’s availability and how you want to structure your interactions.

Thanks and closing, with a reiteration of whatever you have decided on regarding the date, time, and method of connecting for your next meeting, as well as any specific things you may need to do in advance to prepare (i.e. forwarding a copy of your resume, etc.)
Make sure you share contact information so you both have each other’s preferred email addresses and phone numbers.

Don’t forget that a conversation means both people contribute. Your first phone conversation might sound something like the following:

“Hello Mr. Thompson. My name is Jane Smith, and I have been matched with you through the Penn State’s Liberal Arts Alumni Mentor Program. Is this a good time for you to talk with me for a few minutes?

<Comments from mentor>

I’m an International Politics major, and my courses last semester were really interesting. I especially liked my course on International Political Economy, and I was able to get an internship in a Washington think tank this summer working on this issue. Outside of classes, I’m involved in THON as a member of the Morale Committee, and I also am a member of the Liberal Arts Undergraduate Council.

<Comments from mentor>

I’m really excited that we’ve been matched for the mentor program, and I’m really interested in learning more about your career path and your advice for me at this point in my academic career. Can we set up a regular meeting time that works with your schedule? I’m generally available on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays between 3:30 and 7:00 and on Tuesdays and Thursdays any time after 4:30. What is your preference for how we communicate? Phone, email, or Skype are all great options for me, and of course, I’d love to meet you in person if that is convenient for you.

<Comments from mentor>

Thursdays at 6:00 would be great for me. The second Thursday of every month via phone at this number? That sounds fine; I’ll add it to my calendar. Is there anything specific I should plan for our next conversation on Thursday, July 11? I could send you a draft of my resume, so you could learn a little bit more about me, if that would be helpful? Great – I’ll do that tonight. Can you please confirm your email address for me? Got it – thanks.

I really appreciate your willingness to mentor me and will look forward to talking with you on Thursday, July 11, at 6:00. I’ll call you then at this phone number.

Bye for now!”

No Fault Withdrawal Policy

If you no longer wish to be a part of the Alumni Mentor Program, or find that you are not compatible with your assigned mentor, please contact the Career Enrichment Network or Alumni Relations Office to discuss your situation.

If you are not compatible with your mentor or your mentor has not been responsive, then another match may be possible. If you no longer wish to be a part of the program, then we need to communicate with your mentor regarding the situation and possibly identify another student mentee.
Overall, communication is key. Do not simply decide on your own not to communicate with your mentor; let us know so that we can be of assistance.
Mentor Program Student – Mentee Agreement (Compact)

Directions: Complete and upload this document to your Network Symplicity account after you and your mentor have discussed and established your action plan. This should be done after your first or second meeting.

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Who is responsible for scheduling meetings? __________________________
When will we meet? __________________________
How frequently will we meet? __________________________
When is our next meeting (date/time)? __________________________
What is our primary method of communication? __________________________

SMART Goals
The value of your mentorship will increase significantly if you set and seek to achieve specific goals. SMART goals are:

Specific Measurable Attainable Realistic Time-bound

SMART Goal Example: Create or update resume and cover letter
Action step(s): Visit Career Enrichment Network/Career Services, draft resume to share
Target complete date(s): October 1

SMART Goal #1: ____________________________________________
Action step(s): ____________________________________________
Target complete date(s): ____________________________________

SMART Goal #2: ____________________________________________
Action step(s): ____________________________________________
Target complete date(s): ____________________________________
Target completion date(s): ____________________________
Resources

There are a variety of resources available to you and your mentor as you start identifying and working toward your goals. We have included some basic links here, in addition to the contact information for staff members. If you have questions about your mentor relationship or need advice at any point, please do not hesitate to contact a staff member.

Alumni Mentor Program:  http://alumni.la.psu.edu/get-involved/mentor-a-student
Career Enrichment Network:  http://laus.la.psu.edu/network
Mentor Program: http://alumni.la.psu.edu/get-involved/mentor-a-student
Penn State Career Services: http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/
Career Services Handouts: http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/cic/handouts.shtml

Program Contacts:

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Christopher Gamble  
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cvg4@psu.edu

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