



UNIVERSITY *of* WEST FLORIDA

Best Practices Guide *for Mentees*

Industry Mentoring in STEM Program
Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering
HMCSEmentor@uwf.edu

WELCOME

Thank you for applying to the Industry Mentoring in STEM (IMSTEM) Program at the University of West Florida (UWF) Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering (HMCSE). This program offers selected, qualified undergraduate applicants the opportunity to learn from experienced industry mentors in their field of study to establish connections and gain valuable insights into issues such as career choice, networking skills, and career development.

As part of this program, your mentor's focus is on your career success and professional networking. The time you put into developing a professional relationship with your mentor will put you at an advantage during college, and when you start your first job search. Through this relationship, you will have the opportunity to build a solid professional network and develop the personal and social skills that will help enable you to stand out in interviews upon graduation.

While the academic education and career advice that you receive at UWF is excellent, having a professional relationship with a mentor who has successfully navigated the professional world can give you real, sound advice that is invaluable and will put you at an advantage in your full-time job search.

How the IMSTEM Program Works

Our mentoring program pairs a selected student with an experienced industry professional. Your mentor has real-world experience and is looking to pass on his or her knowledge to you, the mentee. Your mentor will act as a coach and role model for you with the intent to promote your personal and professional growth. Through this program, you will gain many skills that will help you succeed throughout your career, and many opportunities will be provided to you, including:

- *Outside, professional source for support on your path from successful degree completion to job placement or graduate school entry.*
- *Guidance and insight into becoming competitive for employment opportunities.*
- *Opportunity to learn and practice professional networking skills.*

How to Start

Your application and resume will give your matched mentor an idea of who you are as a person. By applying to the UWF IMSTEM Program, you acknowledge that the information you submit is true and accurate to the best of your knowledge, and you agree to have this information shared for matching purposes with people outside of UWF.

Mentor Matching

Using the information from your application, you will be matched with a industry mentor who is the best fit for your background and interests. Once matching is complete, you will be notified of the match. You are required to complete a program orientation. During your orientation, you will be reminded of the program's expectations and instructed to contact your mentor through a phone call to introduce yourself and to schedule the first meeting.

As a student mentee, you are responsible for making the first contact and sustaining the relationship with your mentor. This is not to say that your mentor will never reach out to you, but it is your responsibility to drive the relationship and communicate your needs.

Time Requirements

Because you and your executive mentor are busy individuals, the program is structured so that your work and study schedules are not disrupted. There are no required activities or tasks, but after your match is made, you are responsible for contacting your mentor each month.

This mentor relationship is a commitment of at least one to two hours each month. You should consider your schedule prior to applying for the program. It is recommended that you schedule at least one interaction with your mentor per month. After your first face-to-face meeting, you and your executive mentor can come up with the desired form of interaction that best suits both of you. These may be video calls, phone calls or emails, or it may be a scheduled monthly meeting.

The First Step, Once Matched

Contact your mentor via telephone and arrange for a mutually convenient time to meet face-to-face*. Your mentor already knows you will be making this call, so he or she will expect to hear from you.

**As COVID-19 continues to impact our communities, we encourage you to choose your method of communication with your Mentor based on each person's comfort level – following the lead of the person who would like to take the more conservative approach (i.e. You may prefer to meet in person, but your Mentor may prefer to meet via video chat or over the phone).*

The First Meeting

You will not need to dress business professional on campus, but you will need to look business casual (i.e. no shorts and flip flops). The primary goal for the first meeting is getting to know each other and to put a face with a name. To make this easier, we suggest the following:

- *Ask your mentor about their educational background, career path, and things*

that they are involved in.

- *Ask about their job and what duties and responsibilities that entails.*
- *Let your mentor know the areas you feel you need coaching or areas they can assist you.*
- *Tell your mentor about your career aspirations.*
- *Refer to the "Questions to Ask Your Mentor" document as a discussion starter. These are simply ideas to get you started -- none are required.*
- *Please note: It is likely that your mentor will occasionally treat you and pay for a meal. If this is the case, it is strongly advised that you send a short thank you after the meeting.*

Important Responsibilities

Once you have found an excellent mentor, the job has only just begun. You own the role as “mentee” and it has some important responsibilities:

- **Check Meeting frequency** – It’s a good idea for you and your mentor to agree on regular catch-up meetings. Sitting down every few weeks on a routine basis keeps the direction and the relationship on track. Knowing you have an approaching meeting with your mentor will also help organize your thoughts and questions around that meeting. Occasionally, crazy things can happen between these meetings. When that occurs, remember that you are the one seeking advice. Your mentor may have taken a mind-reading course but probably flunked it and likely does not know you are struggling with an issue. Don’t be afraid to call when something unusual comes up.
- **Ask thoughtful questions** – Prepare for the conversation by organizing your thoughts and questions around your goal for the meeting. Ask yourself what you really want to learn from this meeting. Is it how to handle a specific problem or person? Is it reassurance on the direction you have decided to take? Whatever the issue, prepare your questions ahead of time and be thoughtful about their importance. You are the one holding the meeting, not the other way around.
- **Be candid** – You and your mentor can waste a great deal of time if you are not honest about your interests and concerns. Your mentor wants to help you achieve your goals and pursue your dreams, not his or hers. Your mentor may help you adjust the reality of those goals and dreams from time to time but he or she must always know your honest thoughts and opinions.
- **Share what you have learned** – Over time, the information and advice you receive from your mentor will pay off in learning experiences. Be sure to share them with your mentor for two reasons: 1) the review will help you strengthen your inventory of “things that work” and 2) your mentor will appreciate hearing

about positive experience that are accruing to your success.

- **Say “Thank you!”** – your mentor has dedicated to you, not only time, but also a great deal of thought and effort. He worries when you worry. She smiles when you are happy. Be sure to say thank you for the time, interest and emotional connection your mentor is providing. Generally speaking, never ever pass up a chance to say thank you for a kindness, large or small, on anyone’s part.*

On-going Professional Relationship

Your professional relationship will consist of at least one interaction per month and will last for at least one school year. During your professional relationship, you may want your mentor to help you with networking, internship and part-time job selection, as well as deciding on a career path. Some of your interactions may include:

- Coaching and feedback on your "soft skills," such as presence, professional attitude and conduct.
- Receiving advice on improving your time management, organization and study habits.
- Attending professional association meetings, other events or company functions with your Executive Mentor.
- Inviting your mentor to attend campus events, such as club meetings or a "speakers" event.
- Shadowing your mentor during their work day.
- Asking your mentor to arrange for an informational interview with a colleague or associate.
- Help polishing your resume, projects, portfolios and personal calendar organization.

As the mentee, you are expected to take initiative in this relationship. Although at times your mentor will reach out to you, you should initiate contact with your mentor at least once per month and follow through on items the two of you discuss.

Tips

You represent University of West Florida Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering students, and we are counting on you to make us proud. Here are some tips you may find helpful, many of which are from CareerBuilder:

When meeting with your mentor:

- *Dependability:* Confirm meetings and always show up.
- *Timing:* Never show up late for an important meeting. Allow yourself plenty of time to get to the meeting in case you have trouble finding the office or have technology issues. If you arrive more than 15 minutes early, your mentor might feel rushed. Ideally, you should check in 5-to-10-minutes early, and always be courteous and professional to everyone you meet.
- Have a notepad handy to take notes and have a few prepared questions you want to ask.
- Have extra copies of your resume available just in case it is needed.

- Do your research on their company and demonstrate your sincere interest.

What to Wear – Some Tips for Showing Up Professionally

Know that you must be comfortable in your clothing. This does not mean casual — that is altogether different — but aim for comfortable. Comfort as in the clothing feels good on your skin, you can move easily, sit easily and be wearing nothing such as earrings, necklaces, cufflinks, belts or shoes that make a lot of noise.

For all interviews it's good to show up as authentically as you can. If you are a fashionista and often appear in pieces that allow you to stand out — do so for your interview, perhaps tamed a bit to conserve your ability to influence with your clothing. For example, in the business world, it is still often taboo to appear with tattoos. You will need to cover them; the same goes for brightly colored hair (at least let them get to know how colorful you are once you are hired). We want to know you for your personality, but more so for what you can do for the company. Let the interviewer hear YOU without being distracted by what you are wearing.

- Refrain from wearing clothing that is soiled, dirty, stained, neglected.
- Work to have some ease in the fabric so that the clothes are not pulling, stretching excessively or revealing body parts.
- Sports and exercise wear is for the gym and, well, exercise. So unless you are interviewing at ESPN or your favorite water polo magazine, skip athleisure attire.
- Avoid shirts, pants, hats or other jewelry with statements on them
- Remember: Hair and makeup are accessories too. Decide before the morning how you are going to wear your hair. If it's not in your face or extremely distracting, wear it like you usually do. Simple, controlled style works well for both hair and makeup.

Ensure positive, appropriate and polite nonverbal communication:

- **Handshake:** A firm handshake is considered a sign of confidence. Take the other person's hand in your right hand (don't use both hands), so that the space between your thumb and first finger touches theirs. Give a firm, but not crushing squeeze, and shake the person's hand up and down slightly, once.
- **Eye contact:** Look in the eyes of the person talking with you. Looking down or away frequently gives a message of not being confident or being confused. Rolling your eyes up is considered a sign of disrespect. Don't stare intensely at your mentor; just look him or her in the eye as much as possible.
- **Posture and physical distance:** When sitting in a chair, sit up straight or lean forward slightly (don't slouch). If you will be crossing your legs, do it so that one knee is stacked on top of the other or cross your ankles. (Do not cross your legs so that one foot is on top of your other knee.) Alternatively, keep both feet on the floor. Do not stretch your legs out in front of you or sit with your legs spread far apart - it looks too casual. When standing near someone, in normal circumstances a distance of three feet should be observed and is standard in most parts of the United States. Standing closer than this can be quite uncomfortable for others.
- **Arms and hands:** You can "talk with your hands" to some extent, but do not do so to the point of distracting your mentor. Sitting with your arms crossed in

front of you can look defensive. Instead, try to have a more open posture. Even if you're nervous, try not to fidget. Don't play with your jewelry, twirl your hair or cross your arms.

- **Facial expression:** Smiling is an important way of showing that you are a friendly individual and that you are enthusiastic. Smile at the beginning and the end of the meeting at a minimum.
- **Mirroring:** You can also take note of the posture and expressions of your mentor and adopt some of his or her tone. Still, even if an interviewer is quite friendly and casual, that does not mean you should be too casual. It is still a professional meeting.
- **Smoking:** Refrain from smoking in the presence of your mentor.

Table Manners.

The most important thing to remember is simply to follow the host's lead. After he or she takes the first bite of food, you may begin eating - unless he or she tells you to go ahead and eat so that your food doesn't get cold.

- To show that you are ready to order, close your menu and place it on the table.
- Don't pile too much food on your plate; it will probably make you eat faster, which can lead to talking with your mouth full.
- Don't put too much food into your mouth or talk with your mouth full.
- If you are 21 years of age or older, refrain from drinking alcohol unless your host orders a drink first. Limit yourself to one drink. It is always acceptable to refuse.
- When you're not eating, keep your hands in your lap. Don't fidget.
- Elbows may rest gently on the edge of the table between courses, but not while you're eating.
- When cutting food (meat, salad, etc.), cut enough for two or three bites and eat those before cutting more. Don't cut your whole meal at once.
- Don't order one of the most expensive things on the menu.
- Don't order more than you are going to eat.
- Don't push your plate away from you when you are done with your meal. Simply place your fork and knife side by side diagonally across your plate to show that you've finished with your meal. The fork and knife should be pointing to 10, with the handles on the 4, the blade of the knife facing inward (towards you).

Phone Skills are important. The way you answer your phone will form your mentor's impression of you. Keep in mind:

- When you answer the phone, be warm and enthusiastic.
- When answering the phone, welcome callers courteously and identify yourself.
- Enunciate clearly, keep your voice volume moderate and speak slowly and clearly when answering the phone, so your caller can understand you easily.
- Return all your calls within one business day.
- Don't use a speaker phone. Speaker phones give the caller the impression that you're not fully concentrating on his or her call.
- If you use your voicemail to answer calls when you can't, make sure that you have a professional message recorded.
- When you are leaving a message on a person's voicemail or answering machine, state your name, a number you can be reached at, the time and date of your

- call, whether you plan to call back, and a brief explanation of your call.
- For many students, it is important to stay connected with people using mobile phones. Courtesy and respect for the people around you should be a top priority. These devices can be distracting to yourself and your mentor when they start beeping or ringing. If it is critical that you be contacted during a meeting, switch the phone to the vibrate mode so you know when others are trying to contact you, yet the people around you will not be disturbed. The best option available to you is to turn the phone off and retrieve any incoming messages at a more convenient time.

Email is an informal and often convenient way to send messages as long as you retain the same boundaries of propriety you would use if dealing with the person face to face. For example, if you address your mentor by surname (Mr., Mrs., Dr.) in person, do not switch to the first name when sending email. Keep in mind:

- Messages should be as short and concise as possible. If the message is more than a few lines long, divide the text into paragraph-sized "chunks" so it is easier to read.
- Use a meaningful subject line. If a busy professional cannot figure out what an email is about from the subject line, the message may get ignored or deleted.
- Make sure all messages posted are relevant to the subject at hand. When replying to someone, quote the parts of the original message that pertain to your reply.
- Stick to plain text. It is great to send our beautifully formatted messages with special italics, bold type, or heavily formatted HTML, unfortunately some mail systems will not deliver the message in the same format as it was sent. A plain text message may not look as pretty as you want, but it will not look worse than it did when you sent it.
- Pay attention to grammar, spelling and punctuation. Proper grammar, spelling and punctuation make the message more easily understood, not to mention professional.
- Don't take too long to respond. Everyone knows how busy some people can get. That is not an excuse to ignore email or not respond in a timely manner. It is disrespectful not to reply quickly (at least within 24 hours) to your mentor. Not responding quickly implies a lack of interest on your part. Check your email a minimum of once a day.

Above all, always thank your mentor for their time and counsel. Remember, this unique experience aims to equip you with working knowledge and skills that will further prepare you for your career.

Questions? CONTACT:

Industry Mentoring in STEM Program
Hal Marcus College of Science and Engineering
Building 4, Room 423
11000 University Pkwy
Pensacola, FL 32514
HMCSEmentor@uwf.edu