

TCNJ Engineering Alumni Mentoring Program

Mentor Guide

Overview

The TCNJ School of Engineering Alumni Mentoring Program is a great opportunity for students to gain perspective from someone who has more experience than they do. On behalf of the faculty and students of the School of Engineering, we thank each mentor for donating their personal time to *alma mater*.

This brief guide should help you to understand more fully the scope of mentorship as well as give you some guidance in your interactions with the students. You will also receive the Student Guide to the program, so you know exactly what we expect of each student.

As a mentor, you are being asked to provide career guidance, facilitate the transition from school to work or graduate/professional school, and potentially provide advice on navigating the later years of study at TCNJ. If your relationship grows beyond the initial semester (and we hope it does), you can provide more in-depth advice as a role model, offering insight and perspective on careers and how to navigate the professional world as you deal with professional relationships or other topics of interest to you [1].

This program serves to strengthen the entire TCNJ School of Engineering alumni network. As students move through the program and graduate, many will themselves become mentors, thereby perpetuating and expanding the activity within the network. The network will inherently become vertically integrated as older and younger alumni know each other through the program and the various networking events promoted by the Mentoring Program as well as other TCNJ sponsored alumni events.

Student needs

Most of the students are in their junior year, but some are seniors and perhaps some advanced sophomores. The guidance you give them will depend on their level and situation. Because these students have been here for at least a couple of years, they are committed to the major. However, they may still have many questions about what kinds of opportunities are out there for them. You can provide your own example of your work place environment and the type of work that you do – even if you do not have many years of experience yet, you will be able to share your path through the College and into your first post-college experience.

You will find many students already have some internship experience, but there will be many who do not. You should encourage them to seek “real-world” experience before graduation. Clearly, the seniors should already be job hunting in a serious way or applying to graduate/ professional schools.

Student requirements

All students in our Engineering Seminar (ENG 093) course are required to participate in the mentoring program. In order to receive a passing grade in the course the **students** must do four things: 1. Attend a brief orientation session. 2. Attend the networking event, 3. Interview their mentor and submit a brief description of the interview to us and you, and 4. Request that you review their resume and give constructive criticism. ***The students are responsible for initiating and completing these course-required interactions with you.*** You are not required to reach out to them for these items, and, frankly, should not do so. Of course you can reach out to them for any other appropriate interaction, but you should not feel any burden for their course requirements.

These course requirements are necessary to ensure that a proper initiation to the mentorship takes place. After this semester is over, the students are encouraged to continue reaching out to you to keep you informed of their progress, and you are encouraged to reach out to them to see how they are doing. The mentoring relationship can continue as long as you both feel there is benefit, and we hope some lasting relationships are formed and communication continues.

Do not worry if you cannot make it to campus for networking events. Mentors who can attend will be asked to interact with more than just their own student, so no one will feel left out. Also, in this age of social networking sites, students are very comfortable communicating via a variety of methods that do not involve meeting in person.

However, it is expected that all mentoring contact remain professional in nature.

A quick note on the interview that students must complete: As you can see in the Student Guide, the students are required to arrange a Skype or telephone interview with you. We require this because email interviews can take too much of your time. Moreover, the students need to do the work to write up the results of the interview, and not transfer any of that burden to you.

Matching Students with Mentors

Best efforts are made matching students interests with mentors. It is not always possible to match exactly the areas and interests of both individuals. As a mentor, you should feel comfortable giving not only specific advice about a particular engineering sector, but also general advice and counsel to a student engineer who may be considering many options after graduation.

Initial contact

You will be provided with the student(s) name, contact information, and some biographical information, but you should not make the initial contact with the students. The students will be asked to reach out to you to introduce themselves prior to the networking event. This should be a brief, professional introduction.

Follow up surveys

During the semester, we will send out two short surveys to you to determine if the appropriate interaction is occurring – one prior to the networking event, and one prior to Thanksgiving. We appreciate your time on this, as there may be a handful of students who are not interacting correctly, and we want to correct any improper behavior. Also feel free to email the dean (schreine@tcnj.edu) with any concerns at any time.

We will also send out a final follow up survey during the following summer. This will be a more comprehensive survey that will be aimed at documenting any suggested changes to the program based on the interactions throughout the year.

Panel Discussions in the Spring

In the spring semester we will host an alumni panel discussion on campus, and invite all the mentors back on campus for these. This event will serve as the initial networking event for the spring version of the course (typically much lower enrollment).

Additionally, this event will be the first “non-required” event for the fall mentees. The intent is that this venue be used to further the mentoring relationship that began in the fall. Even if your student mentee cannot attend, you are encouraged to attend and interact with the students and other alumni.

[1] Guidance on Mentoring Benefits, Responsibilities, and Roles of Mentors and Mentees, National Academy of Engineering, available online at <http://www.nae.edu/File.aspx?id=14491>