

Student Career Mentoring Program

2009



Mentor Information

An initiative of Careers and Employment
Supported by Alumni Relations

Aims and objectives of the Student Career Mentoring Program:

- To expand the student's understanding of the world of work
- To aid the student's career development process
- To enable the student to network with and learn from an interested professional

Why get involved?

- It will give you the opportunity to further develop your leadership and communication skills
- It will give you an insight into the concerns faced by those about to embark on their careers. This in turn should assist you and your organisation to anticipate and address those issues with new employees
- You may meet a potential employee
- There is an intrinsic satisfaction in knowing that you have assisted a young person at an important stage of their lives
- Many organisations expect their employees to do some form of community service

Eligibility Criteria

The La Trobe University Student Career Mentoring Program welcomes professionals who have 2 years or more experience in the workforce.

Stages in the program:

- March 20th Mentor applications close
Matching of mentors and mentees
- April Initial meeting and orientation :
Bundoora and Shepparton campuses (April 23rd)
Albury-Wodonga campus (April 28th)
Bendigo and Mildura campuses (April 30th)
- July Mid-program functions (dates TBA)
- April - October Mentor / Mentee meetings take place
- October Final Celebration (dates TBA)
Evaluation and feedback

Guidelines & Expectations

In order to make the mentoring program a success for all, we ask you to agree to:

- **participate in an initial meeting and orientation event** at the beginning of the program
- attempt, wherever possible, to meet face-to-face or **have contact with your mentee at least five times during the program**
- arrange, as an alternative to a face-to-face meeting, a **scheduled exchange of emails or a scheduled phone conversation**
- **keep appointments** with your mentee wherever possible, rescheduling at least two working days beforehand if a meeting/email/phone conversation can't be kept
- attend the **final celebration event** at the conclusion of the program, and participate in evaluation activities
- **advise Careers & Employment should any significant problems arise** in your mentoring relationship
- **respect the range of views, experiences and backgrounds of the various participants** in the program and share your own with others wherever possible

Agreements:

Agreements for each mentoring partnership will need to be signed by both mentees and mentors and submitted to the Careers and Employment office before the arranged first meeting. Confidentiality clauses will be included to protect the works and intellectual property of both parties.

What career mentoring is:

A one-to-one, non judgemental relationship in which an experienced individual voluntarily gives time to support and encourage another. The relationship focuses mainly on the mentee's development. A good career mentoring relationship is professional and equal, recognising that both mentor and mentee can grow from the experience.

What career mentoring is NOT:

- Counselling
- Teaching or assisting with course work
- A social relationship
- A superior-subordinate relationship

The role of a mentor may include the following:

- actively listening
- providing constructive feedback
- helping the mentee consider options
- referring the mentee to resources
- facilitating decision-making
- sharing your own experiences
- helping identify areas for development
- allowing the mentee an opportunity to practise new skills
- acting as a sounding board
- asking questions that enable further exploration of ideas or that challenge the mentee's thinking
- providing guidance, not direction
- collaborating in problem-solving but not solving the problems for the mentee
- acting as a role model
- supporting the mentee and motivating them to achieve their goals

Skills and qualities needed by a mentor:

- Ability to allow the mentee to guide the process/topics/discussions, and openness to the mentee's wishes and needs (within the framework of the program)
- Ability to provide constructive feedback
- Ability to relate to others
- Confidentiality
- Empathy
- Generosity of spirit, willingness to give time (without monetary payment)
- Non-judgemental; objective
- Positive; encouraging
- Realistic about expectations
- Respectful
- Sensitivity to individual difference
- Strong communication skills including active listening
- Willingness to share; be open

The rights of a mentor:

- To be treated with respect and in a professional manner
- To be informed at least two days before a planned meeting if the mentee is unable to attend
- To be listened to
- To suggest activities for the mentee (e.g. reading, researching information) that is in line with the agreement
- To have your privacy respected

Potential challenges in the mentoring relationship:

- Mentee becomes dependant on mentor
- Mentor and mentee don't get on
- The mentee seeks personal advice relating to issues at home, or assistance with academic work*
- Mentor or mentee is too busy to give it the time required
- Mentee or mentor doesn't turn up at the scheduled time
- Mentee is reluctant to talk or engage with you

*La Trobe University provides a range of support services to students such as Personal Counselling, Language and Academic Skills Units, Chaplaincy, Equality and Diversity and Careers Counselling. If you feel that your mentee requires more in-depth assistance for any personal or academic issues please refer them to the appropriate service (for contact details go to <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/life/support>)

For further information on how to address these potential challenges or any concerns that you may have about your mentee not working within the Guidelines and Expectations of the program, please contact Careers and Employment.

Building the relationship:

Your mentee may be a little nervous about commencing communication with you in the first instance. You may therefore find it helpful to initiate the first contact and to drive the first couple of meetings.

The best way to start is by understanding what your mentee wants. They will want you to show empathy, interest and approachability. It is unlikely your career path will match all of their ambitions, but your experience and knowledge will be helpful regardless of the mentee's area of study or career plans.

Forming an agreement on topics for discussion and a schedule of meetings creates a constructive basis for the relationship, and puts emphasis on the commitment of both parties. Equally important is the need to keep to arranged meeting times or contact methods, and to be conscious of the mentee's limited transport, finances and time.

Encourage mutual appreciation. Let the mentee know that you are getting as much out of the session as they are, as this will help to maintain and encourage further open-ended discussion. Look to provide options rather than "the answer". Your role is not to be a parent or to teach, but to expand their horizons, and assist them to consider options they may not be aware of, or feel confident in pursuing.

Maintaining the relationship:

Building structure into the relationship, particularly in the early stages, is vital to maintaining the momentum of the mentoring partnership. The structure can be discussed and negotiated explicitly from the outset, or it can be more implicit because at least one member of the pair is driving the process (increasingly the mentee may assume this leadership role, while respecting the needs and time of their mentors). The important principle is that each partner understands and respects what will make the relationship work for both. The level of structure maintained in the relationship will depend on the personal styles of both mentor and mentee, and also on the goals that the mentee wants to achieve.

Activities you can suggest to your mentee:

Mentors from our previous programs have utilised some of these activities with their mentee:

Undertake online self assessment:

Suggesting your student carry out an **Online Self-Assessment** is a great way to get them thinking about the skills, interests and abilities they have or need to develop to reach their career goal. Self Assessment tools allow the user to focus on their work values and current skills and interests.

- www.myfuture.edu.au
- www.windmillsonline.co.uk

Visit the mentor's workplace

- 'shadowing' the mentor
- attending staff meetings
- workplace induction
- work experience*

Attend events and seminars

- industry seminars
- professional association meetings

Practise job search techniques

- arrange an "informational interview" for the mentee with one of your colleagues or networks
- develop a resumé with your help
- have a mock interview
- put together a personal career plan

Research the world of work

- prepare a reading list of careers and industry research and discuss
- put together a career folio with relevant documents, articles, company or industry information
- undertake research and prepare a report on labour market, job prospects, influences etc
- research and identify a list of skills sought by employers and undertake a skills audit

*for information about Voluntary Work Experience and for insurance forms, please contact Val Sandeman, Manager Employer Liaison on (03) 9479 3386.

Further Reading:

If you would like to conduct further research into mentoring or career development practices, skills and techniques, we recommend the following online resources:

Mentoring:

- <http://www.mentoring.org>
- <http://www.mentors.ca>
- <http://www.mentoringgroup.com>
- <http://www.exemplas.com>

Labour Market:

- www.myfuture.edu.au
- www.jobsearch.gov.au

Graduate Careers:

- www.graduatecareers.com.au
- www.gradsonline.com.au

Job search strategies:

- www.graduatecareers.com.au
- www.latrobe.edu.au/careers
- www.seek.com.au

Key Contacts:

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www.latrobe.edu.au/careers

ACTION PLAN

This form is a sample action plan for the mentor's use when meeting with the mentee. Please use it if you feel it would provide a helpful structure to your meetings.

Meeting date:	
Issues raised by the mentee:	
My suggestions:	
Agreed actions before the next meeting:	
Date of next meeting:	