DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICAL SCIENCES MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Mentor Handbook 2017-18
Welcome

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the Department of Statistical Sciences’ Mentorship Program. As a mentor, you will have the opportunity to get acquainted with an undergraduate student in the Statistical Sciences program. You will be a source of information and advice in their transition from the classroom to the workforce.

Every effort has been made to match you with the best possible mentees. Once the matches are finalized, it will be the mentee’s responsibility to contact you and to keep us informed of their progress.

We would be delighted to hear from you at any time during the program’s duration. If you have any questions, comments or feedback, please let us know. We appreciate 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 the academic experience of University of Toronto students is consistently strong and specific, yet co-curricular and support resources provide greater variety. Engagement of students in university life beyond the classroom can be limited, particularly for those that do not live in residences.

A unique advantage of the U of T student experience is our large size. The campus contains a range of smaller communities, each of which has access to a critical mass of top faculty and staff. We also have innumerable resources in the communities around us. We must use these resources to ensure that every student has access to a well-rounded experience at the university and in the communities of which we are a part. We will also continue to take an active interest in students’ careers and development during their time at the university.

Key areas have been identified by many divisions. These relate to enriching the student experience both within and beyond the classroom. Among these are: enhancement of the community feel and experience for students, provision of resources for skills development, and provision of opportunities for community engagement.

The connection between our student and alumni communities is of fundamental importance, not only to fulfil the above objectives, but also to lay the foundation for sustainable and meaningful 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 in regards to skills growth and development. One individual has the skill, knowledge and experience that the other individual seeks to acquire.

Mentoring can help students prepare for life after university. It creates a relationship to develop and practice important skills needed for the workplace. It allows them to ask questions and to better understand their career choices. It also gives them a practical and realistic picture of the working world. Mentoring helps students create their network of contacts with individuals in their area of interest.

Ideal candidates for mentoring are students interested in a mentoring relationship that allows them to commit time to self-assessment of their skills and career ambitions. Such 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:

- Conduct a goal setting session to identify areas of improvement.
- Provide mentee with advice concerning career choices, job applications, and the interview process.
- Review mentee’s resume and give comments.
- Refer mentee to professional colleagues for informational interviews.
- Arrange a meeting for mentee to be introduced to an important contact in your field — make suggestions prior to this meeting regarding possible topics of conversation. A debriefing session is often helpful afterwards.
- Pass on topical articles and books for comment.
- Support by email or by phone on specific issues raised by mentee.

An ideal mentor

- Influential professional with advanced experience and knowledge
- Respected in their field and organization
- Prepared to make a commitment to nurturing and supporting their mentee’s development
- Shares wisdom openly and realistically
- Skilled at listening and provides 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 mentee understand the unfamiliar and often daunting professional world
- 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 mentee include:

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

Expectations for Participants

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

A note on appropriate meeting places: we encourage mentors and mentees to select a venue that is accessible to both parties during regular business hours. Examples of such can be coffee shops, anywhere 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. We assure you that mentees will have many questions about everything from interview skills to corporate culture, and even about your own university experience.

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

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

Timeline

November 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, to introduce themselves via e-mail. This should take place before the launch event. A formal invitation for the launch event will be sent to you in late November.

December 2017
Attend Statistical Sciences 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 mentees to meet.

December 2017 through March 2018
Participate in at least 3 face-to-face meetings with mentees. It is the mentee’s responsibility to take the initiative in arranging these meetings. Ideally, one of these three should be in the form of a visit to your workplace. It should include a brief tour of the worksite, wherever possible. If you work
or live in a different geographical location different from your mentee’s, making face-to-face meetings impractical, then you may use online methods of communication, such as Skype or email, to connect with your mentee.

**Late-March 2018**
Attend the Statistical Sciences Mentorship Program’s closing event at U of T. This event will take place in the evening and will be a final chance for students to network and thank their mentors.

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

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**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. Nonetheless, do bear in mind that it is crucial for students to learn the conventions of acceptable professional interaction. This applies to electronic, written, telephone and face-to-face communication.

**Withdrawal from Program**
If either you or your mentee feels that the mentor/mentee relationship is not benefiting either party, please contact the Statistical Sciences Mentorship Office.

**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

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 is 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
- Finding out about his or her interests and hobbies
- Asking about courses, extra-curricular and part-time work of the student
- Offer to critique their 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 student

Contact

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