



## Finding and Developing Mentors

This guide is intended to give you tools to develop mentorships and make the most out of them. Mentoring relationships can begin with flash mentoring, an assigned mentor, an informational interview or a casual conversation. Regardless of the format, you (the mentee) should take an active role in directing the relationship, and Duke is here to support you in this work.



## What is Mentoring?

### **MENTORING IS A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING RELATIONSHIP THAT:**

- focuses on facilitating your personal growth and development.
- plays a major role in your career decision making by providing guidance, encouragement and empowering you with the knowledge, confidence and skills necessary to succeed.
- builds on a foundation of mutual effort, respect, trust and the courage to communicate openly.

### **MENTORING IS A PROCESS:**

- of engaging in intentional conversations between a you and a mentor.
- that can last a few weeks, months or even years—or, in the case of flash mentoring, just a phone call or two!

## What is Flash Mentoring?

Flash mentoring is a type of mentoring that typically lasts one to two conversations and is centered around tactical meetings that provide timely knowledge for participants. Flash mentoring can be one of the easiest ways to get quick feedback or make a connection. **Duke Alumni has two tools that can help you identify fellow Blue Devils for flash mentoring conversations:**

1. **[Alumni.Duke.edu](https://Alumni.Duke.edu)** Alumni can view more than 150,000 profiles of Duke classmates by [logging in to this site](#). Using this exclusive network, alumni can search for connections in specific industries or companies, identify potential mentors and expand their personal and professional contacts.
2. **[Ask a Blue Devil](https://AskABlueDevil.duke.edu)** ([AskABlueDevil.duke.edu](https://AskABlueDevil.duke.edu)) is a tool to help you grow your Duke network, find a mentor or set up that informational interview to help you navigate a career transition. Fill out the brief form and ask for advice. Your question will be sent to fellow Duke alumni who can help point you in the right direction!

**Once you've established a connection using these tools, you can use this guide to develop the relationship into a longer-term mentorship if you choose.**

# How to Proactively Manage Your Mentorship

- 1 THINK ABOUT AND SET EXPECTATIONS WITH YOUR MENTOR.**

Successful relationships happen when partners have thought through their expectations for mentoring. As you enter into your mentoring relationship, be sure to establish clear and reasonable expectations.
- 2 DEFINE AND COMMUNICATE YOUR NEEDS AND GOALS TO YOUR MENTOR.**

Be prepared to talk with your mentor about what your needs are. Articulate your career goals, ideas and dreams (you don't have to have these all figured out). Plan the topics or questions you would like to discuss with your mentor for each session. Goals will guide the relationship and your conversations.
- 3 LEARN ABOUT YOUR MENTOR'S CAREER JOURNEY.**

Be curious about your mentor's experiences. Hearing about others' experiences can be a powerful way to gain new perspectives. Ask your mentor questions about how they managed challenges along the way.
- 4 TALK TO YOUR MENTOR ABOUT NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES.**

Connecting with others can be incredibly valuable in exploring options and learning more about roles, industries, culture and your interest in different areas. The ability to network professionally and build relationships is a critical skill to develop. Your mentor may have some ideas and contacts for you to continue to explore and learn.
- 5 LEARN ABOUT JOB SHADOWING.**

Shadowing professionals is a good way to observe a "day in the life" as you explore opportunities and is an option to consider at every stage of your career. Talk with your mentor about the value of shadowing professionals, and whether this may be done remotely.
- 6 GAIN ASSISTANCE IN THINKING ABOUT PROFESSIONAL DECISIONS.**

Talk with your mentor about key decisions they have made on their own career path and what they used to inform their decision-making process. Discuss how you might apply their advice to your own career.
- 7 ASK FOR AND BE OPEN TO FEEDBACK.**

Your mentor is a source of information for you. Think about the feedback they are giving you and how you might incorporate it into your thinking and actions. Strive to be open to new ideas, knowing that constructive feedback is essential to continuous professional development.
- 8 ENGAGE IN REFLECTION WITH YOUR MENTOR.**

Reflect on the achievement of your goals, or any failures or challenges you've experienced, and talk through potential changes you might make as a result.

## What Might You Accomplish with Your Mentor?

- Gain insights on internship and job opportunities.
- Determine career options or paths for advancement.
- Gain knowledge about resources for further development, such as graduate and professional school or continuing education.
- Understand how to talk about your skills and how to transfer them to other areas.
- Find a sponsor who can not only advise you, but can champion you.
- Learn more about yourself!

## Key To-Dos for Building a Mentoring Relationship

### **BE PROFESSIONAL AND AUTHENTIC.**

Let your mentor know who you are and what is important to you.

### **BE PROACTIVE.**

Plan what you would like to discuss ahead of time to ensure a more productive meeting. Send your mentor topics you would like to discuss.

### **SHARE WHAT DRIVES YOU.**

Share likes/dislikes, interests and values as appropriate. Talk about your education, your involvement outside of work, your short term and long-term goals and any uncertainties you may have. The more your mentor knows about you the better they will be able to facilitate your development.

### **SHOW GRATITUDE.**

Send thank you notes and let your mentor know the impact they've had.

## Setting Expectations

- Decide together with your mentor how often you would like to communicate and in what format (i.e. once a week, once per month, email, phone, etc.).
- Determine if there are any challenges or uncertainties that are important for you to share with your mentor early in the process.
- Tell your mentor what you want to learn from this experience and/or the mentor's field of work. What are your goals? Consider setting goals for each conversation, as well as more long-term goals.
- Consider sharing your hopes for the mentor/mentee relationship (ex. strictly professional vs. more friendly)—this can also change over time!

## Introducing Yourself to Your Mentor

In your initial communications with your mentor, consider sharing:

What you studied at Duke.

Your current professional role.

Your hobbies and interests.

What excites you.

Your future professional pursuits and goals.

**PRO TIP:** Check out the alum's profile on [alumni.duke.edu](https://alumni.duke.edu) and [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com) to see what you have in common. Who knows—you may have been in the same student organization or lived in the same dorm!

As your conversations progress, you may want to discuss:

What drives you.

A time you were set back and how you dealt with that.

Questions you have about your career path.

Skills and strengths, as well as areas you'd like to develop.

## Getting to Know Your Mentor

Your goal should be to extract common experiences from these questions and build off of them, so that your relationship with your mentor is strengthened. You can do this by asking questions such as:

- What did you study?
- What were you involved in at Duke?
- What did you want to do after graduation/at my stage of life and how did it unfold? What reinforced and/or changed your plans? Be as concrete as possible
- What is the best advice you have received?
- How have you experienced and adjusted to change? Have you moved? Changed jobs?
- What types of competencies/skills do you look for in a potential hire?
- What advice can you give on my current projects and pursuits?
- How should I make the most of my current position? What are resources that you really recommend that I take advantage of?
- How do I make the most of any professional experience?
- How do I build a professional community?
- What are the more elusive elements of a particular field of work (especially if the path you want to pursue is less linear)?
- How do you sustain personal well-being on a daily basis? What habits work?

## A Note about the Mentoring Relationship

Duke's global community is an ideal place to seek out potential mentors who share important things in common with you and are invested in your success and well-being. Your mentorship should be a trusted and safe relationship where you are free to learn and ask questions. However, should you at any point experience suspicious or inappropriate behavior, please share your feedback with [Duke Alumni](#).

## Final Words of Advice

To ensure the most productive mentoring process, you (the mentee) should direct the relationship and the mentor should act as a facilitator. As the director, you set the course and lead the process of developing goals and putting into motion action steps for achieving these goals. You take ownership and an active role in the work you and your mentor take on.

As the facilitator, your mentor will listen and then respond to the direction you set by asking thought provoking questions, sharing perspectives and suggesting ideas. The mentor acts in a supporting role and empowers you to problem solve and make decisions. Ultimately, a successful mentoring relationship helps you make decisions, reach goals and pursue professional and personal paths.