

Graduate Student Alumni Mentoring Program Handbook

2021 – 2022

IOWA

Department of Chemical and Biochemical Engineering

Table of Contents

Overview	3
Membership Benefits	5
Mentor Expectations	6
Mentee Expectations	6
Suggested Mentorship Activities	7
Mentorship Program Timeline	8
Frequently Asked Questions	9

Overview

The Mentoring Program seeks to connect University of Iowa Department of Chemical and Biochemical Engineering (CBE) graduate students and alumni. This connection will provide students with opportunities to interact with chemical engineering professionals, enhance their career readiness skills, including networking, resume and cover letter development, and gain insight into professional life outside of academia. *The objective of this mentoring program is to help transition students from graduate school to a successful professional career.*

Mentors and mentees will apply to be a part of the program and will be matched by the department. Mentors will need to apply each year. After the initial application, mentees will remain in the program unless they decide to opt out. Interests and goals will be taken into consideration when matching, and will be prioritized along with industry and/or academic research area.

A mentor will ...

- Have a graduate degree and experience as a non-academic professional in chemical engineering.
- Serve as a resource for career readiness questions, i.e., resume, cover letter, interviewing, and how to effectively search for a job.
- Provide constructive support and feedback.
- Respond in a timely fashion and encourage communication with mentee.
- Commit to open dialog and extend student knowledge whenever possible.
- Communicate with the program coordinator if they no longer wish to participate in the program or their mentor relationship is not going well.

A mentor will not ...

- Be expected to provide their mentee with a job.
- Be expected to provide more time than what they are comfortable with.
- Stop communicating to their mentee when life gets busy. Rather, they will reach out and let the mentee know what's going on and set up a future time to connect.

A mentee will ...

- Be expected to initiate contact with their mentor and be responsible for continuing to engage with their mentor.
- Be courteous of their mentor's time and have an open dialog about expectations/goals.
- Be open minded and appreciative when receiving advice and feedback.
- Communicate with the program coordinator if they no longer wish to participate in the program or their mentor relationship is not going well.

A mentee will not ...

- Ask the mentor for a job.

- Expect the mentor to become a “life coach” – the focus is on successfully transitioning to a professional career.
- Stop communicating to their mentor when life gets busy. Rather, they will reach out and let the mentor know what’s going on and set up a future time to connect.

Membership Benefits

For mentors:

- Make an impact and influence aspiring CBE graduate students.
- Share your talents, real-world experiences, and professional wisdom with the next generation of chemical engineers.
- Broaden your leadership and mentoring skills.
- Add to your resume or CV.
- Make a critical, non-financial contribution to your alma mater (even if you live far from Iowa City).
- Develop new networking and collaboration opportunities.

For mentees

- Connect with chemical engineering professionals and learn from their experience.
- Improve use of career tools (resume, cover letter, job search process, interviewing, etc.).
- Connect with someone who has made the transition from graduate school to industry – “been there – done that.”
- Practice professional communication.
- Learn about chemical engineering careers, organizations and various opportunities.
- Develop new networking and collaboration opportunities.

Mentor Expectations

- Work with mentee to develop a meeting schedule that works for both of you (i.e., twice a month via e-mail, twice a semester with Zoom, etc.).
- Engage mentee in ongoing conversations.
- Communicate with mentee at least twice per semester – more frequent communication is encouraged.
- Be open to answering all types of professional questions.
- Help foster mentee networks.
- Adapt to mentee needs based on their time in the program and when their degree conferral will take place.
- Provide guidance as mentees transition from graduate school to a non-academic professional career.

Mentee Expectations

- Mentees will reach out to mentors via e-mail for the first point of contact.
- Work with mentor to develop a meeting schedule that works for both of you (i.e., twice a month via e-mail, twice a semester with Zoom, etc.).
- Communicate with mentor at least twice per semester – more frequent communication is encouraged.
- Be prepared to talk about your professional goals.
- Be open to feedback and suggestions.

For a successful mentorship both the mentee and mentor must ...

- Treat each other with respect.
- Communicate with each other.
- Establish the best way to communicate and establish a scheduled frequency of communications. Discuss potential busy periods in which frequency might have to decrease.
- Be respectful of each other's time and make sure they both are on time for virtual or in-person meetings.
- Communicate with the program coordinator if there are questions or things are not going well.

Suggested Mentorship Activities

The following can be used as a guide. These are just examples – it will be up to the mentee and mentor to decide what topics will best support the mentee’s transition from graduate student to non-academic professional.

Getting to know each other:

- Initial email from mentee to mentor will be sent within one week of match announcement.
- Introduction and sharing of backgrounds, goals and interests.
- Mentee should share current career path interests.
- Mentor should share their career path after graduation.
- Set expectations for each other including communication preference.

Professional Development and Preparing for the Workforce

- Review one another’s resumes and the mentees cover letter.
- Discuss how to prepare for a job interview, how to respond during behavior based interviews, in-person versus zoom interviews, etc.
- Conduct mock mentee interviews
- Discuss books to read to prepare for the real world.
- Discuss skills needed in the workplace and how to enhance mentee skill set while in graduate school.
- Explore job seeking search engines together.
- Discuss what work life is like including types of opportunities with different career paths
- Discuss how to choose where to work (large company, small company, consulting, etc.).
- Discuss how to navigate difficult conversations or situations in the workplace.
- Discuss how to achieve desired work-life balance of mentee.

Current Student Needs:

- Discuss potential courses that would be useful in the area of employment the mentee is seeking.
- Research interests and dissertation plans.
- Discuss pros and cons of next stage of life (ex. continuing education or going into workforce).

Mentorship Program Timeline

December 1, 2021	Mentor applications are due
December 15, 2021	New mentee applications are due and existing mentees wanting to opt out of the program or have a change in mentorship interests/goals should let the program coordinator know
December 31, 2021	Match Notifications
January 1, 2022	Mentorship Program Begins
January 20, 2022	Deadline for mentees to send first email to their mentor
June 1, 2022	Mid Year check in with Program Coordinator
November 15, 2022	Mentors and mentees will submit a Program Assessment
December 1, 2022	Mentorship Program Ends

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are the goals of the program?

The primary goal is to help CBE graduate students successfully transition from school to professional (non-academic) career. The program also allows alumni to engage with current graduate students in a meaningful way.

2. How will I be placed with a mentor/mentee?

The Mentoring Committee will review applications and pair individuals together. It is possible that mentors will have two mentees assigned to them.

The Mentoring Committee will try to ensure a good match; however, if there are problems, you should communicate them to the program coordinator.

Interests and goals will be taken into consideration when matching, though the program will be limited based on mentor participation. We will prioritize matching in the by industry and/or academic research area.

3. Who can participate in the Mentorship Program?

All graduate program alumni who have experience working as a professional chemical engineer may apply to be a mentor. All graduate students in the CBE department are invited to participate as a mentee.

4. What do I do if I do not hear from my mentor or mentee?

Please contact the program coordinator right away.

5. What if I feel like my mentor is not a good fit?

Concentrate on the skill building areas that mentors can provide generally. If you are still unsatisfied with your match, please contact the program coordinator.

6. Can I be matched again with my mentor/mentee next year?

To participate the following year, Mentors will need to submit a new application. If the mentee has not graduated and the mentee and mentor would like to continue with their mentorship the following year, they must both email the program coordinator with this request.

7. What is the length of mentorship? What if I have to end the mentorship early?

We are asking for a one year commitment. If you must end the mentorship early, we will understand and assign your mentee to another mentor.

8. Is there a limit to the number of mentees a mentor can have?

We prefer to assign each mentor one or two mentees for two primary reasons: we want each student to be given quality time from the mentor plus we want to give as many alumni as possible an opportunity to participate.