



Welcome and thank you for volunteering to serve as a mentor in our career-focused Alumni Mentoring Program.

Alumni mentors offer advice and insights about what it is like to work in their fields and organizations, the skills and experience required, and how to enter their sector. They may also offer guidance and feedback to students as they set career development goals.

The goal of the program is to help students clarify their career interests by learning from working professionals and to provide alumni an opportunity to give back to CEU.

Note: please know that you are not obligated to serve as a career educator, adviser, coach or counsellor.

CEU students have access to a dedicated team of Career Services professionals, so do encourage them to engage with us early and often. Students can get feedback on their application materials, prep for interviews, brainstorm job search strategies in career advising appointments with us, so please do not feel obligated to assist with any of the above if you are not available.

Rather, you can serve as a resource person, sharing your professional experience and insights about the specific field/career/organization that the student mentees are exploring.

Program Contacts

Alia Flanigan, Career Services Coordinator flanigana@ceu.edu
CEU Career Services ceucareers@ceu.edu

Goal Setting Using the GROW Model

To ensure clarity and focus throughout the mentoring relationship, we suggest experimenting with the GROW model for setting and achieving goals. GROW is a structured approach that helps define clear goals, explore obstacles, and create action plans. This model may be useful in guiding you and your mentee as they set career-oriented goals, while also aligning with their long-term aspirations.

G (Goal)

The first step is to define specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals for the mentee's career. These goals may focus on areas such as:

- Exploring different career pathways the mentees are interested in.
- Identifying skills or competencies required for a specific professional field, organization or job.
- Building a professional network or preparing for job interviews.

We suggest that in the first meeting the mentor and mentee collaboratively set at least three clear career-related goals.

R (Reality)

In this stage, we assess where the mentee currently stands in relation to their goals. For example:

- What is the mentee's level of understanding about the industry or career path they are interested in?
- What skills do they already have, and which areas need improvement?
- What challenges do they face in achieving their goals (e.g., lack of experience, networking opportunities, field-specific knowledge)?

The mentor may offer insights based on their career experience to help the mentee understand the realities of their desired career and field.

O (Options)

This stage involves brainstorming potential actions and strategies to help the mentee achieve their goals. Examples might include:

- Researching career paths or attending networking events.
- Working on improving specific skills, such as communication or leadership.
- Seeking internships or part-time opportunities to gain hands-on experience.

The mentor may guide the mentee in considering different pathways and options that are relevant to their goals.

W (Will)

Finally, the mentor and mentee may create an action plan. This includes defining specific steps the mentee will take to achieve their goals. The mentor may encourage the mentee to commit to these actions and establish timelines. Examples of action steps might include:

- Updating their CV/resume and LinkedIn profile.
- Reaching out to alumni or industry professionals for informational interviews.
- Participating in relevant workshops or seminars.

The mentee may commit to specific actions between meetings, and the mentor may follow up during a subsequent meeting to discuss progress and provide additional guidance.

Questions for Your Mentee

Sometimes mentees know they have questions, but they may not know where to start or may be intimidated. Below are some examples of questions you can use to provoke deeper thought and reflection during your conversations.

- What has happened since we last met/spoke?
- What would you like to accomplish before we meet next time?
- What did you learn (from that experience, about yourself, about others)?
- What steps are you going to take to accomplish those goals? When? How?
- How committed are you to taking action?
- Is anything preventing you from taking action?
- What do you want to be different about your experience moving forward?
- What is the situation/problem/issue? What do you think is the cause?
- What/who could help you?
- What are your strengths? Your weaknesses? (Note: be aware that some mentees may not be able to identify these yet or fully because they have not had the self-reflection practice.)
- Who do you look to as a role model?
- When are you most energized? Most productive?
- What are you worried/concerned about? What are you excited about?
- What role did you play in the situation?
- Are there different ways to achieve your goal(s)?

The First Mentoring Meeting

An early in-person, over-the-phone, or video chat will go far in creating a connection and setting up a good foundation for your connection with your mentee. Here are some suggestions for that first conversation.

We make it clear to the mentees that initial contact and follow up are their responsibility. In the first meeting, you might want to tell your mentee more about yourself. Think about how to describe where you work, what you do, and your interests in further detail.

We suggest you let your mentee know you are excited about being a mentor. Sharing your enthusiasm can help reassure them that you're committed to helping. You might decide to let them know why you decided to become a mentor.

Build rapport with your mentee by asking questions about their background and experiences. You have your CEU experience in common and that is a great place to start! Sometimes mentees know they want help and support, but they don't know where to start or what to ask. Giving them the opportunity to talk about what they've done and experienced up to this point is an easy starting point and will give you a better idea of their personality and passions.

Discuss expectations and goals your mentee might be thinking about for the mentoring experience. Both you and your mentee can set goals in the Mentoring Agreement that help guide your mentoring connection.

Building the Mentoring Relationship

Some Suggestions for Mentors

Every mentoring relationship is unique. In fact, there is so much to learn that there are entire books devoted to how to build a mentoring relationship. The following are a few guidelines that may help you in creating a positive relationship with your mentee.

Help Your Mentee Set Goals

You and your mentee have the option to set goals using the GROW model, or any other kind of model you both agree would work. Setting these goals with your mentee at the beginning of the program is critical because it gives you direction in the relationship and informs you in how to help your mentee.

If your mentee does not know their goals, this can be your first mentoring moment. Ask questions such as "What made you sign up for the mentoring program?" or "What are your specific concerns and questions right now?" or simply "How can I help you?"

Set Expectations and Coordinate Schedules

Make sure your mentee lets you know how and when they would like to communicate with you, and that it works for both of you. Renegotiate as needed, but if you can schedule a set day/time for meetings from the beginning, it often helps maintain the connection. Another option is to schedule your next conversation at the end of each meeting.

Do your best to be responsive and try to return emails in a timely manner.

Get To Know Your Mentee

Ask thoughtful questions about your mentee's interests, experiences and background. They can always tell their story up to this point in their lives, even if they are still confused about where the future will take them.

Follow up on any important steps the student has taken, such as job interviews, leadership experiences, or class presentations, and ask what they learned.

Be an active listener by feeding back what the mentee says, avoiding interrupting and showing interest in your voice and posture.

Ask thought-provoking questions that challenge your mentee to explore and articulate his/her thoughts, interests, motivations, accomplishments, etc.

Share Your Story

Telling your mentee about yourself and your experiences builds trust and rapport.

Think about what you've learned from your mistakes and how your mentee might also be able to learn from them. What would you have done differently?

Share your lessons learned during your studies and beyond.

Offer Options Versus Solutions

Avoid providing too many quick solutions. Ask your mentee what he/she is thinking and help them process those ideas.

Make suggestions of what your mentee might want to try, whether it is a resource, a great class, or another connection. Try using phrases such as "Something I found helpful when I was at CEU..." or "Have you looked into...".

Don't react with judgment. Try summarizing your mentee's main points once they are finished speaking to make sure you are both on the same page.

As you build your professional relationship, the mentor may offer the mentee constructive feedback, helping them recognize their strengths and areas for improvement. Students have lots to learn from you! It could make a difference for their first interview, job, or other professional experiences. This guidance can identify specific skills to develop, offering suggestions on how to refine those areas and start out in their career.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What should we talk about in the first meeting?

During your introductory call, you and your mentee are expected to fill out the mentoring agreement. The student is then responsible for emailing the completed form to Alia Flanigan flanigana@ceu.edu

Suggested prompts for the first meeting:

- "What I wish you knew about me is that..." or "What do you wish your [mentor/mentee] knew about you?"
- "My top three items in each category of 'must have' and 'can't stand' are..."
- "I tend to... [be on time, procrastinate] and prefer [face-to-face meetings, communicating through e-mail]"

- “My motivation for participating in this mentoring program is....”

Here are some questions you can use to get to know your mentee’s career aspirations and help them set goals:

- What areas are you hoping to get help in with regards to your career?
- What challenges or uncertainties do you face?
- Can you identify areas for professional/career growth in the future and why those areas may be challenging for you?

Make sure to set clear boundaries with your mentee. For example, if you are not comfortable providing feedback on job application materials, make that clear from the start, and suggest they make an appointment with the Career Services team. Instead, you may use this as an opportunity to serve as an additional layer of accountability for your mentee.

What happens if I’m paired with someone and never hear from them?

If you have not heard back from your student match by Friday, 28 February, 2027, please contact Alia Flanigan at flanigana@ceu.edu

My mentee isn’t quite the right fit, even after meeting for a couple of times. What do I do?

While we recommend trying to still build a rapport with your match, we understand that not every fit will be perfect. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to us with details on the situation and we’d be happy to assist.

My mentee is enthusiastic and I’m hearing from them a little too frequently. What do I do?

We love our enthusiastic students, but we understand your discomfort, too! Fear not. Revisit your agreement regarding frequency of communications together, or feel free to contact us for assistance.

I’m in a match and no longer able to commit to the program. How can I politely bow-out?

We understand that the unexpected can happen. We recommend reaching out to your student explaining your situation, and letting them know you’ll be stepping away. Please cc Alia Flanigan flanigana@ceu.edu as well.