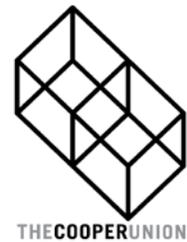




Program Guidebook
2018-2019



September 2018

Dear Student Mentees and Alumni Mentors,

Thank you for participating in the Engineering Alumni-Student Career Mentoring Program! Alumni mentors, we are delighted that you have decided to give back to Cooper Union by sharing the wisdom of your professional experiences with current students. Student mentees, we couldn't be happier that you are taking advantage of Cooper's most valuable asset, our alumni, to serve as role models and sources of professional guidance.

The purpose of this guidebook is to provide ideas as you embark on your mentoring relationship. This information should be viewed as suggestive rather than prescriptive as each relationship will take on a different form. Each mentor/mentee pair is encouraged to have an open dialogue about what would work best for them and what they would like to gain from the relationship. We urge students to take initiative with their alumni mentors. Students should take the lead on scheduling meetings and conversations, and should come prepared with topics to discuss and ideas about how they'd like to work with their mentor.

Of course, if you have questions at any time please feel free to be in touch! We will be checking in from time to time and we look forward to hearing from you, too.

Thank you again for your participation and happy mentoring!

Best regards,

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Program Overview & Purpose

The goal of the Engineering Alumni-Student Career Mentoring Program is to provide engineering students with additional support in identifying and pursuing their career goals through professional networking with experienced alumni of the Albert Nerken School of Engineering. Mentoring relationships are intended to be professional in nature with the goal of helping students transition seamlessly from an academic environment to the workplace and/or to graduate study.

Basic Structure

In order to participate in this program, both alumni mentors and student mentees **must commit to a full academic year-long mentoring relationship (September – May) and be willing and able to meet in person and/or communicate virtually at least once per month.** More communication is encouraged and we advise you to discuss what would work best given your academic and professional obligations. In addition, Cooper Union staff will send periodic communications to check in with participants. Events may be held at The Cooper Union to provide mentoring pairs additional support and opportunities to interact.

What does it mean to be a mentee?

Mentees are students in the Nerken School of Engineering at The Cooper Union who are mature, responsible, and committed to their professional development. They seek to explore career options and develop their interpersonal skills so that they may be successful in their professional endeavors. A mentee is interested in learning as much as she or he can from their mentor, regardless of the mentor's specific academic or professional background. Mentees are open to constructive feedback and advice.

Mentees may come from any major in the Albert Nerken School of Engineering and may represent a variety of career interests, both inside and outside of engineering. As the first year of college can be a significant period of transition, this program is open to undergraduate engineering students in good academic standing in their sophomore, junior or senior year of study. Graduate students are also eligible.

What does it mean to be a mentor?

Mentors are alumni of the Nerken School of Engineering who volunteer time and energy to serve as resources for mentees with regard to their career development. They act as professional role models for mentees and are expected to support and advise their mentees. This professional guidance may take many forms including, but not limited to the following:

- Working closely with mentees to develop their interpersonal communication skills. Simply having a conversation about career goals with a working professional is excellent practice for engaging with professionals in a variety of contexts and serves to boost students' confidence and familiarity with the norms of professional discourse.
- Helping mentees understand career options by sharing insights from their own professional experiences.
- Supporting mentees in their pursuit of their professional goals, which may mean providing feedback on career search materials, or practicing interviewing, as examples.

Most importantly, mentors must be interested in helping their mentees succeed professionally; in whatever way the mentee aims to go. They must also be willing to make time each month to meet/talk with their mentee, and be responsive to email/phone communication. Mentors are excellent listeners and are primarily concerned with providing insight, support, and constructive feedback. This is not about telling students what to do, but rather, about listening, making suggestions based on students' interests, and giving them a forum for career-oriented discussions.

Key Characteristics of Mentors and Mentees

Overall, both mentors and mentees must demonstrate the following characteristics:

- Active listening skills
- Communication skills
- Patience and empathy
- Flexibility and openness
- Dedication and responsibility
- Positivity and enthusiasm
- Eagerness to learn and grow; curiosity
- Professionalism

Expectations

Both mentors and mentees must demonstrate respect and trust for one another and prioritize the relationship – Cooper Union students and alumni are busy people, **so it is critical that you make time for your mentor/mentee and take the relationship seriously.**

In addition, mentors are expected to:

- Listen to the needs and expectations of your mentee.
- Work with your mentee to help them develop and establish realistic and obtainable goals.
- Help your mentee develop their point of view without judgment.
- Offer suggestions and feedback to your mentee.
- Be committed to serving as a resource to your mentee.
- Encourage your mentee to explore new areas/industries/organizations/contacts.
- Follow up on commitments made to your mentee.
- Contact your mentee if you are unable to make a scheduled meeting and/or call.
- Contact the Center for Career Development and/or the Office of Alumni Affairs and Development if there is a concern with the relationship.

In addition, mentees are expected to:

- Discuss your needs and expectations with your mentor; think about what you want out of the program prior to each meeting/conversation.
- Negotiate ideas and activities with your mentor.
- Be committed to carrying out agreed-upon goals; follow through.
- Be receptive to suggestions and feedback.
- Keep your mentor informed of progress and/or challenges.

- Acknowledge that having a mentor is a privilege.
- Demonstrate appreciation and gratefulness – say thank you, be punctual and professional.
- Contact your mentor if you are unable to make a scheduled meeting and/or call.
- Contact the Center for Career Development and/or the Office of Alumni Affairs and Development if there is a concern with the relationship.

Ground Rules

While it is up to you to decide how you would like your relationship to unfold, there are a few ground rules to adhere to:

- Mentees may not, at any time, ask mentors for a job/internship. This program is about developing skills, self-awareness and professional goals, not about job placement.
- Please keep this professional. Conversations should focus on the academic experience, career goals, and professional interests of the mentee, they should not be social in nature. Additionally, please use phone/email and Skype to communicate with one another. Refrain from interacting on social media sites like Facebook and always try to call rather than text.
- Mentors and mentees must communicate at least once a month and that communication should be either in-person (ideal if local), via phone or Skype. Email is fine, but please use it primarily to organize **REAL TIME** conversations.
- Please try to meet in-person, if at all possible, and do so in professional and/or public places, for instance the mentor's place of work, at Cooper Union, or a coffee shop.
- For email communication please respond within 24 hours, if even to acknowledge receipt of the message to respond more fully later.
- If you have questions at any time, please contact Jolie Woodson in the Center for Career Development at jolie@cooper.edu.

Suggested Activities and Topics to Discuss

During the initial meeting or phone call:

- Introduce yourselves to one another. Mentors, what did you study at Cooper and what do you do now professionally? Mentees, what do you study and what are your professional interests?
- Discuss goals and expectations for the relationship. Mentees, in what ways would you like your mentor to support you? Mentors, what do you expect from your mentee? How do you think you can best support your mentee?
- Review your calendars through the rest of the academic year (through May) and set dates for future meetings/calls.** Communicating once per month is a minimum not a maximum, feel free to communicate more as long as both mentor and mentee have agreed and set time aside.
- Discuss your preferred modes of communication and if you will set up phone/Skype calls, decide who will be the one to make the calls. **We strongly urge the mentees to take the lead on communication.**

Subsequent Meeting Suggestions:

Informational Interview:

Mentees, conduct an informational interview with your mentor. Here are some sample questions (please contact the Center for Career Development for more guidance):

- What is a typical day on the job like for you?
- Is there an experience that has significantly influenced your career?
- What led you to make this career choice?
- What strengths have helped you excel in your career?
- What is the most motivating aspect of your work?
- To what extent did your undergraduate and/or graduate education prepare you for work?
- What kinds of challenges do you face at work?
- Did you go to graduate school? Why did you decide to go? In what ways was it valuable?
- What are the most important personal satisfactions and dissatisfactions connected with your occupation?
- How did you prepare for your occupation? How would you recommend others prepare to enter this field?
- If you could start all over again at the start of your career, what might you do differently?
- Are there any courses/books/professional groups/websites/blogs in particular you might recommend to someone interested in your field?
- How, if at all, has professional networking played a part in your professional growth?
- Do you have a mentor in the workplace? Have you ever? What was that like?
- Can you give an example of a specific project you've carried out and tell me about it?

Career & Academic Conversations:

- Discuss and list the mentee's talents, skills, and interests.
- Discuss the mentee's classes and projects: what was interesting and what was challenging?
- Discuss how the mentor's personal and professional life fit together.
- Read a book/news article/journal article related to your field of interest and discuss it.
- Discuss the mentor's educational background and the role of educational preparation in your field.
- Discuss organizational types and cultures.
- Search the Internet together for job resources and other information related to your field.
- Discuss how individual work values impact career choices.
- Discuss a current event or issue in your field.
- Visit/discuss a variety of work environments.
- Discuss the professional standards that exist in your field.
- Discuss the transition from school to work.
- Go out to lunch or dinner and discuss proper business etiquette (or any of these other topics).

Organization Visits and Events:

- If applicable, visit the mentor's place of work for a tour.
- Attend a local professional association event or meeting.
- Attend a "meet-up" related to your professional interests (check meetup.com for ideas).
- Attend an event at Cooper Union together and discuss it.

Networking:

- Develop a list of contacts for the mentee to meet/talk with.
- Talk about the value of networking and the ways to do it (LinkedIn, professional associations, Cooper Union alumni network, etc.).

- Work together to develop the mentee's LinkedIn profile and suggest different groups (including the CUAA – Cooper Union Alumni Association – group) to join.
- Discuss how to track and stay in touch with professional contacts.

Resume/Interview Exercises:

- Critique the mentee's resume, cover letter and/or portfolio.
- Assist the mentee in completing a job application packet, portfolio, etc.
- Conduct a mock interview in-person. Audio or video-record it and do a critique.
- Conduct a mock phone or Skype interview.

Goal Setting

Setting goals helps to ensure that the mentoring relationship will be successful. Clearly articulating and documenting goals will provide clarity and direction.

Goals should be:

Specific – Target a specific area for improvement (e.g. verbal communication/interviewing skills/industry knowledge/etc.).

Measurable – Develop a mechanism for tracking progress (e.g. chart number of mock interviews).

Attainable – Ensure these are things you can achieve.

Realistic - Think carefully about how “doable” given context and constraints the goal is (e.g. given mentor/mentee schedules how realistic is it to do 15 mock interviews when we also have other things we want to cover?)

Time-bound – Attach goals to a schedule and set deadlines (e.g. we will do 3 mock interviews by December, each on a specific date).

Develop a list of 10 goals (become a more confident interviewer/communicator, develop knowledge of the oil/biotechnology/finance/fill in the blank field/industry, build my professional network, etc.) and then choose the top 3 that you want to prioritize.

Create a schedule to achieve stated goals and clearly define action steps needed.

Don't forget to have fun! Thank you for your participating in the Engineering Alumni-Student Career Mentoring Program.

The Center for Career Development

The Office of Alumni Affairs and Development