



## **Penn State Liberal Arts Alumni Mentor Program Student Handbook**

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**Learn** about the wide variety of career paths available to liberal arts majors.

**Network** with professionals and the 90,000+ liberal arts alumni.

**Connect** your academics, extracurricular experiences, and study abroad with your career development.



**This publication is available in alternative media on request.**

Penn State is committed to affirmative action, equal opportunity, and the diversity of its workforce.

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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.<sup>1</sup>
2. To serve as a trusted counselor or teacher.<sup>2</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> (The American Heritage Dictionary: Fifth Edition 2012, 1100)

<sup>2</sup> (The American Heritage Dictionary: Fifth Edition 2012, 1100)

## 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. Your mentor will be motivated to assist you when you show initiative. 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.

**The purpose of each mentoring relationship is professional development. It takes time to establish an effective working relationship, and in spending that time with one another, you may want to talk about more than professional development (hobbies, sports, politics, family, etc.) We encourage this—but only if both parties want to. Enjoy getting to know a fellow Penn Stater and learn from each other while focusing on developing career plans and professional skills.**

### 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 ask during your first several conversations:

- 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.

Academic/Co-curricular	Professional	Post-Graduation
Review your options for classes during upcoming semesters.	Shadow your mentor at work for a day. Discuss best practices for professional workplace etiquette.	Complete skills assessment and career exploration tools (StrengthsFinder®, myplan, MyNextMove) and discuss your results.
Discuss possible major & minor choices, and classes applicable to your desired career.	Review your résumé & cover letter together. Get feedback & make appropriate edits.	Discuss internship and/or job offers.
Discuss global experience opportunities (study abroad, international internships, etc.).	Research summer jobs and internships and identify places to apply.	Talk about post-graduation life and what to expect.
Review Career Enrichment Network resources and program offerings together and identify those which would be appropriate for you.	Attend career fairs, on-campus programming, and other career development events. Recap after each event and discuss next steps.	Keep a mentorship journal to record details of meetings, significant events, accomplishments, and insights gained. Reflect on and evaluate your experiences.
Talk about organizations on campus and national associations with which you could be involved.	Practice interviewing. Ask your mentor to conduct a mock interview and share constructive feedback.	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.

## Professional Development Timeline

Your mentor can assist you with many aspects of your professional and academic development. This chart maps out a plan for working with your mentor. This is a suggested timeline; work with your mentor to develop a personalized timeline based on your interests, goals, and progress.

Month 1
<p>Talk to your mentor about your interests and possible majors and minors.</p> <p>Review your resume with your mentor, update your resume, and submit it to <a href="#">Nittany Lion Careers</a>.</p> <p>Think about study abroad and/or internship options.</p> <p>Talk to your mentor about <a href="#">Paterno Fellows</a></p> <p>Explore new clubs and organizations on campus; seek out leadership roles if you are interested!</p> <p>Review internship/full-time position postings on <a href="#">Nittany Lion Careers</a> and discuss them with your mentor.</p>
Month 2
<p>Make a <a href="#">LinkedIn</a> account to expand your network and make connections; talk to your mentor about ways to enhance your LinkedIn account</p> <p>Meet with CEN staff member to discuss your top internship and/or study abroad options</p> <p>Not studying abroad? Talk with your mentor about other ways to get a global experience</p> <p>Attend career fairs, information sessions, and other workshops</p> <p>Talk to your mentor about perfecting your “elevator pitch” at career fairs and networking events.</p> <p>Consider getting <a href="#">academic credit</a> for your internship experience</p> <p>Talk to your mentor about the do’s and don’ts of networking</p> <p>Apply for <a href="#">Enrichment Funding</a> for your experience</p>
Month 3
<p>Update resume.</p> <p>Meet with a Career Enrichment Network staff member to learn about resumes and cover letters and discuss future plans, internships, and study abroad options.</p> <p>Search for positions on <a href="#">Nittany Lion Careers</a>; talk with your mentor about your top choices.</p> <p>Review your experiences with your mentor and assess your progress and discuss ways to improve</p> <p>Brush up on <a href="#">interview skills</a>.</p> <p>Have a mock interview and feedback session with your mentor</p> <p>Take the <a href="#">StrengthsFinder® assessment</a> to learn more about your skills and strengths.</p> <p>Interested in graduate school? Talk to your mentor about your options</p>
Month 4
<p>Search for full-time jobs on the <a href="#">Nittany Lion Careers</a></p> <p><a href="#">Shadow your mentor at work for a day</a></p> <p>Meet with CEN staff member to discuss your options for post-graduation opportunities</p> <p>Review your experiences with your mentor and assess your progress and discuss ways to improve</p> <p>Discuss any job or interview offers with your mentor</p> <p>Talk about post-graduation life with your mentor</p>
Month 5
<p>Talk to your mentor about developing your own work/life balance.</p> <p>Interested in becoming a mentor? Notify Heather Baruch-Bueter (<a href="mailto:hzb100@psu.edu">hzb100@psu.edu</a>)</p> <p>Fill out your Senior Survey before you graduate</p> <p>Apply for enrichment funding for your experience!</p> <p>Discuss any job or interview offers with your mentor</p>

Not doing an internship? Consider [undergraduate research](#)

## StrengthsFinder®

The StrengthsFinder® assessment will assist you with discovering and understanding your strengths and talents. Completing the assessment will provide you with a list of your “top five” signature themes, which can help you enhance the behaviors that lead to success. You will be able to focus on your strengths and understand how they can translate into a career or post-graduate education plan.

The assessment is **free** to all students in the College. If you have already completed StrengthsFinder® review your results with your mentor, look at resources on the StrengthsQuest website, and reach out to Heather Baruch-Bueter for more materials to help you make the most of your assessment.

To request an access code to complete the assessment, visit [here](#).

## 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](mailto: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!*):

Subject: Penn State Liberal Arts Alumni Mentor Program: Email from your Student

“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](mailto:jxz5111@psu.edu)

## 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. Earn your mentor's advocacy through professionalism and initiative.
- 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.**

## Other Communication Resources

If face-to-face meetings are not possible because of distance, video chatting is a great way to communicate. There are a number of tools to help you achieve success when working with your mentor:

- Skype (<http://www.skype.com/en/>)
- Google Hangouts (<https://www.google.com/+learnmore/hangouts/>)
- Students are able to rent computers and tablets from the Library on campus in order to use these video chatting platforms.

### 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](mailto:hzb100@psu.edu) with any questions or concerns.

## Guidelines and Recommendations Regarding Internships and Job Placement Assistance

General Guidelines: Internships and Job Placement opportunities are NOT expected to be a regular part of the mentor program. However, if opportunities do arise for a mentor to assist a student in obtaining an internship or job placement, the following guidelines should be observed.

For the Student:

- Recognize that internship and job placement assistance is often a very personal and always a highly professional matter
- Typically referrals are only given where a long term prior relationship exists, thus, referrals and job assistance are quite rare in the mentor program
- While it is acceptable to ask for and/or to seek advice in connection with obtaining an internship or job referral, remember that you are using the good name and resources of your mentor to obtain the introduction and perhaps gain an interview in a very competitive position
- If such assistance is offered, close communication with the mentor is critical
- Recognize that your actions in pursuing the opportunity will often reflect on the mentor
- If you are offered an internship/job, you MUST, in all circumstances, report back to the mentor regarding your course of action, PARTICULARLY, if you decide to reject the offer, once you receive it.
- If you decide to reject the offer, discuss this thoroughly with the mentor, PRIOR to informing the company where the position was offered
- If you decide to take the internship or job, recognize that your employer will most likely report back to your mentor on your experience with the company
- Be appreciative and respectful of the opportunity that has been offered to you

For the Mentor

- Be mindful of the above advice given to students
- Recognize that it is a big commitment to help a student obtain an internship or job during the mentor program
- If you do decide to try to open an opportunity, thoroughly discuss the steps that you intend to take on behalf of the student
- Ask for regular communication regarding résumés, interviews and offers, prior to starting the process
- Recognize that the student may ultimately reject the internship or job you assisted in obtaining and talk through the ramifications of this with the student, prior to going down the path

## 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: <https://la.psu.edu/current-students/undergraduate-students/college-offices/career-enrichment-network>

Mentor Program: <https://la.psu.edu/current-students/undergraduate-students/connections/alumni-mentor-program>

Penn State Career Services: <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career>

Alumni Career Services: <http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/alumni/>

### Career Enrichment Network Resources

Enrichment Funding: <https://la.psu.edu/current-students/undergraduate-students/scholarships-and-funding/enrichment-funding>

Global Experience: <https://la.psu.edu/current-students/undergraduate-students/experiences/study-abroad>

Internships: <https://la.psu.edu/current-students/undergraduate-students/experiences/internships>

StrengthsFinder®: <https://la.psu.edu/current-students/undergraduate-students/experiences/professional-development>

Nittany Lion Careers: <http://nittanylioncareers.psu.edu/>

### Professional Development Resources

LinkedIn College Alumni Group: Penn State Liberal Arts Alumni Network

### College of the Liberal Arts Social Media

@AdvisingLAatPSU

@PSULAvoices

@PSULAJobs

@LAEnvoys

@PSULAUC

Facebook:

LANetworkatPSU

LAUSatPSU

### Program Contacts:

#### Heather Baruch-Bueter

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## Getting to Know Each Other: Outlining Expectations and Goals

The goal of the Alumni Mentor Program is three-fold: To **learn** about the wide variety of career paths available to liberal arts majors; to **network** with professionals in your field(s) of interest and the 90,000+ liberal arts alumni; and to **connect** your academics, extracurricular experiences, and study abroad with your career development.

To get your mentor relationship off on the right tone, this sheet will help you outline a few important matters between you and your mentor. **You can fill this out on your own or with your mentor, but be sure to share it with your mentor soon after being introduced.**

What are your expectations for this mentor program?

How do you best respond to mentoring and receiving guidance, feedback, and advice?

What are a couple of goals you'd like to focus on with your mentor?

## 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 completed with your mentor during your first or second meeting.**

Student Name:	Mentor Name:
E-mail	E-mail
Preferred Phone:	Preferred Phone:

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? \_\_\_\_\_

### Outlining goals

The value of your mentorship will increase significantly if you set and seek to achieve specific goals. It is helpful to outline goals and set deadlines to meet those goals.

**Goal #1 (Academic goal):** \_\_\_\_\_

Action step(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Target complete date(s): \_\_\_\_\_

What resources/advice/guidance do I need to accomplish this goal? \_\_\_\_\_

**Goal #2 (Extracurricular goal):** \_\_\_\_\_

Action step(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Target complete date(s): \_\_\_\_\_

What resources/advice/guidance do I need to accomplish this goal? \_\_\_\_\_

**Goal #3 (Career development goal):** \_\_\_\_\_

Action step(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Target complete date(s): \_\_\_\_\_

What resources/advice/guidance do I need to accomplish this goal? \_\_\_\_\_

**Goal #4:** \_\_\_\_\_

Action step(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Target complete date(s): \_\_\_\_\_

What resources/advice/guidance do I need to accomplish this goal? \_\_\_\_\_

**Sample goals include:** researching classes for next semester, choosing one club/organization to join this semester, researching companies for internships/full-time positions.

## Sample Meeting Agenda

Use this agenda to prepare for meetings with your mentor.

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):