Industrial Engineering Mentor Program Handbook*

University of Arkansas
Fayetteville, AR

*Adapted from the Pennsylvania State University Industrial Engineering Mentoring Program Handbook
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I. INTRODUCTION

The objective of the University of Arkansas Industrial Engineering Mentor Program is to forge a mutually beneficial connection between industry mentors and current students. Through participation in mentor circles, mentors and students work together to transfer information, develop student expectations and professional skill sets, and smooth the students’ transition from college life to the workplace.

This handbook provides an overview of the mission and expectations of the Industrial Engineering Mentor Program. The handbook is a resource for mentors and students on initiating their participation in the program and outlines their interactions within the program.

II. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The mission of the Industrial Engineering (IE) Mentor Program is to facilitate the professional development of IE students through connections with degreed industrial engineers and their companies. IE students are provided with networking opportunities and access to industry professionals, with whom they can discuss career opportunities, job expectations, and skills and strategies for professional success. Industry mentors are provided the opportunity to share their passion for their profession and help develop the next generation of leaders, while building their own coaching, communication and leadership skills.

The IE Mentor Program is jointly sponsored by the Department of Industrial Engineering (INEG), the Arkansas Academy of Industrial Engineers (AAIE) and the professional local chapter of the Institute for Industrial Engineers (IIE).

Participation and Eligibility

All IE undergraduate junior and senior students and IE graduate students are eligible to participate in the mentoring program on a voluntary basis.

All degreed industrial engineers are eligible to serve as mentors, subject to approval of their applications. Mentors who do not live in the local area can participate via teleconferencing.
Mentor Circles

Mentor circles, composed of 5-6 students and 2-3 industry mentors, meet during the spring and fall semesters a minimum of three times per semester. Mentors and students each commit to an initial period of one academic year, with the opportunity for longer term involvement. Participants commit to these meetings, with meeting places, times and discussion topics to be agreed upon by each mentor circle.

Students and potential mentors identify career interests and goals for the program in their applications. A team composed of at least one IE faculty member, one AAIE member and one IIE member assigns mentors and students to mentor circles based on common career interests/experience and schedules.

Mentor Circle Meetings

Typical mentor circle meetings should last 1-1½ hours. The meetings may take place during or outside normal business hours and can be with all participants face-to-face or make use of teleconferencing. Lunch meetings and plant visits are also possibilities. Mentor circles requiring teleconferencing capability may reserve the Harrison Family Video Conferencing Facility in the Department of Industrial Engineering (based on availability) by contacting the INEG office.

A recommended list of discussion topics will be supplied. Topics will range from writing resumes to choosing the right job, handling social media accounts properly (e.g., LinkedIn and Facebook) and handling social interactions in the work place.

III. Roles and Responsibilities

As soon as the mentor circle is formed, all parties should work together to establish circle guidelines and goals. Each circle should establish parameters, such as preferred appointment time and frequency and most convenient methods of communication. The circle should also establish high, but not unreachable, goals to work towards achieving. If any of the mentors or the students find the match-up to be less than ideal, it is his or her responsibility to approach the program administrators.
Below is a general breakdown of the roles and responsibilities of students and mentors.

**Students**

Open communication is the foundation of a productive mentor circle. It should be fun but professional. Students should be enthusiastic and assertive in communicating their individual interests and needs. One of the greatest ways in which mentors may be assets to the students is by sharing real world work experiences. Students should take advantage of this asset by asking questions about the workplace and how best to prepare for specific work environments.

Students may discuss a range of topics with mentors, from school work and career goals to extra-curricular activities and relationships with other students, faculty, and staff. However, remember that while mentors play many different roles throughout the relationship, the mentor is not a parent or counselor. Most importantly, students must keep their commitments and remember that their mentors have volunteered this time to be of service to them.

**Mentors**

The five main tasks of the mentors are to establish personal relationships, help the students to develop career skills, assist the students in obtaining resources, increase students’ abilities to interact with other social and cultural groups, and to encourage development in new field-related competencies. Most importantly, the mentors must foster an environment of open communication. Regular face-to-face contact is best for developing the kind of relationship conducive to such communication; however, if that is not always possible, regular contact by telephone or e-mail will help to forge the necessary personal connections.

Mentors must keep in mind that students have different personalities and learning styles. As a result, they may need different kinds of support from their mentors. To develop a positive working relationship, the mentor should develop an understanding of the student’s learning style and adjust accordingly.
IV. Applications and Matching

Mentors and students must apply to participate in the mentoring program by completing the online application forms. After the application deadline, the program administrators will form mentor circles based on background, interests and schedules. Students and mentors will see their mentor circle assignments before mentoring begins.

The administrators analyze the registration information submitted by students and mentors to define mentor circles. Students and mentors are notified of the circle assignments and are provided with each background and contact information for circle members.

Ideally, the initial meeting will be held face-to-face; however, if this is not possible, it is acceptable for the meeting to be conducted by teleconference. The initial meeting should be arranged for a time no later than two weeks after receiving notification.

During the initial meeting, the students and mentors should assess their satisfaction with the circle. They should discuss their backgrounds, interests, and professional goals. They should also consider what kinds of goals should be set for the duration of the mentoring relationship.

After the initial meeting, both students and mentors should feel as if they have some common ground both personally and professionally. If a student or mentor does not feel the match is appropriate, they should notify the mentoring program administrators.

V. MENTORS

Applying to be a Mentor

Every mentor must complete an online application to participate in the mentor program. The application includes personal information, work experience, interests, topics of discussion, and availabilities. Along with submitting this application, mentors need to submit a resume. The mentor should have either a degree in IE or have work experience in an IE role. Most mentors are active members of the Institute of Industrial Engineers or members of the Arkansas Academy of Industrial Engineers. Being a member of these organizations is not a requirement but is encouraged.
A Successful Mentor

- Listens intently to the student and offers comment only when the student is receptive
- Is consistent
- Is a supporter, but not a crutch
- Respects confidentiality (except in cases of potential harm to the student or others)
- Has high, but realistic expectations
- Respects the student’s commitment by making good use of their time and by being prepared and on time for every meeting
- Doesn’t expect or ask students to “return the favor” (i.e. arranging football tickets or accommodations)
- Keeps the focus on career and professional development.

Tasks, Roles & Responsibilities

Mentors serve many purposes. During the course of positive mentoring relationships, mentor roles are likely to include:

- Good listener
- Advocate
- Coach
- Friend
- Guide
- Positive role model
- Job reference
- Facilitator of self-esteem and self-confidence

Mentors must commit to scheduling and hosting three meetings with their mentor circle in the Fall and Spring semesters and to comply with the rules of conduct and interaction in this handbook.

Five Tasks for the Mentor

1. Establish a positive relationship
   a. Most important task in mentoring
   b. Requires building trust
   c. Might take a while to cultivate, but be patient
   d. Is unique to each mentoring relationship
e. Encourages regular interaction and specific support
f. Should be enjoyable and fun
g. Should enhance the student’s self-esteem
h. Should be a good working relationship, similar to professional relationships the mentor has with colleagues in the workplace

2. Help develop career skills as needed
   a. Goal setting
   b. Time management
c. Communications skills
d. Teamwork
e. Critical thinking and decision making
f. Perseverance, dedication and accountability
g. Importance of continuing education

3. Assist the student in obtaining additional resources
   a. Act as a guide or advocate
   b. Discuss what resources and courses are needed to pursue and achieve goals and ambitions
   c. Be a resource and a network to help identify professional opportunities, as appropriate

4. Increase the student’s abilities to interact with other social and cultural groups
   a. Broaden the student’s outlook on different kinds of social and business situations
   b. Respect differences; do not promote your values as superior
   c. Help the student understand the behaviors and attitudes needed to interact in the workplace and society as a whole
   d. Challenge the student to think about the importance of respecting and functioning in a diverse world

5. Develop competencies
   a. Providing feedback on his or her work
   b. Share accomplishments and roadblocks you had to overcome to be successful
   c. Encourage him or her to seek new opportunities and experiences
VI. STUDENTS

Applying to be a Mentee

The mentor circles consist of junior and senior undergraduate IE students and graduate IE students, selected through an application process. The application will include personal information, interests, employment information, expectations, and availability. Along with submitting this application, students submit a resume.

Guidelines

Selected mentees must commit to three meetings with your mentor circle in the Fall and Spring semesters, and comply with rules of conduct and interaction in this handbook.

Tips to Remember

- Mentors are busy professionals
- Have fun, but keep all behavior professional
- Be yourself
- Share your student experiences
- Ask if your mentor would mind critiquing your work, such as a resume, papers, projects, presentations, etc.
- Confidential information about you will not be discussed with anyone
- Discuss guidelines with your mentors, such as appropriate times to meet, call and how to handle appointments that must be rescheduled
- Do not miss appointments unless it is absolutely necessary, especially at the beginning of a mentoring relationship
- Be patient
- Be flexible
- Be appreciative
- Don’t set unrealistic expectations

Interacting with your Mentor

Mentors are volunteers who have agreed to help answer your questions, give advice, and help you reach a greater understanding of business environments. Do not worry if you are nervous about contacting your mentor. The best way to interact with your mentor is to be respectful,
enthusiastic, assertive, and maintain a professional manner. They are there to help you create and reach your educational and career goals.

Respect your mentor’s commitment by making good use of their time. Be prepared for every meeting and start on time. Feel free to discuss various subjects with your mentor, but the focus is career and professional development. Mentors are there to aid you in career development by reviewing resumes and providing possible contacts, but not create or cultivate them for you. If you need assistance in other matters, they will try to direct you to the best place to get that assistance.

Here are some suggested questions to ask your mentor about their workplace and industry.

- What do you like most about your work?
- What kinds of problems do you face? What issues do you find most difficult?
- What skills and abilities are most important in your work?
- What trade journal/magazine/websites/blogs should I review to learn more for my future career?
- What is the typical work environment for a person in this career?
- What are the basic prerequisites for jobs in this field?
- Are there any specific courses a student might take that would be particularly beneficial in this field?
- What entry-level jobs are available in your chosen field?
- Is there a demand for people in this field?
- Do you view this field as a growing one?
- What is the best way to obtain a position that will start me on a career in this field?
- How much flexibility does one typically have regarding: innovation, life-style, self-expression, working with colleagues, hours of work, and decision-making?

VII. MEETINGS/KEY EVENTS

Each fall there is an Industrial Engineering Mentor Program Mixer planned on a Saturday morning before one of the September home football games in Fayetteville, Arkansas. The first meeting of mentors and mentees is very
important, and face-to-face introductions are better than meeting by phone, by conference call or a web-based meeting. Make it a priority as a mentor or mentee to attend the Industrial Engineering Mentor Program Mixer if you can. Attending the mixer is not a requirement to participate in the program, but is highly recommended.