Welcome

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the Department of Psychology Mentorship Program. As a mentor, you will have the opportunity to get acquainted with an undergraduate student in the Psychology program and be a source of information and advice as he or she transitions from the classroom to the workforce.

Every effort has been made to best match you with your student mentee. Once we finalize the matches, it will be the student’s responsibility to continue the conversation and introduce themselves, and to keep us informed of their progress.

We would be delighted to hear from you at any time as the program moves forward. If you have any questions, comments or feedback, please let us know. We are greatly appreciative of your willingness to take part in this program and we hope you enjoy the experience.

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Section #1: Introduction

Mentorship at U of T

Anecdotal and statistical evidence show that although students report a positive academic experience at the University of Toronto, their co-curricular and support experience is much more varied. Engagement of students in the life of the university beyond the classroom can be limited, particularly for those who are not living in residences.

U of T is a large university, but also includes a range of smaller communities; this unique structure gives students access to a critical mass of top faculty and staff. We also use the innumerable resources in the communities around us to ensure that every student has the opportunity for a well-rounded experience at the university. We also continue to take an active interest in students’ careers and development while they are at the university.

Many divisions have identified key areas that relate to enriching the student experience both within and beyond the classroom. Among these are: enhancement of the experience of community for students; provision of resources for skills development; and provision of opportunities for community engagement.

The connection of our student community with our alumni community is of fundamental importance, not only in fulfilling the objectives stated above, but also in laying the foundation for a sustainable pattern of interaction between the university’s past, present and future students.

A Guide to Mentoring Students

What do we mean by mentoring?

Mentoring is about supporting people to help them develop more effectively. Mentoring occurs when two individuals decide to work together to achieve specific outcomes for skills growth and development. One individual has the skill, knowledge and experience that the other individual needs to acquire.

Acquiring a mentor can help students prepare for life after university. The mentoring relationship creates an environment in which students can develop and practice important skills needed for the workplace. It allows them to ask questions, to better understand their career choices, and to obtain a practical and realistic picture of the working world. A mentor can help these students create their network of contacts with individuals in their area of interest.

Ideal candidates for mentoring are students who are interested in a mentoring relationship that allows them to commit time to self-assessment of their skills and career ambitions. The mentoring relationship will allow them to create a plan of action to help them achieve their goals.
What kind of activities do mentors do?

Possible mentoring activities include:

- Conducting a goal setting session to identify areas that you will work on together
- Providing the student with advice concerning career choices, job applications and the interview process
- Reviewing your student’s resume and give comments
- Referring the student to professional colleagues for informational interviews
- Arranging a meeting for the student to be introduced to an important contact in your field — make suggestions prior to this meeting regarding possible topics of conversation — a debrief session is often helpful afterwards
- Passing on topical articles and books for comment
- Supporting by email or by phone on specific issues raises by the student

An ideal mentor

- Influential professional with advanced experience and knowledge
- Respected in his or her field and organization
- Prepared to make a commitment to nurturing and supporting the student’s development
- Shares wisdom
- Skilled at listening and provides supportive guidance and constructive feedback
- Available; keeps in contact
- Confidential; treats all dealings and discussions in confidence

What are the benefits?

Benefits to you, the mentor, are many:

- The satisfaction of knowing you are helping the student understand the unfamiliar and often daunting world he or she will face after graduation
- Heightened profile as an active supporter of your community
- Valuable practice to help develop your coaching and leadership skills
- Heightened self-awareness
- The pleasure of giving back

Benefits to the student include:

- Access to wisdom and expertise
- Opportunities for self-assessment
- A personalized career-development plan
- Greater understanding of current business practices
- Introduction to business networks and related supports
- Exposure to the business environment
- Job search strategies
- Advice, moral support, encouragement
Section #2: Program Format

Expectations for Participants

It will be the student’s responsibility to initiate contact with his or her mentor. Once a mutually agreeable appointment time has been secured, there should also be some preliminary discussion or informal agenda for the appointment, so that both the student and mentor may adequately prepare.

A note on appropriate meeting places: we encourage mentors and students to select a venue that is accessible to both parties during regular business hours; this can be at a coffee shop, on campus, at the mentor’s office, etc. We advise against scheduling meetings at either person’s home, or during the evening hours.

The goal of these contacts is to provide students with some insights about the “real world” especially as it pertains to seeking employment upon graduation. While many students are interested in entering the workforce after graduating, others are interested in learning more about graduate studies, including the application process and potential careers in the field. No doubt all will have many questions about everything from interview skills to graduate studies to corporate culture and even about your own university experience.

You will likely find that the topics raised by students will range from the very broad to more practical; a sample list of some of the most common questions can be found near the end of this handbook for your reference.

We hope that this will be a meaningful experience for both you and your student, where you can feel that you have helped them, and they can feel optimistic and excited about their future beyond U of T.

Timeline

Mid- to Late-October 2017
Alumni and students will be notified of one another’s name and contact information. At this point, students will be directed to initiate contact with their mentor, by e-mail, to introduce themselves. This should take place before the launch event. A formal invitation for the launch event will be sent to you in late September.

November 13, 2017 at 6:00 pm in room 4043 Sidney Smith Hall, 100 St. George Street
Attend Psychology Mentorship Program launch event at U of T. This event will take place in the evening and will be the first chance for mentors and students to meet one another.
November 2017 through March 2018
Participate in (minimum 3) face-to-face meetings with students; it will be the student’s responsibility to take the initiative in arranging these meetings. Ideally, one of these three contacts should be in the form of a visit to your workplace, and include a brief tour of the worksite, wherever possible. If you are located in a different geographical location than your mentee, and face to face meetings are not possible, you may use online methods of communication such as video calling or email to connect with your mentee.

January 2018
The Psychology Department will conduct an informal mid-program evaluation.

March 2018 (details to be determined)
Attend Psychology Mentorship Program event at U of T. This event will take place in the evening and will be a final chance for students to thank their mentors and network.

April 2018
Complete a program evaluation form; this will be very helpful in our continued efforts to improve the program.

Technical/Housekeeping Rules

Confidentiality
All alumni mentors and student mentees are responsible for identifying and observing areas of confidentiality, including personal, contact, employment and/or academic information.

Professionalism
One of the core objectives of this program is to get students into the habit of initiating professional, efficient and timely business-style correspondence. They will look to you to set the tone for acceptable levels of professionalism – please feel free to exercise your judgement, and by all means go ahead and respond in the manner with which you are most comfortable, but do bear in mind that for the students, learning the conventions of acceptable professional interaction is crucial. This applies to electronic, written, telephone and face-to-face communication.

Withdrawal from Program
If either you or your student feels that the mentor/student relationship is not benefiting either party, please contact the Psychology Mentorship Office at 416-978-7304 or sellers@psych.utoronto.ca.

Evaluation
In the spring, you will be asked to complete a short program evaluation to provide feedback and suggestions. Results will be used to improve the program for subsequent years.
Section #3: Resources

Sample Questions from your Mentee

Obtaining Employment & Advancement
1. What are the most important skills someone should have to find success in this occupation?
2. What types of part-time, full-time or summer jobs should I be doing right now which may prepare me for this career path?
3. What avenues did you explore to find job openings in your field?
4. What kind of experience is needed to obtain an entry-level position in this profession?
5. How long should I expect to stay in an entry-level position?
6. What are the opportunities for advancement?
7. Is this type of work available on an international basis (without further training)?
8. In what ways did your education contribute to your career?
9. What academic courses do you find most relevant to your day-to-day work?
10. Is a post-graduate certificate or diploma necessary within this field?

Networking
1. Who helped you to get into this field through networking or otherwise?
2. How important is it to know someone in the industry?
3. What professional associations or organizations are useful to belong to in this field?
4. What magazines, journals, web sites are important to read in this field?

Corporate Culture & Expectations
1. What do you do in a typical day?
2. What kind of a salary can I expect in an entry-level position?
3. What are some other jobs in your field that are similar to your own?
4. What terminology or ideas should I remember when I am applying for a job in this field?
5. What kind of corporate/company culture exists?
6. How many hours is the typical work week?
7. What type of supervision is typical in this career?
8. Do opportunities to work from a home-based office exist in this industry?

Personal
1. Who had the most significant impact on your choosing this career?
2. What are the things you find personally rewarding in your career?
3. What are the things you find frustrating or disappointing?
4. What extra-curricular activities should I pursue to help me prepare for this career area?
5. What kind of volunteer experience would be beneficial?
6. Why did you get into this field?
7. Is travel a component of the job?
8. How stressful is this occupation?
9. How do you personally balance home and work?
10. How do you make your commuting time most productive?
11. What was the most surprising part of your transition from university to work?
12. What do you see as the biggest challenges new graduates face when they enter your industry?
Additional Suggestions

A few ideas to keep in mind as discussion topics or other initiatives

- What types of skills and competencies are employers looking for in new hires?
- The importance of additional training/degree(s) for entry into your line of work
- Preparing for the transition from student life to the workforce and/or further education
- Finding out about his or her interests and hobbies
- Asking about courses, extra-curricular and part-time work of the student
- Offer to critique his or her resume; any suggestions you can provide would be most welcome
- Introduce the student to colleagues or associates who may have work experience and/or background that is of interest to the student
- Fax or e-mail an article that might be of interest to your mentee.

If you have any questions, please e-mail:

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