

## STUDENT FAQ

### **What if I really don't know what I want to do for a career...does the mentor program still make sense?**

As graduate students, it is assumed you have a general idea of where your interests lie, but not necessarily a specific plan for your career. The mentor program is designed to help you assess your skills and interests and ultimately to explore potential career choices as well as prepare you to pursue one of these avenues. You will be able to discuss different career options with your mentor in order to focus your career goals.

### **What kinds of things are we supposed to do with our mentor?**

There's a tremendous variety of things to do around the professional development theme. A few examples are listed on the info page. So, for example, after filling out a career interest inventory and e-mailing the results to your mentor, you could schedule a phone meeting to talk about it—get your mentor's insights and interpretations. Sign up for a résumé-writing workshop at Career Services, and again, send the draft to your mentor for feedback and edits. Arrange to shadow your mentor at his or her worksite for a day or several days, or your mentor could arrange for you to visit his or her colleagues.

### **How do students and mentors contact each other?**

You will decide on a method of communication with your mentor at the orientation meeting. Many pairs communicate via e-mail and/or telephone. You may even decide to meet your mentor at his or her workplace during the course of the program. The decision of how to communicate depends on your and your mentor's personal preferences. The important thing is that you reach and maintain an understanding about contacts from the outset.

### **How often are we expected to be in contact?**

Students and mentors are expected to communicate in order to make substantial progress on the goals they set at the beginning of the program. While the actual number of times that you are in contact with your mentor is your decision, we expect that you will need to communicate with them at least once a month in order to reach your goals. You will probably find it helpful to be in contact more often, however.

### **How do my mentor and I establish goals?**

You will establish goals with your mentor at the orientation meeting. While establishing goals, think about the reasons you decided to join the mentoring program as well as what you hope to get out of it. Consider what you would like to learn from your mentor. Even if you are feeling far away from career planning, there is a lot that you can get from a mentor. If you have trouble coming up with goals, there will be a list of examples in the program guidelines, such as doing a basic interest inventory or drafting a résumé and cover letter.

### **What if we run out of things to talk about . . . to do?**

If you reach all of the goals that you set at the orientation event you can always choose something else to work on or discuss. You are not limited to the specific goals you set at the orientation event. Once again, think of what you would like to learn from your mentor.

### **What's covered at the orientation meeting?**

One of the key ingredients to the mentor program is the initial face to face contact. Other student–alumni mentor programs that start the relationship with someone initiating a phone call or meeting via e-mail are missing an important component. At the orientation meeting you will meet your mentor in a casual setting, and you will meet other students and alumni as well. Short workshops for mentors and for students will address program expectations, provide information on what's available through Penn State Career Services (and what's not available), provide guidance on establishing goals and next steps with your mentor, and answer common questions. Most important, the event will include each mentor–student pair meeting to establish their goals and agreeing to next steps.

### **Can I still participate if I can't arrange a face to face meeting at the outset?**

Maybe. It is essential that you meet your mentor in person and work with him or her to develop individual goals for the program. If you cannot attend a meeting at the outset, an alternative meeting time may be considered. Contact the program coordinator.

### **If my mentor and I really hit it off, can we stay in the program for more than a year?**

If you really hit it off with your mentor, the two of you may decide to informally strengthen your relationship and broaden the scope of your networking. However, we are only asking the mentors for a one year commitment.

