Alumni Mentor Program
Guide for Mentors

Kansas State
College of Engineering
Thank you for participating in the College of Engineering Alumni Mentor Program. We hope you find the mentor relationship to be both fulfilling and enlightening. The purpose of this guide is to provide an overview of the program.

Program description
The College of Engineering Alumni Mentor Program is a nine-month series (September - May) designed specifically for College of Engineering students with sophomore standing or above. This program matches K-State alumni with students interested in a mentoring relationship. Mentors will provide guidance and support to their mentees, to assist in professional development and career advancement. Students will be matched with a mentor based on background, experience and interest. Students must be prepared to engage in a professional relationship, one in which the student is jointly responsible for maintaining regular communication and is willing to listen, learn and take initiative.

Program goals
The College of Engineering Alumni Mentor Program aims to –
- Enrich students by offering opportunities for interaction with industry professionals.
- Empower students in the development of personal responsibility and independence.
- Create an environment that fosters career and professional development.
- Encourage and support College of Engineering students.
Program benefits

Benefits of mentoring
Mentoring benefits the mentee, the mentor and the university by fostering high levels of engagement. As each mentee-mentor relationship is different, each individual in the program will experience unique benefits. Although many people believe that mentees gain the most from a mentoring relationship, mentors have a lot to gain as well.

Benefits for mentors
• Exposure to the emerging talent pool
• Ongoing attention to your own career development
• Satisfaction from imparting wisdom and experience to others in the profession
• Enhancement of coaching, mentoring, leadership and management skills
• The chance to be exposed to diversity of thought, style, personality and culture
• A way to recruit employees for the mentor’s department or area of interest
• Feedback loop to students and program regarding curriculum needs
• A way to “give back” to the College of Engineering
• A lasting career network

Benefits for mentees
• Access to a professional network
• Individual interaction with a professional
• Exposure to new experiences and points of view
• Honest, thoughtful advice and feedback
• An opportunity to make a connection that can open doors to future opportunities
• Assistance in identifying positions or companies to which the mentee may want to apply and connecting the mentee with colleagues
Role of a mentor
Mentors have the opportunity to enrich the life of a student by cultivating an individual, personal connection. The mentor assists the mentee in shaping interests, helping to find career or life paths, using wisdom to give sound advice and sometimes just being a good listener. Mentors look to connect and grow alongside their mentees. Mentors seek out their mentees and actively discover new ways to engage and connect. This means seeing the relationship as more than just “helping” the mentee, but as a relationship where both people grow over time. Within the program, this growth is concentrated in the last few years of the student’s college journey. Although mentoring is often a personal choice that grows out of a connection with an individual, the program hopes to cultivate an environment where mentor-type connections with students can develop. Mentors provide students with the opportunity to learn from highly successful alumni by forging long-lasting, professional relationships. Our experienced mentors can share knowledge and understanding, discuss industry trends, build a mentee’s professional network, facilitate career development through guidance and advice, share technical expertise and offer advice on professional communication, dress and demeanor. All are skills that will assist the mentee when preparing to enter the workforce. The formal mentoring program will last for nine months, unless you or the mentee request to end the mentorship.

Guidelines for mentoring success
• Communicate with your mentee at least once per month during the nine-month academic calendar year (September – May). Regular communication is critical to build a trusting relationship.
• Be sure you are clear about how you will communicate, whether it will be by phone, email, video chats or in person.
• Keep professionalism in mind, and use your best judgment when communicating and connecting with your mentee.
• Discuss areas to talk about and work on.
• Follow up when you make a commitment to get information, take action, etc.
• Work hard to make the relationship a two-way street. Sharing responsibility for setting up times to meet is one example.
• Be appreciative of your mentee – learn the student’s strengths, and seek or offer advice in areas of strength.
• Set boundaries that work to keep both parties feeling respected, valued and comfortable.
• Be flexible and enjoy the experience.

Questions or comments
If you have questions or comments concerning the College of Engineering Alumni Mentor Program, please contact Mackenzie Blakeslee at 785-532-5592 or coementor@k-state.edu.
Not sure how to engage your mentee in professional development effectively, or are you just looking for ideas to improve the quality of your interactions? Below you will find a list of recommended activities or topics to engage in with your mentee.

**Starting out**
- Discuss your expectations of one another. Do you expect your mentee to initiate most communication or do you prefer that it be more balanced? Be careful not to make assumptions. If you expect something, such as that your mentee responds to an email from you within 48 hours, be specific in stating so. It is likely that your mentee has not had many, if any, professional relationships such as this one.
- Establish ground rules. Are you open to discussing all topics or are certain topics off limits? How formal or informal do you want the relationship to be? Agree upon how frequently you would like to meet or communicate, and the methods by which you will do so.
- Share your current resume with your mentee and ask to have the student’s shared back with you. Talk about what you look for in a resume or in an individual’s experience when you are hiring.
- Share a life experience that had a significant impact on your career trajectory.
- Ask your mentee about current career goals. Talk about your own career goals and how they have evolved over time.

**Developing**
- Identify an article or book you feel would be beneficial for your mentee to read. Plan a time to discuss the reading at an upcoming meeting.
- Help your mentee develop an “elevator pitch.” What information should your mentee convey to potential employers in a brief conversation?
- Ask your mentee about participation in professional development activities as a student at Kansas State (e.g., student organizations, career fair, etc.) thus far. Encourage your mentee to get involved in student organizations and Career and Employment Services (k-state.edu/ces), if the student isn’t already.
- Give your mentee clear, objective feedback regarding attitude, presence and other skills, such as hand-shaking and smiling, then offer suggestions on how to improve on them.
- Coach your mentee on professional correspondence. When should emails be sent versus a typed note versus a hand-written note? What elements/information should be included? What are some common mistakes to avoid?
• Discuss generational differences you have noticed in the workplace.
• Ask your mentee to create a vision for five, 10 and/or 15 years from now – even if your mentee does not know which career path to take, ask your mentee to describe the setting and elements that will be a part of the future.
• Ask your mentee to identify risks, difficulties or stress that will be faced in the coming months (e.g., job search, challenging academic load, upcoming exam, balancing work and school, etc.). Discuss strategies for minimizing stress and preparing in positive ways to handle these challenges.
• Encourage your mentee to get involved in an appropriate professional organization – many such organizations allow for student members or have student chapters at K-State.
• Talk to your mentee about appropriate clothing for interviews and office. Make sure to be clear on the differences between casual, business casual and professional dress.
• Review typical interview questions that your mentee may encounter on a phone or in-person interview.
• Discuss the qualities of a good response versus poor response.
• Discuss the importance of intercultural communication skills in the workplace – how to develop them (e.g., study abroad, meeting international students) and examples of when you have used these skills.
• Have your mentee identify three goals for the semester or year. Assist your mentee in determining if these goals are SMART\(^1\) - specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound. If not, help your mentee to adapt these goals. Work together to develop an action plan for achieving these goals.
• Share tips or strategies you use for building your network, and for remembering and maintaining contact with business associates.
• Discuss appropriate use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, Google+, etc.) and how employers might use this information when making a hire.
• Encourage your mentee to establish a LinkedIn account and discuss ways LinkedIn can be used to grow a professional network.
• Conduct a mock interview with your mentee and give feedback on your mentee’s performance. Hold a debriefing session with your mentee later.
• Discuss personal branding/marketing. Challenge your mentee to think about what makes your mentee unique and the ways in which to differentiate from other applicants. How can this information be utilized in application materials and interviews?

**Concluding your formal relationship**

• Share with your mentee things you learned from your interactions and provide positive feedback about your experience with your mentee.

**References and further information**


This manual was adapted and modified to meet the needs of the College of Engineering Alumni Mentor Program courtesy of the Kansas State University College of Business Executive Mentor Program.

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