

# MENTORSHIP MANUAL

For Student Mentees

**ILLINOIS TECH**  
Career Services

# Key Tips for Your Mentorship Program

**\*\*If you read nothing else in this manual, read this!**

1. **Show Up & Be Professional**

Be punctual, prepared, and ready to make the most of your mentor's time.

2. **Communicate Clearly**

Respond within 24-48 hours, keep your mentor updated, and be honest about your needs.

3. **Respect the Relationship**

Understand that your mentor volunteers their time to help you, so keep conversations confidential and respectful. Show gratitude and appreciation for their help.

4. **Take Initiative**

You drive the relationship - set agendas, ask questions, and follow through on commitments.

5. **Stay Present & Engaged**

Be curious, ask thoughtful questions, and give your full attention during meetings.

6. **Be Open-Minded**

Welcome feedback and new perspectives - even if they challenge you.

7. **End the Relationship on a Good Note**

Reflect on what you learned, thank your mentor, and maintain the connection even after the program ends.

**YOU MUST READ  
THIS PAGE BEFORE  
YOU CONTINUE!!!!**

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## Introduction

We are so grateful for your interest and participation in the Alumni Mentorship Program at Illinois Institute of Technology. We are excited to support you along this next step of your academic and professional journey, and we want to make sure that you have all the resources and information for success.

In this manual, we will outline specific steps that you can take to ensure that you will receive the most personal and professional benefits. We exist to provide guidance and inspiration to support both mentors and mentees in personal and professional evolution. 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 assistant Emily Vanichtheeranont at [evanichtheeranont@hawk.illinoistech.edu](mailto:evanichtheeranont@hawk.illinoistech.edu) with any questions or concerns related to the process.

### Benefits of Receiving Mentorship

- Guidance and Support: Through mentorship, you will receive the opportunity to gain important insights and ideas from someone with more experience to help navigate academic, professional, and personal challenges.
- Expands Professional Network: You will receive access to new networks, resources, and career possibilities.
- Skills Development: You will learn new strategies for more successful and effective communication, leadership, and growth.
- Skills Development: Opportunity to discuss new trends, ideas, and workplace challenges keeps mentors engaged and informed.
- Confidence Building: Through constructive feedback, encouragement, and support - you will learn how to improve your confidence, self-esteem, and decision-making

## Program Values

**Professionalism:** Students and alumni are expected to uphold high standards of integrity, conduct, and accountability - which means honoring scheduled time commitments, respecting responsibilities/expectations, and conducting yourself in a way that reflects positively on you, our program, and Illinois Tech.

**Communication:** We are committed to open, clear, and respectful communication with mutual understanding, active listening, and interpersonal effectiveness. We expect that you will respond to your mentors within 24-48 hours and communicate about any scheduling conflicts ahead of time. If you are unable to meet this expectation or fail to communicate, it may negatively impact on your mentorship relationship and your continued participation in this program. Ensuring that you are consistent, timely, and respectful in your communication is essential to building a strong, supportive mentorship rapport.

**Engagement:** Your input into the mentorship program will dictate the output of benefits that you receive. Success within the program is self-driven and self-motivated, and coming to your meetings with adequate preparation and organization will create more opportunities for your future success.

**Collaboration:** We expect that our mentors and mentees openly collaborate, support, and work together to learn from one another's experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives.

**Openness:** We encourage our mentors and mentees to remain open-minded and receptive to feedback, new ideas, and diverse ways of thinking. Through cultivating open-mindedness, we can foster adaptability, growth, and deeper connections.

**Respect:** We honor every individual's background, experiences, and contributions - and we recognize that respect is the foundation for a safe, inclusive, and supportive mentorship atmosphere.

**Curiosity:** We embrace learning with enthusiasm and inquiry. Curiosity drives exploration, understanding, innovation, and knowledge.

**Empowerment:** We encourage our mentors and mentees to create an empowering environment through uplifting and supporting one another through shared knowledge and experiences.

**Confidentiality:** We encourage that the content of mentoring conversations remains between the mentor and mentee to maintain privacy.

# Expectations

As a student who has been accepted into our mentorship program, we expect that you will adhere to the following guidelines:

1. **Determine** the time and location for mentoring sessions through mutual agreement in advance. If you are unable to make a meeting due to a scheduling conflict, please let your mentor know in advance - so that the appropriate arrangements can be made
2. **Communicate** openly and honestly with your mentor if any questions, concerns, or confusion arise
3. **Professional** conduct and behavior are highly valued in this program. If you are experiencing any issues with your mentorship experience, please do not hesitate to reach out to [eginger@illinoistech.edu](mailto:eginger@illinoistech.edu) or [evanichtheeranont@hawk.illinoistech.edu](mailto:evanichtheeranont@hawk.illinoistech.edu) to troubleshoot these concerns. At any time, if the mentorship pair is not working for you - we encourage you to reach out to our office. Ghosting your mentor is not acceptable and will result in your ineligibility in the program in the future.

## Professionalism

Professionalism refers to ethical conduct, positive attitude, and reliable behavior that enhances trust and credibility within working relationships. Some key aspects of professionalism include professional appearance, respectful communication, and punctuality. It is important to uphold your word through consistency, accountability, and active engagement. People who act professionally are more likely to receive new career opportunities, promotions, and respect from peers and executives.

**Conduct and Behavior:** Interact with respect, courtesy, and integrity in all settings. Avoid using profanity, gossip, or spreading negative comments. Always follow through on commitments, taking initiative to reschedule if any conflicts arise. Take ownership of your actions, decisions, and mistakes while demonstrating humility and accountability. Show gratitude and appreciation for the time and effort that your mentor has volunteered to support you, recognizing that they are sharing their personal and professional energy to help you grow. Proactively take on tasks, demonstrate reliability, and show a willingness to contribute. Foster a positive environment, be eager to learn, adapt to changes, and seek continuous improvement. Remain open-minded to feedback and new ideas, viewing them as opportunities for growth rather than criticism.

**Punctuality:** Arrive on time and be well prepared for meetings and responsibilities. Being punctual demonstrates respect for your mentor's time, builds trust, and reflects reliability. If you anticipate being late or missing a meeting, notify your mentor as soon as possible.

**Professional Appearance:** Dress appropriately for your work environment, keeping in mind that first impressions and consistent presentation impact credibility. While standards vary depending on context, try to aim for a polished, neat, clean, and respectful appearance.

**Communication:** Use clear, respectful, and professional language in both verbal and written exchanges. Respond to messages in a timely manner (within 24-48 hours unless otherwise discussed), acknowledge receipt of important information, and practice active listening. Maintain appropriate boundaries in communication, balancing friendliness with professionalism.

**Digital Etiquette:** Be mindful of how you present yourself online, including emails, social media, and virtual meetings. Use professional email etiquette, ensure your virtual background and environment are appropriate for video calls, and mute distractions to show respect and attentiveness.

## Appearance

**Business professional** is the most formal level of professional dress. This style is most appropriate for interviews, career fairs and more formal events. It is recommended to opt for darker, more traditional colors such as black, navy or gray and minimal accessories. Examples include:

- Jackets and blazers with matching pants or long (below the knee) skirts
- A button-up collared shirt and tie combination
- A tailored, conservative shirt or blouse
- Dress shoes
- Formal flats
- Close-toed high heels

**Business casual** combines elements of business professional and smart casual to create a tailored, put-together look. This look may be appropriate for interviews at companies that have a relaxed dress code or at a networking event. Examples include:

- Professional button-up
- Polo shirts
- Dress pants
- Slacks
- Chinos
- Dress shirt
- Blouse
- Skirts (below knee length or longer)
- Tailored sweater or cardigan
- Professional vest
- Tie
- Leather pull-on shoes or boots
- Formal flats
- Loafers
- Closed-toe high heels

**Smart casual** is the most relaxed of the three levels of professional attire. It combines professional clothing with more casual pieces. You should pair formal and casual items when following this dress code.

- Dark-wash professional jeans (no distress, no rips/tears/holes, etc.)
- Slacks

- Chinos
- Skirts (below knee length or longer)
- Blouse
- Collared shirt
- Sweater
- Blazer
- Cardigan
- Ballet flats
- Boots
- Loafers
- Closed-toe high heels

## Foundations for 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.</p>	<p><u>Guarantee of a Job:</u> A mentoring relationship does NOT guarantee job placement, 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>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>

## 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 preferred mentorship style.

**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 Maintains privacy/confidentiality	Fixes problems for you Assumes responsibility for mentee

**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 Ensures a safe environment to take risks	Fights mentee's battles Overprotects

**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 Provides guidance based on observations during interactions with mentee	Dictates, controls learning Looks for quick fixes Provides general criticism or judgment

Empowers mentee to handle his/her problems independently	Tells mentee what to do
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**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 Identifies and facilitates development opportunities	Allows for personal biases Abdicates, does not follow up

**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 Helps mentee explore potential career opportunities	Pushes too far too soon Discounts mentee's thoughts and opinions

**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

**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

**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 Exhibits empathy and understanding	Gives too much feedback Discounts mentee's feelings or concerns

## Skills and Qualities of Great Mentees

### Effective mentees are...

- **Proactive:** They take initiative in communicating and scheduling with their mentors. They come to the meeting prepared with questions, ideas, and goals - rather than waiting for their mentor to lead the process. They recognize that it is their responsibility to drive the mentorship forward.
- **Positive:** They bring optimism, enthusiasm, and a growth mindset to the relationship.
- **Flexible/Adaptable:** They adapt to changes in schedules, feedback, or evolving goals with resilience and openness. They view change as an opportunity to grow, rather than as a setback.
- **Eager to Learn:** They are interested in learning, growing, and developing their current knowledge and skills. They ask thoughtful questions and show a genuine interest in their mentor's experiences.
- **Open-Minded:** They are receptive new perspectives and are willing to consider alternative approaches that are outside their comfort zone.
- **Respectful:** They honor their mentor's time, effort, and boundaries, showing gratitude for the support that they receive.
- **Professional:** They maintain professionalism in conduct, communication, and appearance, demonstrating accountability, integrity, and reliability.
- **Self-Aware:** They reflect on their own strengths, weaknesses, and growth areas. This allows them to seek guidance with clarity and act intentionally on feedback.
- **Communicative:** They practice clear, consistent, and respectful communication. Effective mentees keep their mentor informed, ask clarifying questions, and advocate for their needs in a professional way.
- **Driven/Motivated:** They set ambitious yet realistic goals and follow through with determination. Their motivation keeps the mentorship purposeful and impactful.
- **Emotionally Intelligent:** They understand and manage their emotions while remaining empathetic to their mentor's perspective. They practice active listening and respond thoughtfully in conversations.
- **Responsive:** They reply to emails, messages, and requests in a timely manner (ideally within 24-48 hours). Responsiveness demonstrates reliability and respect.

- **Prepared:** They arrive at the scheduled meetings early or on time with specific topics or questions in mind. They take notes, reflect on past discussions, and show readiness to apply what they have learned.
- **Committed:** They view mentorship as a priority and invest consistent time and effort. They honor commitments, respect the process, and remain engaged throughout the program.

# The Phases of Mentorship

## Phase 1: Establishing Expectations

- Identify your goals, hopes, and expectations for the mentoring relationship
- During the initial meetings, work with your mentor to clarify expectations, roles, and responsibilities for both parties
- Practice active listening to understand your mentor's perspective
- Establish ground rules around communication, scheduling, and feedback to create trust and openness

## Phase 2: Developing an Action Plan

- Reflect on your own strengths, challenges, and areas for further growth
- Collaborate with your mentor to define specific, measurable goals for the duration of the program
- Focus on breaking down your goals into manageable action items and timeframes
- Remain flexible - goals can evolve as the relationship develops

## Phase 3: Consistent Meetings

- Aim to meet regularly with your mentor, treating each meeting as a priority
- At each meeting, review the progress on action items
- Share current challenges, ask questions, and discuss items of interest.
- Be open to practical exercises, networking/shadowing opportunities (if applicable), reflective assignments, or skill-building activities that may be suggested by your mentor
- Take notes and follow through on the next steps before your next meeting(s)

## Phase 4: Experience Reflections and Next Steps

- Reflect on the progress and growth that you have made, celebrating accomplishments and working to improve areas you feel are not as strong
- Review the success of the mentorship relationship with your mentor, expressing gratitude and appreciation for their support and guidance
- Discuss future challenges, opportunities, and goals on the horizon

- Seek feedback on your development and the overall experience to strengthen your self-awareness
- Consider ways you can maintain the relationship, even after the program ends - whether through ongoing check-ins, networking, or professional support

# 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 your 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.
- **Understand Other Perspectives:** 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.

## How Do I Connect with my Mentor?

A successful mentorship relationship is founded on trust, curiosity, and mutual respect. Taking the time to connect on both a personal and professional level encourages open, honest conversations and sets the tone for a collaborative partnership.

One of the most effective ways to build rapport is by applying timeless interpersonal skills: showing genuine interest in others, actively listening, appreciating their perspective, and finding common ground. Building trust means not only sharing your own journey, but also making your mentor feel valued, heard, and respected. This creates a safe environment where both mentor and mentee feel comfortable being vulnerable, asking questions, and exchanging feedback.

### Helpful Tips:

- **Start with warmth and curiosity.** Begin with casual conversation before diving into professional topics — people feel more open when they first feel comfortable.
- **Show genuine interest.** Ask thoughtful questions about your mentor's background, experiences, and goals. Listen with intent rather than waiting to respond.
- **Practice active listening.** Give your full attention, use affirming body language, and reflect back what you have heard to show empathy and understanding.
- **Express appreciation.** Acknowledge the mentor's time and guidance sincerely — appreciation helps strengthen the bond.
- **Be authentic and approachable.** Share your own challenges and lessons learned in a way that feels natural, which encourages openness.
- **Honor privacy and confidentiality.** Protecting the trust in your conversations creates psychological safety.
- **Be consistent and reliable.** Follow through on commitments and maintain regular check-ins to build credibility.

### Conversation Starters:

- What's your preferred name and pronouns?
- Where did you grow up, and what's something meaningful about that place for you?
- What hobbies or activities did you enjoy outside of work?

- Have you been reading, watching, or listening to anything recently that you'd recommend?

**Professional Background:**

- What's your role like day-to-day?
- What inspired you to pursue your career path?
- What is an accomplishment that you are most proud of?
- What's one challenge you faced in your career, and how did you grow from it?

**Mentorship-Specific Questions:**

- What inspired you to participate in this mentorship program?
- Why did you decide to become a mentor?
- What's your preferred way to stay in touch — 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, bi-weekly, 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 preparation and work for mentoring meetings
- Follow up on action items identified during conversations
- Consistent communication
- Maintain privacy/confidentiality of conversations
- Provide input to assess and improve the mentoring program
- Openness to tracking development and progress of goals

# 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

## Regular Meetings

Regular meetings are the foundation of a successful mentorship relationship. Consistent meetings are important because it...

- 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 updates or progress items. 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 Alumni Mentorship Program connects you with alumni who are eager to share their experiences, advice, and professional insights. As a student mentee, you'll gain valuable guidance, build your network, and learn practical skills to help you prepare for your future career.

### How do I know if I am eligible to participate?

All currently enrolled Illinois Tech students are welcome to apply! Whether you're just starting to explore career options or preparing for life after graduation, the program is designed to support you.

### How long does the program last?

The mentorship program will last from the end of October to the beginning of May.

### How are alumni and students matched?

We match students and alumni according to their department, major, industry, and/or career interests to help create meaningful, relevant connections.

### How many mentors can I have?

Each student will be paired with one mentor during the program. This helps you focus on building a strong and consistent relationship.

### How often should I meet with my mentor?

We recommend checking in every 2-4 weeks, but you and your mentor can set a regular schedule that works with both of your schedules.

### What should I talk about with my mentor?

You can talk about career goals, job search strategies, networking, professional development, or even balancing school and life. The program also provides conversation starters if you're not sure where to begin.

### Do I need to have a clear career plan to participate?

Not at all! Many students join because they're exploring their options. Your mentor can help you reflect, ask questions, and consider different paths.

Can I ask my mentor for a job or internship?

The mentorship is about guidance, not direct job placement. Instead, your mentor can share advice, networking strategies, and tips to make you a stronger candidate. Directly asking your mentor for a job or internship is not professionally acceptable.

What if my mentor and I do not "click?"

Not every pairing is a perfect fit. If you feel the relationship isn't working, reach out to the program administrators — they can help you navigate the situation or explore other options.

What should I do if my mentor never responds or becomes unresponsive?

If you haven't heard back after reaching out and giving your mentor about a week to respond, let the program administrators know. They can help troubleshoot and make sure you're supported.

What if I get too busy and cannot commit time to my mentor?

Life happens — just be upfront with your mentor if your schedule changes. Communication is key, and short check-ins are better than silence.

Who do I contact if any questions or concerns arise?

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

## Helpful Resources

### Career Services Resources:

- Master Webpage: <https://www.iit.edu/career-services/career-resources>
- Resume Guide: <https://www.iit.edu/sites/default/files/2023-07/ILTech-Resume-Guide-2023.pdf>
- Cover Letter Guide: [https://www.iit.edu/sites/default/files/2021-04/cover\\_letter\\_guide\\_2020.pdf](https://www.iit.edu/sites/default/files/2021-04/cover_letter_guide_2020.pdf)
- LinkedIn Guide: [https://www.iit.edu/sites/default/files/2021-09/linkedin\\_guide.pdf](https://www.iit.edu/sites/default/files/2021-09/linkedin_guide.pdf)
- VMock Resume Editor Software: <https://vmock.com/iit>

## References

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