

# Nicholson School of Communication and Media Alumni Mentorship Program Handbook



**2020-21**



**Nicholson School of  
Communication and Media**

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

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## **Welcome from the NCSM Alumni Mentorship Chair**

Thank you! On behalf of UCF Alumni and the Nicholson School of Communication and Media (NSCM) Alumni Chapter, thank you for participating in the mentorship program for 2020-21. We are looking forward to a great year of helping our young Knights as they work toward graduation and starting their careers. Your input during and following the mentorship program is important to improving the program and encouraging more students and mentors to participate. Please let us know how we're doing and contact me if you have any questions or suggestions.

Now more than ever, we truly appreciate our alumni mentors and students. The COVID-19 pandemic has made connection difficult; we hope that through this program, you are able to form meaningful and **virtual** connections.

**As a final reminder, all mentor/mentee communications and experiences will be virtual during the 2020-21 academic year. Thank you!**

Sincerely,

Sean Helton '96

Vice Chair/Mentorship Chair

UCF NSCM Alumni Chapter Board

## **Program Contacts**

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Vice Chair/Mentorship Chair

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## **Alumni Mentorship Program History**

The Nicholson School of Communication and Media introduced the alumni mentorship opportunity in 2015. This mentorship program has offered alumni the opportunity to give back to their alma mater while providing a truly unique opportunity to network with the intent of creating lasting personal and professional relationships.

## **For the Mentors: About the Program**

In the spirit of Knights helping Knights, the NSCM Alumni Mentorship Program enables alumni to share their experience and expertise with UCF students. The connections made in the program help prepare our students for a successful future and leave a lasting impact on our campus community.

As an alumni mentor, you will have the opportunity to advise student(s) on academic guidance, career advice and personal development for the academic year (September-May). We encourage mentors and mentees to connect on a regular basis (i.e. phone calls, virtual meetings, text messages, email). However, the frequency and form of communication are things you both can determine. As this year's program will be held virtually, alumni do not have to be in Orlando or even Florida to serve as a mentor. We invite alumni from around the world to be part of the program.

Alumni do not have to be on campus to leave a footprint at UCF. Whether you are right down the street or across the globe, we invite alumni from around the world to be part of the NSCM Alumni Mentorship Program.

## **For the Mentors: Getting Involved**

You can get involved by filling out the included application. The thorough and honest completion of this application plays a crucial role in the Mentorship Committee being able to create meaningful and successful mentor/mentee matches. During the month of September, mentor/mentee pairs will be matched, and each participant will receive confirmation of their pairing via email. Your match will be created on the basis of career interest, your availability, and your stated preference.



## **For the Mentees: About the Program**

As a UCF student, you have an opportunity to be matched with alumni who are eager and willing to talk with you and share their wisdom and advice about life beyond UCF.

The NSCM Alumni Mentorship Program is a unique opportunity for you to form meaningful and lasting relationships with alumni that will extend beyond your time as a student. As a program participant, you'll have a chance to request a mentor to assist you with academic guidance, career advice and personal development. You will be paired for the academic year (September-May). We encourage mentors and mentees to connect on a regular basis (i.e. phone calls, virtual meetings, or email). However, the frequency and form of communication are things you both can determine.

This is NOT a job placement program, but student mentees who take full advantage of this opportunity gain valuable skills and knowledge that will assist them in their internship/job search and future career.

## **For the Mentees: Getting Involved**

You can get involved by filling out the included application. The thorough and honest completion of this application plays a crucial role in the Mentorship Committee being able to create meaningful and successful mentor/mentee matches. During the month of September, mentor/mentee pairs will be matched, and each participant will receive confirmation of their pairing via email. Your match will be created on the basis of career interest, degree, and any stated preferences.

## **Goals and Roles of the Mentor:**

**Program Goals for the Mentor:** To provide the next generation of alumni with the tools they need to succeed in professional development, an update on the current atmosphere of the industry, and an appreciation for their UCF degree.

**Mentor Role:** An NCSM mentor actively engages their student in the role of coach, guide and motivator. Students have learned much about the profession during their course of study but helping them successfully transition into the industry is of critical importance. This is where you come in!

**Coach:** Assist in developing SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time bound) goals, and creating a realistic, refined work plan toward achieving them. Also or alternatively, consider implementing the GROW (Goal, current Reality, Obstacles, Way forward) model for mentorship and coaching.

**Guide:** Advise your mentee on professional conduct, including how to network, communicate and represent themselves professionally.

**Motivator:** Encourage your student to feel confident about their ability to meet goals and to be successful in their endeavors. Share information or feedback that will help them feel prepared to take on the next steps in their career.

Ultimately, it is our hope that as a mentor you act as a friend to your student, helping them to transition into their career, not just their first job after graduation. Mentorship should be a comfortable relationship for each party which provides both members an enriching growth and learning experience.

## **Goals and Roles of the Mentee:**

**Program Goal for the Mentee:** To inspire students to become career ready professionals who can confidently transition into the workforce with appropriate expectations set by a knowledgeable mentor already experiencing success in the industry.

**Mentee/Student Role:** A NSCM student is also actively engaged in the networking and developmental process with their mentor. Provide your mentor with an update on the current education process. Additions of technology and the transformation of the school might be new to your mentor. Be sure to share what your experience has been like so your mentor understands what you have been exposed to and can be thoughtful about additional areas for development.

### **An ideal student mentee has the following characteristics:**

- A professional, respectful, mature demeanor when interacting with your mentor
- Ambition and motivation to grow as a professional
- Willingness to apply mentor insights
- Enthusiasm and interest in learning and expanding your thinking and skill set
- A positive attitude

All students are expected to respond to their mentor in a timely manner and commit themselves to both the monthly themes of this program and relationship building. Networking is a meaningful and highly beneficial practice and skill. Students will benefit from this program based on the time and interest they put toward it. Mentor relationships often last far beyond school and can be highly beneficial through a new professional's career.



## **You've Been Matched! Next steps:**

Congratulations on being matched! We expect that you make initial contact with your assigned mentor/mentee within one week of receiving notification of your match from the NSCM Alumni Chapter Mentorship Committee. Set a date and time for your first official "meeting," where you will talk about expectations, goals and a plan to talk with each other over the next weeks. The NSCM Alumni Chapter Mentorship Committee will provide resources to assist in laying the building blocks for a successful mentoring relationship.

Once a mentorship match has been made, we expect all of our participants to adhere to the following program guidelines:

Together, mentor and student should discuss your expectations for this program. Both are advised to discuss the monthly theme (set by the NSCM Alumni Board), and think about what your goal is for each meeting and how each should benefit. Ultimately, the mentor and student should create an exchange that is respectful and engaging for both parties. Ask thoughtful questions of one another and remember that mentorship is an ongoing process. Each meeting should be an opportunity to learn, but true development happens over time.

**Deliverable Outcomes:** Work with your student to create/update their resume and LinkedIn profile by the end of the school year.

## Resources

### **Program Timeline and Suggested Conversation Topics**

For monthly meeting topic suggestions and talking points, as well as a more detailed timeline of the Mentorship Program, review and consider the following:

- **September: Mentor and Student are matched**
  - **Getting to know you:** once matched, take some time to get to know each other. Discuss your backgrounds, expectations, goals and objectives for the mentorship experience.
  - **Students:** Share with your mentor what your education has been like as a way of updating them on the process. Consider discussing your biggest takeaways thus far in addition to the areas you still feel you need the most improvement in or the most additional experience.
  - **Together:** Establish your October meeting time and date.
  - Set October meeting time and date.
- **October: School/work/life balance**
  - **Mentors:** Discuss your experience balancing school/work/life. What was your routine as a student? What worked, what didn't? What advice would you give your younger self?
  - **Students:** What is your course schedule for the year? Are you interning/working? Are you involved in Greek life, student government, any other time commitments?
  - **Together:** Discuss what commitments are more likely to positively impact student/career success.
  - Begin building professional network – LinkedIn, professional organizations, etc.
  - Set November meeting time and date.

- **November: What do you want to be?**

- **Students:** You may complete free career assessments to determine your values, interests, personalities, and skills through [UCF Career Service's My Plan](#). This will allow you to discuss with your mentor which areas with which you align.
- **Together:** Discuss the student's career interests and goals (consider planning SMART goals); talents, skills and interests; the mentor's educational background and educational preparation; and mentor's job and work environment:
  - What is your typical day on the job?
  - What percentage of each day do you spend in various work activities?
  - What is the title of the person to whom you report?
  - How free are you to do your work independently?
  - What types of problems are you likely to face during the day?
  - What are the most satisfying and the most frustrating parts of your work?
- Set December meeting time and date

- **December: Preparing for Your Career**

- **Mentors:** Discuss job preparation - How did you prepare for this occupation? What preparations do you recommend for a person entering this occupation? What education/degrees/training are required or recommended? If you could start all over again in launching your career, what steps would you take?
- **Together:** Consider a resume exchange and a mentee resume and cover letter critique together.
- Set January meeting time and date.

- **January: Networking and Your Skill Set**

- **Mentors:** Encourage your student to make a new connection in their professional network this month. Share your tips for networking. Discuss the importance of networking and how it has helped your career. Do you have connections to help your student get started?
- **Students:** Consider conducting an informational interview with your new connection to learn about his/her career journey and to gain valuable advice to apply to your job search. How can you use your school connections – professors, classmates – to find that first job? Have you done an internship – are there opportunities there?
- **Together:** Consider attending a professional event together (virtually or in-person, depending on current restrictions). Discuss professionalism and etiquette. What professional standards exist in the field? Dress code, dining, networking, time-sensitivity/urgency, etc.
- LinkedIn – harnessing the power of LinkedIn, LinkedIn etiquette, etc.
- Set February meeting time and date

- **February: Professional Development Opportunities**

- **Mentors:** Discuss student and external organizations with your student.
- **Together:** How do these organizations serve their members? Discuss using organizations to expand your network. Discuss a plan for getting involved with key organizations.
- Discuss other professional development activities (community volunteering, etc.).
- Set March meeting time and date.

- **March: Interviewing**

- **Students:** Complete a practice interview. You will be paired with a different mentor for a phone interview. The mentor will share feedback with your assigned mentor to discuss with you.
- **Together:** Discuss student strategy for attending career fairs/expos. Discuss interviewing etiquette.
- Email and communication etiquette.
- Following-Up (thank you notes): Discuss proper utilization of connections in the community, review and discuss the interview experience.
- Set April meeting time and date.

- **April/May: Graduation and the road ahead**

- **Mentors:** Discuss the transition from school to work
  - Now what? Where to live? Budgeting?
  - Discuss advancement within career, how long to stay at that first job, what skills are most transferrable.
  - Professional organizations, certifications, graduate studies
  - What are the future trends and developments affecting careers in the industry?
  - Discuss final recommendations for your student as a summary of the mentorship experience.
- **Students:** What will you look for in a job? Location? Benefits? Pay? Growth?
- **Together:** Reflect on the mentorship experience. What have you learned? What was your biggest takeaway?
- Make plans to check-in for updates.

## Initial Meeting Checklist

To get the most out of your mentoring experience, talk to your mentor/student about the general expectations and goals that you have for your mentoring relationship.

Agree on communication expectations: How will the relationship work?

1. Meeting together: What works best? (remember, you want to have at least one meeting or conversation) Will we meet:

In Person (Due to COVID-19 we highly encourage participants to follow UCF and CDC guidelines when meeting in person)

Skype/Zoom

Phone

Email

Other

2. In general, how often would we like to meet/interact (e.g. once per week, every other week, once a month)? Renegotiate as needed.

3. If an email/voice mail is received, we will get back to our partner within:

24 hours

1-2 days

3 days

Other

4. If we can't make an expected meeting/interaction, how will we get in touch?

5. When will we meet or talk next?

## **Initial Meeting Checklist (cont'd)**

Agree on Goals: What do you hope to gain from the relationship?

1. What are the mentee's goals for this mentoring relationship? (Is there any clarification needed?)
2. What are the mentor's goals?
3. What actions can you and your mentee take to achieve these goals? See Appendices.

## **Suggested Activities**

### **Become Acquainted**

- Discuss your backgrounds and get to know each other
- Discuss the mentee's career interests and goals
- Discuss and list the mentee's talents, skills and interests
- Discuss how the mentor's personal and professional life fit together

### **Career Conversations**

- Read a book/article related to your field of interest and discuss it
  - Discuss the mentor's educational background and educational preparation in their field
- Discuss organizational types and cultures
- Search the Internet together for job resources and other information related to your field
- Discuss how individual work values impact career choices
- Discuss the professional standards that exist in your field
- Discuss the transition from attending school as a student to working as a professional
- Discuss office politics

### **Career Observations (below are contingent upon current restrictions and CDC guidelines)**

- Participate in a company tour, if appropriate
- Attend a professional meeting or program together
- If feasible, arrange for your mentee to visit your work site and shadow you for a day



**Resume/Interview**

- Share resume and cover letters. Review and critique your mentee's resume and cover letter
- Assist the mentee in completing a job application packet, portfolio, etc
- Conduct a mock/practice job interview

**Technology in the Workplace**

- Review your mentee's LinkedIn profile and provide suggestions on how to improve their online presence and professional brand.
- Discuss how social media can impact hiring.
- Discuss how your company or industry uses social media to reach and communicate with clients/customers.
- Discuss how your company or industry utilizes technology to communicate internally or with clients/ customers. What type of technology is used to do this?

**Back to School (below are contingent upon current restrictions and CDC guidelines)**

- Attend a campus lecture, alumni event, or sports game together.
- Invite the mentor to attend one of your classes.
- Investigate career-related student clubs.
- Visit your college's career center together.

**Creating Professional Networks**

- Compile a list of contacts the mentee could meet with in your field.
- Attend a professional networking event together.

## **Frequently Asked Questions:**

### **Why should I participate as a mentor?**

Our hope is that mentoring will be a positive and enriching experience where you will be able to:

- Refine your coaching and mentoring skills
- Develop meaningful connections with current students and provide a positive impact as they prepare to enter the industry
- Experience a reconnection with Nicholson School of Communication and Media and be in the know of all current college happenings

### **Why should I participate as a mentee?**

Having a mentor can contribute enormously to your success in future professional aspirations. Much of the learning that contributes to our success happens not through books but through real world experience. Without a mentor, that learning occurs mostly through trial and error. With a mentor, however, even seasoned professionals can benefit from the experiences and expertise of someone who has withstood the trial and can help us avoid the error. Similarly, those new to the industry or interested in learning about the industry will discover that being a mentee shortens the learning curve for acquiring the skills and knowledge most critical to a successful career.

Other benefits that accrue as a result of being a mentee in a mentoring relationship include:

- Learning new things about yourself – The self-reflection that can result from a mentoring relationship can be a powerful growth experience and provide you with new insights about yourself
- Making more of your strengths and exploiting your hidden talents – A good mentor will push you to do more with your strengths, and help you discover and exploit hidden talents

- Expanding your personal network – Entering into a mentoring relationship adds your mentor to your personal network, and may lead to an introduction to the individuals in the mentor’s network
- A source of referrals – Your mentor may refer you to other mentors once s/he has a better understanding of your needs, abilities, and goals

## **What are the qualifications I must have to be eligible to participate as a mentor/mentee?**

Mentors must be UCF alumni or a graduate of an accredited university. Mentees must be currently enrolled UCF students

## **How long is the commitment?**

Mentors and mentees are asked to participate for an entire academic year (September–May).

## **What if I want to continue to mentor my mentee beyond the term commitment?**

Alumni are welcome to continue mentoring their mentees as long as they are willing and able.

