

# **MENTORSHIP MANUAL**

## **For Alumni Mentors**

**ILLINOIS TECH**  
Career Services

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## Introduction

Thank you so much for your contributions to the Alumni Mentorship Program at Illinois Institute of Technology. This manual describes effective, evidence-based practices to provide guidance and inspiration to support the professional development of mentors and mentees. The unique connection between a mentor and mentee is one-of-a-kind and is an intimately individualized experience. Effective mentorship is characterized by mutual trust and authentic engagement, as well as the ability to align expectations, build rapport, maintain open communication, and adapt to evolving dynamics.

Feel free to reach out to the Alumni Mentorship Program Coordinator, Emily Ginger at [eginger@illinoistech.edu](mailto:eginger@illinoistech.edu) or her fellow Emily Vanichtheeranont at [evanichtheeranont@hawk.illinoistech.edu](mailto:evanichtheeranont@hawk.illinoistech.edu) with any questions or concerns related to the process.

## Foundations of Mentorship

| Mentoring IS   | Mentoring is NOT   |
|--|--|
| <p><u>Developmental Tool:</u> It is a program aimed at professional development that focuses on the growth of knowledge, networks, and careers. For example, the process allows more experienced employees to support and develop high potential employees to become future leaders.</p> | <p><u>Guarantee of Promotion:</u> A mentoring relationship does not assure promotion or an increase in salary. However, both parties may develop competencies and skills that improve overall job performance.</p> |
| <p><u>Knowledge Sharing Opportunity:</u> Mentoring is a process that improves cross-functional knowledge sharing and facilitates the flow of information and ideas throughout the organization.</p>  | <p><u>Replacement for Formal Development:</u> Mentoring cannot take the place of formal training but rather should augment formal development activities</p>   |
| <p><u>Organizational Culture Enhancer:</u> Having a mentor will help their mentee better understand the organization's operations, policies, and culture.</p>  | <p><u>Management Replacement:</u> The mentor should not take on the responsibilities of a manager.</p>   |
| <p><u>Candid and Specific:</u> A good mentoring relationship provides honest and specific feedback and a route to growth.</p>  | <p><u>Personal Counseling:</u> It is best to seek help on personal issues from a life coach or mental health professional rather than a mentor.</p>  |

## Benefits of a Mentorship Relationship

The beauty of mentorship is that it is a mutually beneficial exchange between two individuals. Mentorship relationships encourage continuous learning, personal growth, and professional development for all parties involved. Both the mentor and mentee gain valuable insights, skills, and connections that can positively impact their careers and lives.

### Benefits to Being a Mentor:

- Strengthens Self-Awareness: Mentors often reflect on their own experiences and values, leading to greater self-understanding.
- Expands Professional Network: Mentors connect with emerging professionals, other mentors, and leaders within and outside their organization.
- Improves Leadership Skills: Mentoring enhances active listening, feedback delivery, and interpersonal communication abilities.
- Skills Development: Opportunity to discuss new trends, ideas, and workplace challenges keeps mentors engaged and informed.
- Fosters Culture of Collaboration and Growth: Mentors help shape a supportive, growth-focused work environment.
- Fresh Perspectives: Mentees often bring new ideas and different viewpoints that can inspire and challenge mentors in positive ways.

## The Difference Between Mentoring and Coaching

| Mentoring   | Coaching  |
|---|---|
| Helps facilitate a culture of growth and development.   | Assesses and improves an individual's performance in a specific area. |
| Concentrates on the individual's developmental needs and goals based on their career aspirations. | Disproportionately benefits the person being coached.                 |
| Mutually benefits both the mentor and mentee.   | Is a time-bound relationship  |

The key difference between coaching and mentorship is the place of evaluation. Mentorship is non-evaluative, while coaching is based on measuring performance change.

In a mentorship relationship, the mentee drives the relationship through specifying goals – coming to their mentor with problems they want to solve. In coaching, the coach or supervisor is driving the agenda for the relationship. The relationship is about performance. The coach helps the mentee reach a specific goal or develop a particular skill.

Mentoring is highly personalized, whereas coaching is repeatable. In mentoring, a mentee has specific needs and needs to discuss challenges that are not necessarily tied to company-wide, top-down performance initiatives. Mentoring also carries the benefit of building the mentee's network by meeting multiple mentors and making new connections. Mentoring in this way is particularly helpful when onboarding new employees.

In coaching, the organization identified a specific skill gap, and one or more coaches are selected to provide a generalized program to make improvements. Thus, content is reused and generalized, and a coach would not typically be a networking opportunity for the person being coached.

## Mentorship Styles

There are **eight different types of mentors** that we will discuss in this next section. Read through the following types and reflect on which one best describes your own mentorship style.

1. **Advisor:** An advisor is someone who makes suggestions and recommendations on what their mentee should do. Advisors also give advice based on their professional expertise and personal experience. Mentees who want to follow the same path would do well with an advisor.

| Effective Mentors   | Ineffective Mentors   |
|---|---|
| Acts as a sounding board and facilitator<br>Maintains privacy/confidentiality | Fixes problems for you<br>Assumes responsibility for mentee |

2. **Protector:** A protector is great for a mentee who is amid a transition which can be stressful and have some risk. Protectors help prepare their mentees for growth by making sure they don't make any mistakes that would be detrimental to their careers.

| Effective Mentors  | Ineffective Mentors                     |
|--|---|
| Supports and is a safety net<br>Ensures a safe environment to take risks | Fights mentee's battles<br>Overprotects |

3. **Developer:** A developer is like a coach but is an observer without specific goals for performance improvements. Developers are good listeners and will point out red flags they recognize in their mentees. Likewise, if a mentee displays positive qualities like honesty, humility, or critical thinking a developer will make sure to point them out and commend them.

| Effective Mentors  | Ineffective Mentors   |
|--|---|
| Gives structure and direction<br>Provides guidance based on observations during interactions with mentee<br>Empowers mentee to handle his/her problems independently | Dictates, controls learning<br>Looks for quick fixes<br>Provides general criticism or judgment<br>Tells mentee what to do |

4. **Broker:** A broker is great at connecting their mentee with opportunities to grow. Rather than discussing possibilities for growth, a broker will determine what their mentee wants to learn and then connect them with whoever is an expert in that area. Brokers are great mentors for mentees who are less inclined to talk a lot but are hungry to pursue learning opportunities.

| Effective Mentors   | Ineffective Mentors   |
|---|---|
| Identifies skills or competency gaps through a “third party” lens<br>Identifies and facilitates development opportunities | Allows for personal biases<br>Abdicates, does not follow up |

5. **Challenger:** A challenger thrives on tough love and playing the devil’s advocate. They won’t stand for poor attitudes or faulty logic. They will push back on their mentees if they begin to complain about their challenges without considering possible solutions. Mentees that want someone to “tell them how it is” will thrive under these mentors. However, they may need thicker skin.

| Effective Mentors   | Ineffective Mentors   |
|---|---|
| Positively provokes, pushes toward highest standards<br>Helps mentee explore potential career opportunities | Pushes too far too soon<br>Discounts mentee’s thoughts and opinions |

6. **Clarifier:** A clarifier is a great companion to their mentee. A mentee who is independent and can pursue their growth without much direction would benefit from a clarifier. A clarifier will quickly be able to fill the gaps in the mentee’s knowledge based on their own experience within the organization. They can lean on their mentor, for example, if the mentee needs to know how to act at an upcoming board meeting.

| Effective Mentors                          | Ineffective Mentors  |
|--|--|
| Teaches organizational values and politics | Removes obstacles so mentee does not have to deal with organizational politics |

7. **Sponsor:** Sponsors help their mentees meet the people who will make a difference in their careers. They have large networks and credibility. By

having their recommendation for promotions or new opportunities, these mentees will gain access to professional growth much faster than if they were on their own.

| Effective Mentors                             | Ineffective Mentors                      |
|---|--|
| Provides visibility and recognition of mentee | Promotes mentee at the expense of others |

8. **Affirmer:** An affirmer is great for mentees that respond well to a soft shoulder. Rather than tough love, affirmers are great listeners. If a mentee is going through a stressful situation, they can trust that their mentor will be there to talk through it with them.

| Effective Mentors  | Ineffective Mentors  |
|--|--|
| Gives needed support, enhances self-esteem<br>Exhibits empathy and understanding | Gives too much feedback<br>Discounts mentee’s feelings or concerns |

## Skills and Qualities of Great Mentors

### Effective mentors are...

- **Experienced:** Mentors who have worked in their area of expertise for some time and who have gained experience with the company will be a good fit for mentees wanting to follow their same path. A mentor can share what they know about their job, how they fit into the organization, and share insights about their industry.
- **Motivated to Share Wisdom:** Good mentors are those that not only have gained lots of knowledge and experience but are also motivated to share what they know with others. They must understand and respect the mentor-mentee relationship and take the workplace mentoring program seriously.
- **Committed to Helping Others Through Extra Responsibility:** Being a mentor can take time and energy. To be an effective mentor, they will need to be committed to putting in the extra time and effort required.
- **Positive:** Good mentors are positive people. Would you feel comfortable sharing your goals and challenges to a mentor who does not seem to care? It is beneficial that you see the glass as half full and have an optimistic view of what the relationship can provide.
- **Communicative:** One of the most critical factors in a mentoring relationship is good communication. Therefore, someone who has proven they can communicate positively and effectively will be a good mentor. This will be proven in how they provide guidance and constructive feedback to their mentee.
- **Fulfilled:** An effective mentor is interested in their own positive and enthusiastic about growing with their mentee.
- **Emotionally Intelligent:** An effective mentor has a good understanding of their own emotions and knows how to be sensitive to others. This skill allows effective mentors to relate better to their mentee. They are empathetic and can see things from another person's perspective.
- **Candid and Honest:** Good mentors provide clear, honest, and constructive feedback. They do not shy away from difficult conversations but approach

them with care and integrity, always aiming to help their mentee improve and succeed.

- **Supportive and Empowering:** Effective mentors actively encourage their mentees to pursue their goals, recognize their strengths, and build confidence. They provide reassurance during challenges and celebrate achievements, fostering an environment where mentees feel valued and empowered.
- **Understanding and Adaptable:** Great mentors recognize that every mentee is unique, with different challenges, aspirations, and communication styles. They take the time to understand their mentee's individual needs and adjust their guidance to offer relevant, personalized support.

## **The Phases of Mentorship**

### **Phase 1: Establishing Expectations**

- Identify your expectations for the mentoring relationship.
- During the initial meeting, clarify expectations, roles, and responsibilities for both parties.
- Actively listen and identify the needs of the mentee.

### **Phase 2: Developing an Action Plan**

- Identify your mentee's strengths and challenges.
- Discuss your mentee's specific goals and action items for the program.
- Encourage your mentee to complete the action plan document.

### **Phase 3: Consistent Meetings**

- At each meeting, review the progress on action items.
- Discuss items of interest, current challenges, recent successes, etc.
- Foster learning and development with practical exercises.

### **Phase 4: Experience Reflections and Next Steps**

- Acknowledge the progress of your relationship and the accomplishments that have been made.
- Discuss next steps, including future challenges and new goals
- Provide feedback on experience

## Meeting Guidelines and Best Practices for Mentorship Success

To build a strong, meaningful mentorship relationship – both the mentor and mentee must approach the connection with intention, structure, and active engagement. The following guidelines outline how to make the most of your mentoring sessions and cultivate a productive, supportive partnership.

### During Sessions:

- **Be Active:** Both mentees and mentors need to be fully involved. Mentees should define their goals, seek advice, ask thoughtful questions, and follow through on guidance received. Mentors are responsible for offering insight, providing constructive feedback, guiding goal achievement, and encouraging mentees to grow their skills and networks.
- **Get a Good and Compatible Match:** A successful mentoring relationship does NOT require you to have identical backgrounds or personalities. In fact, different perspectives often create the richest mentorships. Embrace your differences and use them as opportunities for growth and learning.
- **Develop Trust:** Trust is essential — and it takes time. Begin your relationship with a get-to-know-you meeting where you share backgrounds, interests, and reasons for participating in the program. As the relationship progresses, continue to build trust by being open, honest, consistent, and reliable.
- **Establish Expectations:** Establish clear expectations and responsibilities early on. Discuss how you'll handle scheduling conflicts, confidentiality, and feedback. Clarify what each person hopes to gain and what they can contribute to the relationship.
- **Set Goals:** Mentees should identify specific objectives they want to accomplish throughout the mentorship, whether it is growing their network, learning new skills, or seeking guidance on career decisions. Mentors can help refine and support these goals.
- **Prioritize Communication:** Mentors should offer constructive, sensitive feedback and avoid harsh criticism. Mentees should express their thoughts and concerns clearly and respectfully, offering feedback on the mentorship process itself when needed. Open, honest communication keeps the relationship healthy and effective

## Prior to the Initial Meeting

First impressions matter, and the first meeting sets the tone for the entire mentorship relationship. Your initial meeting is a valuable opportunity to start building trust, establish expectations, and lay the foundation for open, meaningful conversations. Use this time to learn about one another and collaboratively decide how you will navigate your mentorship journey together.

### Key Topics to Discuss in Your First Meeting:

- **Introduction:** Share preferred names, pronouns, roles, professional backgrounds, and personal interests. This is a great chance to connect as people first — building rapport early creates a more comfortable and trusting environment.
- **Reason for Participating:** Share why you decided to sign up for this mentorship program and what you are hoping to gain from this experience. Understanding one another's motivation will strengthen your connection.
- **Preferred Communication Style/Availability:** Share how you prefer to stay connected (email, phone, virtual, in-person, etc.) and how often you would like to meet. Clarifying this early helps avoid misunderstandings later.
- **Areas of Interest/Other Topics to Explore:** Identify what subjects you are interested in discussing or learning about throughout the program. This helps shape your future conversations and ensures the mentorship stays relevant and engaging.
- **Defining Success/Progress:** Discuss what a successful mentoring relationship looks like for each of you. How will you track progress? Consider setting personal or professional goals, check-in milestones, or using reflective conversations to celebrate achievements and growth.
- **Managing Scheduling Conflicts:** Life happens — it is important to decide how you will handle rescheduling or last-minute changes. Agree on how much advance notice is preferred and how to communicate changes to avoid frustration or misunderstandings.

## Connecting with Your Mentee: Building Trust

A successful mentorship relationship is founded on trust and mutual respect.

Taking the time and consideration to connect on both a personal and professional level encourages open, honest conversations and sets the tone for a collaborative partnership.

Building trust means showing genuine interest in your mentee's life, experiences, and goals while sharing pieces of your own journey in a way that feels natural and authentic. This helps break the ice and fosters a safe environment where both mentor and mentee feel comfortable being vulnerable, asking questions, and exchanging feedback.

### **Helpful Tips:**

- Start with casual conversation before diving into professional topics.
- Practice active listening by providing your full attention to the mentee, indicating empathy and understanding.
- Be authentic and approachable by sharing your own challenges and lessons learned along the way
- Honor privacy and confidentiality by ensuring that your conversations are private to create a safe, trusting space.
- Be consistent and reliable by following through on commitments and maintaining regular check-ins

### **Conversation Starters:**

- What is your preferred name and pronouns?
- Where did you grow up, and what is something you loved about it?
- What hobbies or activities did you enjoy outside of work?
- Do you have a favorite book, movie, or TV show that you have been enjoying lately?

### **Professional Background:**

- Can you share a little about your current role and responsibilities?

- What led you to pursue your current career path?
- Is there a professional accomplishment you are especially proud of?
- What is one challenge you have encountered in your career, and how did you overcome it?

**Mentorship-Specific Questions:**

- What inspired you to participate in this mentorship program?
- What are you hoping to gain or learn from this experience?
- Are there specific topics or areas you would like to focus on during our time together?
- How do you prefer to receive feedback and support?
- What's your preferred way to communicate — email, phone, in-person, or virtual meetings?

## Defining Expectations

Establishing clear expectations is an important step to developing a successful and meaningful mentorship relationship. After building rapport and establishing trust, it is essential to spend time defining how you would like to structure your time together. Setting mutual expectations ensures that both the mentor and mentee feel supported, respected, and aligned in their goals for the partnership. This conversation should be collaborative and flexible, leaving room for adjustments as the relationship evolves.

### Key Areas to Define

- How often will you meet (e.g., weekly, biweekly, monthly, etc.)
- What meeting format works best (e.g., in-person, virtual, phone, etc.)
- How long will each meeting be (e.g., 45 minutes, 60 minutes, 90 minutes, etc.)
- What topics will be discussed over time? (e.g., career development, work-life balance, leadership skills, navigating workplace challenges, expanding professional networks, industry trends/best practices, etc.)
- How will you measure progress or success (e.g., long-term, medium-term, short-term goals, etc.)
- How will you handle scheduling conflicts or unexpected changes (e.g., communication for scheduling issues/unforeseen changes, establish preferred method of contact for rescheduling, etc.)

### Core Performance Expectations

- Be willing to discuss failures and successes
- Exhibit a desire to improve in a specific area or learn a new skill
- Identify professional development goals, priorities, and career interests
- Active listening
- Open and honest communication
- Personal accountability
- Willing to commit time and energy to the relationship
- Maintaining respect and consideration of each other's time and schedule

- Do the necessary pre-work for mentoring conversations
- Follow up on action items identified during development conversations
- Consistent communication
- Maintain privacy/confidentiality of development conversations
- Provide input to assess and improve the mentoring program
- Track development and progress

## Collaborative Planning

Collaborative planning is an essential part of effective mentorship. Through collaborative planning, the mentor and mentee agree on shared understanding of goals, expectations, and responsibilities – creating a clear path forward. By working together, the mentor and mentee can set the direction of the relationship to make the experience more meaningful, organized, and productive for both parties.

### **Purpose of Collaborative Planning:**

- Align on mutual goals and priorities.
- Clarify expectations for roles and responsibilities.
- Foster shared ownership of the mentoring relationship.
- Establish a flexible but intentional plan for meetings and activities.
- Promote accountability and measurable progress.

### **Steps for Collaborative Planning:**

- **Define Goals Together:** Identify personal, professional, or skill-based goals the mentee wants to achieve. Discuss how the mentor's experience and insights can support those goals. Prioritize short-term and long-term objectives for the duration of the program.
- **Map Out Topics to Explore:** Brainstorm a list of relevant topics, questions, or skills the mentee wants to learn about. Consider areas such as career development, networking, leadership, personal growth, or workplace challenges.
- **Develop a Meeting Schedule:** Decide how often you will meet (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly). Determine the preferred meeting format (in-person, virtual, phone, etc.)
- **Create a Progress Check-In Plan:** Set periodic check-ins to evaluate progress toward goals. Reflect on what's working well and what could be improved. Adjust goals or plans as necessary to keep the relationship effective and engaging.

- **Agree on Shared Responsibilities:** Define what each person will contribute to the relationship (e.g., setting agendas, bringing topics, providing resources, etc.) Decide how you'll hold each other accountable for agreed-upon tasks.

## SMART Goals

In an effective mentorship relationship, working together to set and achieve meaningful goals is essential for successful outcomes. SMART goals provide direction and clarity to mentoring sessions, keep both mentor and mentee accountable, enable progress tracking/constructive feedback, increase likelihood of achieving meaningful results, and enhance motivation/engagement.

### SMART Goals are:

**S – Specific**

**M – Measurable**

**A – Achievable/Attainable**

**R – Realistic/Relevant**

**T – Timely/Time-Bound**

| Component             | Description   | Example   |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| Specific              | Clearly define what you want to accomplish. Avoid vague goals.                                    | “I want to improve my public speaking skills by practicing presentations.”          |
| Measurable            | Identify how you will measure success. How will you know you have met the goal?                   | “Deliver at least three presentations during meetings over the next two months.”    |
| Achievable/Attainable | Ensure the goal is attainable given available resources, time, and skills.                        | “With support from my mentor and by attending a workshop, this goal is achievable.” |
| Realistic/Relevant    | Make sure the goal is relevant and practical within the context of your professional development. | “This goal aligns with my career aspirations and role responsibilities.”            |

|                   |  |   |
|-------------------|--|---|
| Timely/Time-Bound | Set a deadline or time frame for achieving the goal. | “Complete this goal within the next eight weeks.” |
|-------------------|--|---|

**How to Collaboratively Set SMART Goals:**

- Discuss the mentee’s personal and professional aspirations
- Identify areas of growth or further skill development
- Use the SMART framework to refine goals into clear, actionable objectives
- Document the goals and reflect on progress throughout timeframe
- Adjust goals if needed based on new opportunities or challenges

## Open and Honest Communication

Effective mentorship relationships are built on a foundation of open, honest, and respectful communication. The ability to share thoughts, experiences, feedback, and challenges candidly creates a safe environment for growth, reflection, and mutual learning.

### Why It Matters:

- Builds trust and psychological safety in the relationship.
- Fosters meaningful conversations beyond surface-level topics.
- Encourages vulnerability, honesty, and authentic connection.
- Helps address misunderstandings early and prevents conflict.
- Provides opportunities for constructive feedback and improvement.

### Basic Principles:

- Be respectful and considerate
- Listen actively and without interrupting
- Acknowledge differing perspectives
- Approach sensitive topics with empathy and care
- Practice transparency by honestly sharing your goals, challenges, and expectations openly
- Be honest about limitations, concerns, or changes in availability and encourage your mentee to do the same
- Provide candid and constructive feedback (focus on observations and behaviors, not personal attributes)
- Use supportive language and suggest actionable next steps
- Balance praise with feedback about areas for growth
- Address misunderstandings early by tackling tough conversations by bringing up concerns in a calm, timely, and solution-focused way
- Use “I” statements (e.g., “*I felt confused when...*” or “*I’d appreciate if...*”) to avoid blame or criticism

- Embrace vulnerability by sharing challenges, lessons learned, and personal insights when appropriate (vulnerability fosters trust and deepens connection)

**Conversation Starters for Candid Dialogue:**

- What's something you have been proud of since our last meeting?
- Is there anything you have been struggling with that we have not talked about yet?
- How can I better support you in this relationship?
- Is there any feedback you would like to share with me?
- What's one thing we can both improve in our next meeting?

**Pro Tips:**

- Set the tone for openness from the first meeting.
- Agree on confidentiality within your mentorship relationship.
- Be patient — trust and candid conversations take time to develop.
- Open communication is a two-way street — both parties should actively contribute.

## Regular Meetings

Regular meetings are the foundation of a successful mentorship relationship.

### **Meeting consistently:**

- Maintains momentum and accountability in the mentoring relationship.
- Provides the opportunity for ongoing reflection, feedback, and goal progress.
- Strengthens the rapport and trust between mentor and mentee.
- Allows for the space to address challenges, celebrate milestones, and adjust goals as needed.

### **Meeting Frequency:**

- Establish a consistent meeting schedule early in the relationship.
- Aim for biweekly or monthly meetings, depending on availability and program requirements.
- Be flexible and considerate of each other's schedules.

### **During Meetings:**

- **Come Prepared:** Review notes from your previous meeting. Bring updates, questions, or challenges you would like to discuss. Mentors should be ready to offer advice, resources, or feedback. Mentees should be prepared to actively share progress and ask questions.
- **Set an Agenda:** Begin with a quick check-in on how each person is doing. Review any action items from your last meeting. Prioritize topics you want to cover (career goals, skill-building, challenges, etc.) Leave time for open conversation and reflection.
- **Define Next Steps:** Identify action items or goals to work on before your next meeting. Clarify who is responsible for each task. Set a tentative date and time for the next meeting.
- **Follow Up:** Share any promised resources (articles, webinars, contacts, etc.). Reflect on key takeaways and lessons learned from the conversation. Use email or a shared document to track progress and next steps.

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **Why should I join?**

The Illinois Tech Mentorship Program allows alumni to share their own personal experiences, advice, guidance, and expertise to help students prepare for a successful future. As a mentor, you will help Illinois Tech students with academic, career, and personal development to help them navigate their academic and career paths.

### **What type of experience do I need?**

We welcome alumni volunteers from all backgrounds and experience levels. We provide guidelines, tips, and advice for our mentors to help them connect with their mentees. Alumni can always reach out at any time.

### **How are alumni and students matched?**

Alumni and students are matched based on department, major, industry, and/or career interests.

### **How many student mentees can I have?**

Most mentors have one mentee, but alumni can indicate in the application whether they would be interested in mentoring more students with the limit of three mentees.

### **What should I do if I never hear from my mentee, or they become unresponsive to my to attempts to contact them?**

If your student mentee never contacts you or becomes unresponsive and you have given them a week to respond, contact the program administrators to help address the issue.

### **Who do I contact if any questions or concerns arise?**

Feel free to reach out to the program coordinator Emily Ginger ([eginger@illinoistech.edu](mailto:eginger@illinoistech.edu)) or her fellow ([evanichtheeranont@hawk.illinoistech.edu](mailto:evanichtheeranont@hawk.illinoistech.edu)) with any questions or concerns.

## Ideas for Exercises and Activities

Incorporating interactive exercises and activities into mentorship sessions can help with skill development, rapport building, and provide practical, hands-on learning opportunities. Here are some ideas for interactive exercises and activities that you can integrate throughout your mentorship relationship:

### **Situation-Based Exercises:**

Discuss with your mentee how to best address a past or upcoming situation where they need support.

- What happened or what is coming up?
- How did you handle it, or how do you plan to approach it?
- What were the outcomes, or what outcomes would you like to see?

### **Role Play:**

Help your mentee prepare for challenging conversations, interviews, presentations, or performance reviews by role-playing the situation.

- Take turns playing different roles.
- Practice responses to difficult questions or scenarios.
- Offer constructive feedback on their communication, tone, and approach. This helps build confidence and equips your mentee with practical skills for real-world situations.

### **Shadowing Opportunities:**

Invite your mentee to observe a meeting, event, or professional interaction to see leadership, decision-making, and collaboration in action.

- Provide context beforehand: what is the meeting about, who will attend, what should they watch for?
- Debrief afterward: discuss observations, insights, and any questions. This can also work virtually — by including them in online meetings, webinars, or panels.

### **Networking Support:**

Use your professional network to help your mentee expand theirs:

- Identify a few colleagues or connections relevant to your mentee's interests or goals.
- Make introductions via email or at networking events.
- Encourage your mentee to conduct informational interviews or attend networking mixers together. Discuss their networking takeaways in your next session.

### **Peer Feedback Exercises:**

Encourage your mentee to seek feedback from a trusted peer, supervisor, or colleague on a specific project, task, or presentation.

- Help them identify the best person to ask and how to frame their feedback request.
- Discuss the feedback they receive and how they might implement suggestions moving forward.

### **Attend a Learning Event Together:**

Select a professional development webinar, training, or event that aligns with both of your interests or goals.

- Attend together or separately and set a time to discuss your key takeaways.
- Reflect on how the information can be applied to your mentee's work or career path.

### **Additional Ideas:**

- Article or Podcast Discussion: Pick a relevant article, book chapter, or podcast episode to read or listen to before your next meeting, then discuss.
- Goal-Setting Workshop: Dedicate a session to mapping out short and long-term SMART goals.
- Career Mapping: Have your mentee outline their ideal career path and discuss how to navigate steps along the way.

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