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Welcome to the Liberal Arts Alumni Mentor Program!

The program is designed to connect you with a Liberal Arts alumni mentor, who will help you in navigating academic, professional, and extracurricular life at Penn State, as well as answer questions and provide guidance about internship and job searches, and life after graduation.

As a student in the program, you are expected to read this handbook and contact program staff with any questions. Many students have used the tips, examples, and resources in this Handbook in their work applying for internships, preparing for job interviews, and networking.

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

Regards,
Career Enrichment Network and Alumni Relations Staff

Who is a mentor? What is mentoring?

1. A wise and trusted counselor or teacher.¹
2. To serve as a trusted counselor or teacher.²

Your mentor can provide you with knowledge, advice, counsel, support, and opportunities in the development of your academic, professional, and personal life. Your mentor will serve as a resource, provide guidance, and share his/her expertise to promote your success. Your mentor can serve as a sounding board, assist with the job search, and encourage you to develop new skills. We encourage you to make the most of your experience in the mentor program by reaching out to your mentor regularly.

Benefits of the program 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
- Finding career exploration and development resources
- Having an unbiased sounding board
- Gaining a role model
- Being challenged
- Hearing different points of view
- Creating a friendship
- Enhancing your ability to enter and grow quickly in your job field and profession
- Showcasing leadership

What is your role in the program?

Role of the Mentee
You should demonstrate initiative by identifying goals, suggesting next steps, and asking for input. You should be willing to responsibly try out your mentor’s suggestions or, in the event of a suggestion seeming unfit, discuss possible alternatives.

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 your 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.

Expectations
- Find the best mode of communication for you and your mentor (phone and video chats are recommended).
- Maintain regular communication.
- Collaborate with your mentor about goals, interests, and expectations.
- Communicate with staff about successes and challenges.
- Complete mid-semester and end-of-semester surveys.
- Check and respond to emails from Program staff (if you use an email different than your PSU one, have your email forwarded).

Working with your Mentor

Getting Started
The best way to get to know your mentor is to talk! Asking questions is a great way to break the ice, dispel any awkwardness, and begin a strong mentor relationship. You can ask your mentor about his or her professional journey, experience at Penn State, and if appropriate, who he or she is as an individual. No matter who your mentor is, you will have one thing in common: Penn State!

Here are some good conversation-starting questions to look at before your first conversation:
- 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 is a typical work day for you?
- What do you like most or find most interesting about your work?
- What is the biggest challenge of your job?
- What education, skills and experiences are needed to enter your profession?
- 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 publications do you suggest reading to stay updated on industry news?
- Are there professional associations connected to your field that you recommend?

**Suggested Activities**
Your mentor will serve as a resource and sounding board. He or she will also have a lot of great advice and be able to share experiences related to careers and post-college life. In addition to talking, there are a number of activities that will enhance your experience working with your mentor, and are strategies to better equip yourself as you prepare to enter the post-graduation and professional stages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic/Co-curricular</th>
<th>Professional</th>
<th>Post-Graduation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review your options for classes during upcoming semesters.</td>
<td>Shadow your mentor at work for a day. Discuss best practices for professional workplace etiquette.</td>
<td>Complete skills assessment and career exploration tools (LEAD, StrengthsFinder®, myplan, MyNextMove) and discuss your results.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discuss possible major &amp; minor choices, and classes applicable to your desired career.</td>
<td>Review your résumé &amp; cover letter together. Get feedback &amp; make appropriate edits.</td>
<td>Discuss internship and/or job offers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discuss global experience opportunities (study abroad, international internships, etc.).</td>
<td>Research summer jobs and internships and identify places to apply.</td>
<td>If you are interested in attending graduate school, talk to your mentor about his or her experience, if applicable. You can research programs, review test prep materials, and draft application essays together.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review Career Enrichment Network resources and program offerings together and identify those which would be appropriate for you.</td>
<td>Attend career fairs, on-campus programming, and other career development events. Recap after each event and discuss next steps.</td>
<td>Keep a mentorship journal to record details of meetings, significant events, accomplishments, and insights gained. Reflect on and evaluate your experiences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talk about organizations on campus and national associations with which you could be involved.</td>
<td>Practice interviewing. Ask your mentor to conduct a mock interview and share constructive feedback.</td>
<td>Talk about post-graduation life and what to expect.</td>
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**Communicating with your Mentor**

Effective communication is 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.**
Communication Tips:

- Talk and/or meet on a regular basis. The program requires students and mentors to talk at least once a month, but most speak more frequently!
- If meetings are not possible because of geographic limitations, you should explore video chatting through Google Hangouts, Skype, iChat, Facetime, or another video chat platform.
  - Note about technology: Students can borrow iPads and computers from the library if their own computers do not have video chat capabilities. Contact the Library for more information.
- Establish a set date and time to talk (i.e. every other Tuesday night at 8 p.m.).
- Always set up and confirm your next meeting before your previous one ends.
- If you are unable to make it for a scheduled meeting, contact your mentor as soon as possible. You wouldn’t want to be stood up, so make sure you don’t do the same to your mentor!
- Be honest with your mentor about your schedule. Don’t skip class, review sessions, or office hours if you need to attend. Your mentor was once a student at Penn State and understands your academic responsibilities.
- Develop an agenda for each conversation. Have questions and topics ready to discuss. 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

While you may not be accustomed to using e-mail as your primary method of communication, it is the preferred way for most alumni mentors to keep in touch. Developing professional email practices and decorum now will help you in the future. It is professional and polite to respond to emails with at least an acknowledgement within 24-48 hours of receiving the email. Students have found these guidelines to be helpful:

- 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/student pair, but the most important point is that you are both comfortable with the agreement you have established.

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.

If you will be introducing yourself to your mentor over email, it is important to start off on the right note. Please edit your message to suit your specific situation; the intent is to be professional while also sharing something about yourself in your communication. This is a skill you will be using during 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 Heather at hzb100@psu.edu with questions or drafts of your email.

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, you should add a signature line to your email account to provide your contact information.

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!)*:

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“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.

Mondays between 5pm and 8pm
Tuesdays between 10am and 2pm
Wednesdays are full (class and work all day!)
Thursdays between 10am and 2pm
Fridays anytime

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
Bachelor of Arts in History (Expected May 2014)
Tel: 610-555-5555
Email: jxz5111@psu.edu
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Phone Conversations
If you will talk to your mentor via cell phone, 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.

Phone calls tips:
• Be sure to introduce yourself and explain why you are calling, whether you reach your mentor or someone else (family member, assistant, etc.).
• Keep your conversations professional, as this will set the tone for future correspondence. Because 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 with your internship or job searches.
• 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, in class, shopping, etc.).
• Make sure your voicemail box is set up. Also be sure that your voicemail is professional; ensure that it clearly states your name and contains a polite message. Make sure to listen to any voicemail messages within 24 of receiving them.

This All Sounds Great! But What If I’m Feeling Overwhelmed?
This program is designed to assist you, not add stress to your life! If you feel you cannot keep active with the program, please speak with Program staff. There may be a way to stay active in the program while balancing a busy course load and/or work schedule. We want to work with you to make this experience valuable, so please contact Heather at hzb100@psu.edu with any questions or concerns.
What Do Other Students Say?

“My mentor's appreciation and understanding of my liberal arts degree has helped tremendously in learning about job opportunities - he understands the transferable skills my degree has given me, and reinforces different ways to translate those skills in interviews. My **mentor is so well-networked**, that any field or occupation I've mentioned having an interest in - if he doesn't know the field personally, he is sure to find a friend or colleague to put me in contact with.”

-Alison Goldberg, English

“I did not expect to have a **mentor who is so enthusiastic to help me succeed** and easy to stay in touch with since we were paired. I also was hesitant as to how helpful a mentor would be to get in touch with potential employers, but **my mentor is the reason I am interning where I am this summer.**”

-Yosra Alterkawi, Communication Arts and Sciences & International Politics

“The Alumni Mentor Program is a wonderful opportunity to garner the outside perspective of someone who has expertise in his/her respective career, and is subsequently able to offer wonderful advice, opportunities, resources, and connections that will surely last a lifetime. **This program is definitely one of the highlights of my Penn State career.**”

-Amanda Thoet, Communication Arts and Sciences & English

“What I love about my mentor is that **she always challenges me.** She never wrote my cover letter or put together my resume, she always would give me pointers and find ways to make me think hard about how I wanted to present myself to companies. **I gained knowledge in how to present myself professionally, make the most out of my internship and so much more.**”

-Todd Kahn, Labor Studies and Employment Relations & Psychology

“I gained a life-long professional relationship. I have someone that I can go to when I need professional advice or even life advice. The **more you connect, the more advice you gain and the more wise choices you can make.**”

-Rachel-Paige Mumenthaler, Economics & International Politics

“My mentor helped with academic matters that were related to the career searching process. She gave me hints and advice for **building professional relationships with professors** after the courses were finished such as sending out thank you notes, etc.”

-Mackenzie Nelson, Economics

“My mentor has been **one of the greatest supports I have had.** Usually, she helps me remember my good qualities and skills in addition to stabilizing my confidence and emotions so that I can ace interviews. Professional development and the search for a job or graduate program can become incredibly stressful because it seems as if your life is on the line. **The support and her confidence that I will do well with my skills helps me to not be as stressed as I would be without her.**”

-Christina Trinh Nguyen, Psychology
Resources

There are a variety of resources available to you and your mentor as you start identifying and working toward your goals.

**Important Penn State Websites:**
Career Enrichment Network: [http://laus.la.psu.edu/network](http://laus.la.psu.edu/network)
Mentor Program: [http://laus.la.psu.edu/network/mentoring](http://laus.la.psu.edu/network/mentoring)
Penn State Career Services: [http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/](http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/)
Alumni Career Services: [http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/alumni/](http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/alumni/)

Career Enrichment Network Resources:
Enrichment Funding: [http://laus.la.psu.edu/network/funds](http://laus.la.psu.edu/network/funds)
Global Experience: [http://laus.la.psu.edu/network/global](http://laus.la.psu.edu/network/global)
Internships: [http://laus.la.psu.edu/network/internships](http://laus.la.psu.edu/network/internships)
LEAD: [http://laus.la.psu.edu/network/network/lead](http://laus.la.psu.edu/network/network/lead)

**Professional Development Resources:**
LinkedIn: Penn State Liberal Arts Alumni Network

**College of the Liberal Arts Social Media:**
@AdvisingLAatPSU
@PSULAvocies
@PSULAJobs
@LAEnvoys

Facebook:
LANetworkatPSU
LAUSatPSU
Blog: voices.la.psu.edu

**Program Contacts:**

**Heather Baruch-Bueter**
Career Enrichment Network
101 Sparks Building
814.865.1070
hzb100@psu.edu

**Christopher Gamble**
Alumni Relations
138 Sparks Building
814.863.2398
cvg4@psu.edu
Alumni Mentor Program Compact

This compact will be helpful to outline goals and expectations. Feel free to share it with Program staff. This should be done during your first or second meeting with your mentor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name:</th>
<th>Mentor Name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>E-mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred Phone:</td>
<td>Preferred Phone:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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): ______________________________________________________

SMART Goal #3: ______________________________________________________
Action step(s): ______________________________________________________
Target complete date(s): ______________________________________________________

SMART Goal #4: ______________________________________________________
Action step(s): ______________________________________________________
Target complete date(s): ______________________________________________________
Sample Meeting Agenda

Meeting Date:
Meeting Time:
Meeting Location (if applicable):

What are three things I want to discuss during this meeting:
1.
2.
3.

What are three questions I have for my mentor?
1.
2.
3.

What are three goals I want to work towards?
1.
2.
3.

What are three action steps I will take after this meeting to help me work towards my goals?
1.
2.
3.

What will I include in a follow-up email?

When is our next meeting?
Meeting Date:
Meeting Time:
Meeting Location (if applicable):