

University of Alberta Business Alumni Association Alumni Mentorship Program

Program Guidelines

This document is designed to be a reference guide, containing information that you will need throughout your mentorship.

On behalf of the Alberta School of Business Advancement Office and the Business Alumni Association, thank you for your participation. We wish you an enriching and rewarding experience!

Purpose and Goals of the Alumni Mentorship Program

- To connect recent graduates with experienced Alumni to strengthen the Alumni family and expand networks.
- To influence future business leaders through providing career guidance and sharing relevant knowledge and experience.
- To assist recent graduates to further develop their communication and networking skills.
- To share insight into the local business community.
- To facilitate the exchange of knowledge on new business trends and developments.

Please Note: All participants are advised that this is not a job placement service.

Process

- Register as a protégé or mentor via the online application forms available at: <https://www.ualberta.ca/business/alumni/mentorship-volunteer/alumni.html>
(note: 2021 applications are being accepted until February 28, 2021)
- The Alumni Relations Office and Business Alumni Association will work together to match protégés with mentors, attempting to address the goals set out in each application.

Expectations and Responsibilities

- The program will run from **April 2021 to November 2021**. (This will be a 1-year commitment for each mentor and protégé in the program). The timing of the program is built to allow protégés and mentors to make the most of their match.
- Minimum commitment: **4-6 meetings**.
- Maximum commitment is unlimited. Some mentorship relationships last years.
- **Protégé: a recent grad from the Alberta School of Business (approximately 0-7 years out of school).**
- **Mentor: an experienced Alumnus from the Alberta School of Business (approximately 5+ years out of school).**



- While it is the protégé's responsibility to initiate contact with mentors, we encourage a flexible, open relationship.
- Either party may ask to be re-matched with a new partner if the current partnership is proving to be unsuccessful; however, the change must first be discussed between the protégé and mentor prior to concluding the relationship through the organizers.
- Protégés are informed that this is not a job placement program and are precluded from asking mentors for a job.
- *Mentors* – Plan to share your experiences, perspectives and approaches to developing your career and gaining the skills and qualifications to become successful in your field of work. An exploration of critical incidents can be particularly valuable. Consider sharing some of the key challenges you have been confronted with in terms of job search, important career decisions, skill acquisition and development; the options you identified for resolving issues you faced; your decision-making strategy; the actions you took; the outcomes you obtained; your analysis of the results; how you may have benefitted from your own alumni network.
- *Protégés* – Your mentor will be giving his/her time to share experiences, perspectives and approaches to developing personally and professionally. You should be prepared for each meeting and set the agenda for your meetings to ensure you get the most out of each interaction. You should actively seek feedback from your mentor and be receptive to the feedback you are offered. Be as specific as possible when asking for information, ideas and suggestions. ***Since this is a volunteer program, it is paramount that protégés respect their mentor's time and are prepared to make the most of the mentorship match.***

Clarify Interests and Needs

This relationship will be most beneficial if both participants work to carefully identify their personal and professional goals before and during meetings. Protégés are encouraged to consider their questions pertaining to job search strategies, industry knowledge, career paths, time management or balancing work and family life. From the application process and first meetings, you should develop three to five specific goals for your participation in the program. You may wish to review these goals throughout the year.

Protégés may have difficulty developing questions to ask their mentor. Prepare to assist your protégé by giving some advance thought to what your own experiences have taught you. Think about key learning experiences and important insights you have gained. What aspects of the job search were particularly challenging for you? What support were you given that you can now pass on to your protégé? What discoveries did you make on your own and how can you ease the path for your protégé?

Recognize the Value and Limits of the Relationship

Like any relationship, this match will be unique to the personalities, backgrounds and experiences of the participating individuals. You are not expected to respond to all of your



protégé's needs. Be thoughtful in how you spend your time together and clarify the ways in which you will choose to be of support.

While sharing your expertise, refrain from telling a protégé what to do. Instead, assist your protégé in recognizing the options available for action and selecting the one that will work best for him/her. Recognize that some advice you offer may seem irrelevant to your protégé at this time, but may prove to be useful later on. It will ultimately be your protégé's choice as to how s/he will utilize your guidance. Look for opportunities for your own enrichment, as mentors often find value in the questions or fresh perspectives of protégés.

Setting Goals

A copy of the protégé's application will be shared with their mentor. Protégés are encouraged to bring a list of questions or prospective goals to the first meeting. After learning more about your protégé's career plans, work together to finalize the list of goals that you believe can be adequately addressed during this experience.

The First Meeting

People often begin a mentoring relationship with high expectations and some uncertainty about how to proceed. To that end, it can be helpful to structure the first meeting and to give some thought as to how you would like the meeting to go. Consider the following ways in which you can contribute to the first meeting:

- Show genuine interest in each other.
- Create a list of your goals and expectations.
- Listen and share ideas.
- Share your professional background along with personal information (as you feel comfortable) and your interest in participating in the program.
- Identify and clarify areas where you believe you can support one another.
- Help each other develop a focus and agenda for your next meeting.
- Suggest other resources, as appropriate, in preparation for your next meeting.
- Agree upon the duration, frequency and locations of each of your meetings.

Mentors are encouraged to set aside an hour for the first meeting with your protégé. Review his/her resume and application form prior to this meeting so that you already know pertinent professional information. Use this hour to get to know other aspects of your protégé. Is he/she married? Any children? Any hobbies? Share similar information about yourself. You may want to conduct this first meeting away from the office. At the conclusion of the first meeting, set the next meeting date or determine a regular time to meet.



Sample Questions and Discussion Topics

Personal	Professional	Plans
What are your expectations of this mentoring relationship?	Why do you want to pursue a career in this specific area / industry?	Do you have any plans in place to reach your goals?
How do you think a mentor can help you?	What challenges are you currently facing with your professional development?	What activities are you participating in to reach your goals?
What are your strengths and weaknesses?	Networking tips	Have you considered taking some professional designation courses?
Important life skills	Resume tips	Are there networking events that you can attend together?
Obtaining work/life balance	Alternate career options	
Sharing personal background (family, hobbies, travels, etc.)	Job search strategies	
Things your mentor would do differently if given the chance	Key success factors in your mentor's chosen industry	
	How your mentor acquired those skills	
	How your mentor chose his / her career	

Managing the Relationship

Since this is a volunteer program based around building a personal relationship, we cannot stress how important it is to be prepared for each meeting with a prioritized list of topics or questions that you want to discuss.

While face-to-face meetings are suggested, you can also use e-mail, phone or instant messaging as methods to maintain communication with one another. Be sure to show up for scheduled meetings on time. If necessary, offer to reschedule a meeting, shorten it, or handle via e-mail. Be flexible but remain committed to achieving your goals from the relationship. Return messages to one another in a timely manner; no one likes to feel ignored.

Clarify Confidentiality

Complete confidentiality in the relationship is a must in the program since we are providing all participants with a safe environment to share their thoughts and experiences.



Bringing Closure to Your Relationship

This program is specifically time-limited to allow the mentor to support the protégé's learning without long-term obligations from either party. After the program's conclusion you may continue your relationship informally, if you wish. Support each other in recognizing the positive achievements and benefits from the partnership. Recognize the value of your respective roles in supporting this Alumni program and building a stronger Alumni Family. Be sure to celebrate the experience at our wrap-up event (details TBA).

At the conclusion of your mentoring relationship, we ask that you complete the online feedback form to help us advance the Alumni Mentorship Program. Your feedback is confidential and will be used only to improve our program. Thank you for your support!

Additional Support Appendices:

1. **Setting Expectations**
2. **Goal Setting**
3. **Strategies on Strengthening the Relationship**
4. **Trouble Shooting**



Appendix 1 – Setting Expectations

1. Encourage your protégé to take the initiative in setting meetings, agendas and topics of discussion.
2. As a mentor, be prepared to take on various roles throughout the relationship:
 - a. **Coach** – As an experienced and successful business person, be willing to teach and coach the protégé on your areas of expertise and your experiences in business since graduation. For example, you may have experienced transitioning through several different careers. Use this experience to offer advice on the steps you took to arrive at your current position.
 - b. **Listener** – Remember that the learning process never ends and both the mentor/protégé will benefit from the match. Being an active listener and getting to know each other will help build trust and strengthen the relationship and overall experience.
 - c. **Facilitator** – There may be times when a subject or question comes up in which you are not an expert or have never experienced. It is expected that you will do your best to help your protégé through pointing them in the right direction in order to get the answers they seek. This does not mean you have to open your network to them but simply guide them in discovering the ways in which to network or find the right people to contact (protégés often just need a push in the right direction).
 - d. **Supporter** – You are always expected to be a supporter. Everyone needs someone to confide in and to bounce ideas off of in a safe environment. You should be there to listen and support each other as you reach your goals in the match.
3. Be diligent in **preparing** for every meeting. This will help in keeping the meetings organized and ensure that each interaction is not wasted.
4. **Respect the commitments** you make with your match. We impress upon everyone to respect each other's time. Try not to cancel or reschedule meetings once they are set (unless absolutely necessary).
5. **Encourage** your protégé to **follow-up** with all the issues and actions that you two have discussed after each meeting so that you both can see progress throughout the relationship.
6. Recognize that it is not the quantity but the **quality** of the meetings that matter. If you set out clear expectations and follow them, the experience will be more rewarding and productive.



Appendix 2 – Goal Setting

Remember the following rules for effective goal setting:

1. **Desirable** – Goal should be focused on the protégé’s top priorities, thus ensuring they are meaningful. If the goals are focused on what the protégé is passionate about they will have more natural motivation to achieve them.
2. **Achievable** – Ensure that the goals you set are achievable during the one-year duration of the relationship/program.
3. **Measurable** – Goals must always be measurable. Set benchmarks for each goal and assign timelines to them.
4. **Written** – Ensure that both the goals and benchmarks are documented in writing. This will maintain focus throughout the relationship and provide tangible expectations.



Appendix 3 – Strategies on Strengthening the Relationship

1. **Demonstrate your commitment to each other** – Respect the meetings you have arranged and try to keep them. If the protégé takes the initiative to make contact, try to respond back in a timely manner as well to demonstrate that you take the relationship seriously (vice versa).
2. **Be prepared** for each meeting. In order to get the most out of this program you have to be prepared to set the direction of the match (protégé) and to share your experiences in reaching the protégé's goals (mentor).
3. **Share your experiences openly** – The relationship will be most effective if you are willing to share both the positive and negative experiences you have had in business. We all learn more from failure and challenges; this open sharing also demonstrates that success is a long road and being able to overcome challenges is part of developing both personally and professionally.
4. **Share your thoughts and opinions** – In addition to offering technical advice, it is always good to share your personal feelings or opinions on matters to allow for discussion of different points of view.
5. **Be attentive** – Be an active listener and remember what your match has mentioned to you both professionally and personally. Referring back to comments made at the previous meeting will demonstrate that you are interested and invested in the relationship goals.
6. **Stay positive** – Refrain from being negative about issues or individuals. It will be a more positive experience if you remain positive or impartial.
7. **Keep your commitments** – If you promise to do something or introduce someone to your protégé, keep those promises. No one likes to feel neglected.
8. **Be honest** – Always give honest and productive feedback.
9. **Be clear in setting guidelines** – Clear communication of expectations and ground rules will strengthen the relationship. (Example: be clear on what types of communication is acceptable: email, phone, acceptable times to call, etc.)



Appendix 4 – Trouble Shooting

1. **No Chemistry** – Chemistry and personalities are difficult to predict but we encourage each match to work through their relationship. We do our best to ensure that matches are based on career interests and goals, so fundamentally you should share some commonalities. It is also encouraged to take the extra time to set out goals, expectations and benchmarks of success, so that even if there is no personal chemistry there is an action plan to follow. Recognize that everyone has a different communication style and be as open and flexible as possible. Consider writing down questions and responses prior to meetings so that face-to-face time is used most effectively.
2. **No sign of progress** – This is a common issue if clear goals and appropriate benchmarks have not been developed early on in the relationship. Be diligent in insisting your protégé is prepared for each meeting and follow-up on action items.
3. **Lack of commitment** – If your protégé or mentor simply doesn't put in the effort and you have given them every chance to make a commitment, please let the organizers know about the issue so that we can take action. We appreciate and respect your time and want to ensure you are getting value out of the experience.
4. **Our schedules just aren't working out** – We understand that everyone has busy schedules and hope the program length of one year will increase the opportunity for the mentor and protégé to meet. We also encourage both participants to stay committed to scheduled meetings. If a new commitment arises and you find yourself too busy to continue participating in the program, please contact the organizers so we can work to re-match participants.
5. **The protégé is too pushy** – We remind all our protégés that this is not a job search program and that trust must be earned in every relationship. Mentors are under no obligation to open their personal network to the protégé if they do not feel comfortable doing so. Simply remind the protégé of the goals of the program and move on. If your protégé continues to be pushy, please contact the program organizers and we will work to resolve the situation immediately.

