Bright Futures Student-Alumni Mentoring Program Handbook

A guide for mentors and mentees

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Careers & Employability

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BRIGHT FUTURES Student-Alumni Mentoring Program handbook

A GUIDE FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES

INTRODUCTION

The Bright Futures Student-Alumni Mentoring Program is a collaborative project between Alumni and Careers & Employability. This exciting program is designed to match students with alumni in a related industry and provides a learning experience for students that connects the classroom to the 'real world'.

Mentoring relationships are:

- Professional in nature
- Enhance connections between study and the world of work
- Assist students with the transition from university to employment
- Provide an opportunity for professional development, networking and idea exchange between experienced professionals and the next generation of leaders
- Involve alumni (and industry) back in the life of the University in a meaningful way.

Successful mentoring relationships are reciprocal, respectful and mutually beneficial with the mentor and mentee learning from each other.

BENEFITS TO MENTORS AND MENTEES

Benefits to mentors
Refine coaching and mentoring skills.
Share your knowledge and experience to develop meaningful relationships with students.
Identify potential employees or interns.
Expand professional networks.
Make a meaningful contribution to the life of the University.
Be inspired by the enthusiasm of those about to enter your industry.
Connect with and influence the next generation of leaders.
Potential Continuing Professional Development (CPD) recognition from your professional association.

Benefits to mentees
Benefit from another person's vision, experience and learning.
Gain insight into organisational culture, appropriate behaviours, attitudes and protocols in your field.
Talk with experienced people in your field.
Focus on career plans and career exploration.
Gain job search tips and advice.
Become energised by achievement, mastery and personal growth.
Explore new ideas and areas of interest.
Understand the relevance of study to the 'real world'.
Develop networks.

WHAT IS MENTORING

> **'A mentor is one who offers knowledge, insight, perspective and wisdom that is especially useful to the other person.' Shea Gordon, Mentoring: a practical guide (1997)**

The word 'mentor' comes from Homer's Odyssey – where the Greek hero Odysseus asked his friend Mentor to look after his son Telemachus while he went away to the Trojan War. Mentor was a guardian, a role model, an advisor and a friend to the boy for many years.

> **Mentoring is about one person helping another to achieve something. More specifically, something that is important to them. It is about giving help and support in a manner that the recipient will appreciate and value and that will empower them to move forward with confidence towards what they want to achieve.**
>
> **Mentoring is also concerned with creating an informal environment in which one person can feel encouraged to discuss their needs and circumstances openly and in confidence with another person who is in a position to be of positive help to them. (David Kay and Roger Hinds, A Practical Guide to Mentoring, 2004)**

OVERVIEW OF THE MENTORING PROCESS

EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Mentor and Mentee

An advantage of this program is its flexibility as the mentor and mentee decide how the relationship will best work. To facilitate this program we have established the following minimum requirements and expectations:

- Mentees/mentors will make initial contact by phone or email.
- We recommend monthly meetings of 30-60 minutes (the end date of the program will be advised on your notification email) – these contacts can be via phone, Skype, other online platform, or in person. In person meetings should take place in a work or public location, not in a private home.
- Communication will be responded to in a timely manner (i.e. within two working days).
- Be professional, respectful and open-minded in your communications.

Mentor

- Listen to the needs and expectations of your mentee.
- Help your student identify and set realistic goals, monitor progress and make changes as needed (see goal setting sheet – Appendix A).
- Support the student's professional and personal development.
- Encourage the student to consider new ideas and try new things.
- Teach and advise your mentee how to make professional contacts and provide introductions if appropriate.
- Encourage open and honest communication.
- Maintain and model professional behaviour.
- Communicate problems with the mentoring relationship to program staff – **careers@scu.edu.au** or **T:** 02 6620 3300.

Mentee

- Discuss your needs and expectations with your mentor – establish clear goals and think about what you want out of the program prior to each meeting.
- Agree and commit to expectations and goals you set with your mentor (use the goal setting sheet – Appendix A).
- Be appropriate in your requests – for example you are not asking them for a job or internship.
- Be responsive and open to suggestions and feedback.
- Be professional in all interactions with your mentor.
- Understand that being selected as a mentee is a privilege and work hard to make the most of this opportunity.
- Communicate problems with the mentoring relationship to program staff – **careers@scu.edu.au** or **T:** 02 6620 3300.

ONCE MATCHED – FOR MENTORS

First contact

- Students are requested to email or phone at the commencement of the program to introduce themselves and discuss a schedule of meetings/conversations – so please be on the lookout for their communication.
- Contact your mentee within the first week via phone or email if they have not initiated contact.

What to expect during your first conversation

We recommend a phone, Skype or in person meeting with your mentee as early as possible and suggest the following to build rapport:

- Tell your mentee that you are looking forward to being their mentor and share your enthusiasm for the program
- Ask questions about your mentee's interests, background and experiences. Look for things you may have in common
- Start to talk about your goals and expectations for the program
- Establish a schedule for future conversations.

EXTENDING THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

Setting goals

- Setting and working towards goals provides direction to your relationship and helps your mentee explore this valuable skill. Your mentee has been encouraged to use a goal setting worksheet for the program (See Appendix A).
- Setting goals is a process and can be daunting to start with – so helping your mentee set their goals and then monitoring how they are progressing or changing their goals throughout the session is important.

Meeting expectations

- Follow your communications schedule or renegotiate as needed.
- If your mentee does not remain in contact as agreed, please contact program staff on careers@scu.edu.au or **T:** 02 6620 3300.

Options vs solutions

- Sometimes it can be tempting to jump in and provide quick solutions to a mentee's problem. A better approach is to ask probing questions to assist them to process and explore their own ideas and solutions.
- Suggest approaches that a student may try such as 'Have you thought about...?' or 'An approach I found useful when I was starting out was...' or 'What are the pros and cons of ...?' or 'What other things could you consider?' Avoid saying, 'You must' or 'You should...' etc.
- Don't be discouraged if your mentee doesn't seem to take your advice, this is all part of the learning process.

Sharing your story

- Sharing your experiences at work and uni helps build rapport.
- Sharing your successes, mistakes and the lessons they have taught you can provide valuable learning opportunities for your mentee.
- What would you have done differently at uni? In your career?
- How have you dealt with some of your professional challenges?

Coaching

- Encourage your mentee to try something new.
- Don't hesitate to provide your mentee with constructive feedback, especially if they are acting in an unprofessional manner. A friendly nudge in the right direction could be what they need to be successful in their part-time or graduate job search process.

OPTIONAL MENTORING ACTIVITIES

Getting to know your mentee

- What are their interests, strengths and values?
- What type of organisation do they want to work for? Why?
- What do they find most interesting at uni?

Career conversations

- Share information about current trends or issues in your industry or organisation.
- Discuss organisational culture and office politics.
- Talk about how values can impact on career and/or organisation choice.
- Discuss professional standards or accreditation requirements within your industry.
- Is a site visit to your organisation to spend time shadowing you appropriate/feasible?

Job search advice

- Provide feedback about your mentee's resume or portfolio.
- Conduct a mock job interview.
- Discuss how and where to search for jobs or internships within your industry.

Networking

- Discuss potential contacts and professional organisations that may be helpful.
- If appropriate, introduce your mentee to colleagues and/or attend a professional networking event together.
- Discuss how to conduct an informational interview.
- What networking approaches work best for you?

PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALITY, TRUST AND RESPECT

Privacy

Mentors and mentees will be provided with each other's contact details (name, phone number, email address) once a match has been made to enable initial contact.

These details must not be shared with anyone else, and should not be left anywhere they can be accessed by other people. Both mentors and mentees have a right to their privacy and have given their personal details only for the purposes of student mentoring.

Confidentiality

From time-to-time mentees and mentors may share details of their life that are very personal. These could include their personal living situation, details about their work situation, family situation, relationship or other personal information. Please remember that information shared with you is confidential and you should not discuss it with anyone else.

Trust

Trust is important in any relationship and by entering into a mentoring relationship you will rely on trust as the basis of the exchange of information to foster authenticity and honesty.

Respect

Respect is an important element of all relationships. This involves:

- Showing courtesy and consideration
- Being non-discriminatory (that is, avoid treating others differently because of their race or religion, disability, gender or sexual preference)
- Allowing alternative points of view to be expressed
- Respecting the views of others
- Not behaving in a manner perceived as harassing, bullying, belittling or intimidating.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The mentoring relationship

Each mentoring relationship will be unique regardless of the prescribed framework or schedule of contact. As individuals are unique, so too is the context of their mentoring relationship due to the different reasons that people become involved in a mentoring program.

Communication tips

We all receive and communicate information in different ways. Good communication – both verbal and nonverbal – is essential for an effective mentoring relationship. Communication techniques such as appropriate body language, active/reflective listening, and summarising, can aid communication. Feedback and clear communication are vital components of the mentoring relationship. Remember to:

- Use active listening skills (take time to focus)
- Check your body language
- Use eye contact when face-to-face
- Check your understanding of the needs and issues for the student
- Give and receive feedback
- Encourage, empathise and share
- Be aware that people have different communication styles and preferences
- Communication will often be via email, phone or text message – so be careful of the 'tone' of communications especially emails and text messages. Ensure you are always professional e.g. be careful of the level of formality/informality to avoid miscommunication/misunderstandings. Before pressing SEND – always read your communication again, put yourself in the recipient's shoes and consider from their values and perspectives if the message could be misconstrued.

Of course if difficulties arise or there is a communication issue, please contact program staff – **careers@scu.edu.au** or **T:** 02 6620 3300.

How to make the most of being a mentee

- Be curious – ask questions. See attached questions in Appendix B for conversation starters.
- Model professionalism in your mentor meetings by being prompt, prepared, and maintaining a professional attitude. You are ambassadors for Southern Cross University.
- Part of being professional is making only positive or neutral comments about your mentor to others. If you disagree with your mentor's values, behaviours, or attitudes, discuss this with them directly. Respect your mentor's confidence and trust.
- Assume the mentoring connection will be strictly professional. This does not mean you cannot be yourself, or you cannot be friendly. Let your mentor take the lead in establishing a more friendship based connection. Do not intrude into your mentor's personal life or expect to be close friends. Do not divulge inappropriate personal information – remember the relationship is a professional one.
- Always be considerate and respect your mentor's time as you do your own. Be thorough, but succinct in your explanations, experiences and comments. Watch for clues that you may be going on too long. It is polite to ask directly if you are talking too long.
- Flexibility/constraints – your mentor is busy and has competing demands so consider these potential constraints and be as flexible as possible.
- Accountability – consider all advice or suggestions you receive. Arguing about why your mentor's advice would not work can be construed as rude and close-minded. Be flexible.
- Once you and your mentor establish mutually held goals and expectations, keeping your agreements will strengthen trust and help maintain a positive relationship. Demonstrate that you have followed advice or commitments for action at every opportunity, even if you have modified your plan. Pointing out that you used your mentor's help, and sharing outcomes, is important.
- Express your appreciation for every form of assistance you get. Provide positive feedback and thanks, as well as positive comments to your mentor.

Awareness of diversity

SCU is committed to providing an environment for staff and students that embraces and supports knowledge of and respect for equity and cultural inclusion, safety and security, and which is free from harassment and discrimination. Mentors and mentees are expected to treat all members of the University community with respect, and have the right to expect the same treatment in return.

Students with disability have the right to participate in all courses and programs offered by SCU. This includes participating in the Bright Futures Student-Alumni Mentoring Program as either a mentee or a mentor. We can provide assistance to mentees and mentors with disability if required.

THANK YOU TO OUR MENTEES AND MENTORS

We extend our sincere appreciation for your involvement in the Bright Futures Student-Alumni Mentoring Program. Without your commitment and enthusiasm, this program would not be possible.

This booklet will evolve with the program and we welcome your feedback on how to improve our support materials and the overall program.

CONTACT US

For all enquiries about this program, please contact:
Gina Werner
Program Coordinator, Careers & Employability
T: 02 6620 3300
E: careers@scu.edu.au

Southern Cross University

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APPENDIX A: GOAL SETTING WORKSHEET

My goal statement

What is your basic goal?

S – Is it *specific?* (Who? What? Where? When? Why?)

M – Is it *measurable?* How will I measure progress? (How many? How much?)

A – Is it *attainable?* (Can this really happen? Attainable with enough effort? What steps are involved?)

R – Is it *realistic?* (What knowledge, skills, and abilities are necessary to reach this goal?)

T – Is it *time-bound?* (Can I set fixed deadlines? What are the deadlines?)

APPENDIX B: POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR MENTOR

Academic and co-curricular preparation

What skills and abilities do you think you developed as a student and how have these contributed to your professional development?

Looking back, were there any skills and/or abilities that you wished you had developed more fully while at uni?

Did you participate in campus organisations while a student and how did these opportunities contribute to your professional development?

If you completed an internship, can you tell me about this professional experience? How did this contribute to your professional development?

As a student, did you see yourself in your current career? Please explain.

What do you know now regarding your professional path, that you did not know when you were an undergraduate student?

Education and preparation

How much formal education is needed in your field? What sort of special training or postgraduate qualifications are required?

What are the important personal characteristics (personal traits/qualities) for someone entering this field?

What kinds of experience do employers want?

What kinds of extracurricular activities and/or volunteer experiences would be beneficial?

Are there electives/streams/majors or units and skills that would be beneficial?

What are the most important skills someone should have to find success in this occupation?

What types of part-time, full-time or summer jobs should I be doing right now that may prepare me for this career path?

What are the most important personal attributes and qualities needed for career success?

Working conditions

What is your job title?

Would you please describe your organisation (its goals, size, structure, culture etc.)?

What type of training did you receive when you started your first job?

What is the typical career path in this field? What are typical entry-level jobs?

How many hours per week are you expected to work? Do you put in additional hours?

What other things are expected of you outside standard work hours?

What is a typical working day like for you?

What are the most satisfying and the most frustrating parts of your work? In what ways can this job be stressful?

How much variety does this job involve? What is the pace of work?

What times of the year are busiest/slowest?

Does your job involve much travelling?

What are the typical daily pressures that you deal with?

What is the starting salary for an entry-level role?

Industry advancement

How has the field changed since you first started your career?

What are the trends/challenges that you see in the future of this field?

What is a major challenge that you face today?

How is the job market for your field in [insert region here]? Is it difficult to find an opening? Is there a particular region that's best for starting out in?

How long should I expect to stay in an entry-level position?

What are the opportunities for advancement?

What would be the next step in a career path for a job like this?

Networking

How did you find your first job after graduation?

What avenues did you explore to find job openings in your field?

What role does networking play, if any, to help break into this field?

How important is it to know someone in this industry?

What professional associations or organisations are useful to belong to in this field?

What magazines, journals, websites, are important to read in this field?

Do you know anyone in [insert name of specialised field here] who would be willing to chat with me?

About your mentor

What is your background?

Describe your career path. How did you get to your current role?

Why did you get into this field? Did someone/something significant influence you to choose this career?

Do you belong to any professional associations?

Do you read any specific journals or magazines or subscribe to online groups?

What are the things that you find personally rewarding in your career?

What are the things you find frustrating or disappointing?

If you were starting out again, would you plan your career differently?

If your job were suddenly eliminated, what other kinds of work could you do?

Advice and other questions

What did you learn about yourself as a person or a professional in your first professional position?

What have you learned about yourself from some of the challenges you have faced in your career?

What have you learned from the successes in your career?

What is one thing about your first job that you didn't expect?

What was the most surprising part of your transition from university to work?

Do you have any additional information that might be helpful?

What advice do you have for someone planning to start a career in this field?

What do you see as the biggest challenges new graduates face when they enter your industry?

What are some other jobs in your field that are similar to your own?

Would you be willing to critique my resume/cover letter? Can you offer any suggestions?

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