



# BLUE DEVIL BRIDGES MENTEE GUIDE

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DSG's Alumni-Student Mentorship Program

# PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS



This program is meant to be flexible and **the best structure is what works well for you and your mentor**. One of the criteria for matching is the desired frequency of meetings and how long you and your mentor wish to sustain a mentor/mentee relationship.

When assigning your mentorship match, we take into account how long you want to be in contact. If the pairing is a strong connection, hopefully, you will choose to stay in contact well beyond the program launch. That being said, how long you stay in contact with them is up to you and your mentee.

Mentees should take time to get to know their mentors and to learn about their unique education and career trajectories. Mentees are expected to plan the topics or questions they would like to discuss with their mentor for each session. These should be considered as you set goals for the times that you meet.

**Meetings can range from a quick get-to-know-you session, an informational interview about the mentor's career journey, or it can be a quick text, phone, or email check-in.**

# INTRODUCTION & A WORD OF THANKS



## **ABOUT THIS PROGRAM**

*Blue Devil Bridges is a one-on-one mentorship program that pairs undergraduate students with Duke alumni based on identity, academics, and professional interests. The program, designed by Duke Student Government in collaboration with Duke Alumni Engagement and Development (AED) and the Career Center, aims to give students the ability to connect with alumni who can give insight into life after graduation, gain focus and clarity in their career path, and strengthen their connection with a valuable part of the Duke community – Duke alumni!*

**Thank you for applying to be a mentee!** We hope that your conversations will help guide and empower you to determine your career path, gain knowledge and insights into resources for further development, enrich your Duke experience, and serve as a bridge between current students and alumni who can not only advise you but champion you.

Whether an alum experienced Duke as an undergraduate or graduate/professional student, they are very excited to share their path, throughout their time at Duke and beyond.

**GET EXCITED to meet your mentor, a Duke alum who is committed to giving back to the Duke community!**

# SAMPLE EMAIL



Dear [Mentor's Name],

I hope this message finds you well. My name is [Your Name], and I am thrilled to have been paired with you as a mentee through the Blue Devil Bridges program. As a current [Your Grade Level] at Duke, I am eager to hear your guidance and learnings from your experiences.

To give you a brief overview, I have interests in [one or two specific interests or fields]. I am excited about the opportunity to learn from you and your experience.

I would love to schedule an initial meeting if you'd be willing at your convenience, either via Zoom or phone call, to introduce myself further, get to know you, and discuss goals! Please let me know a time that works for you, and I will adjust my schedule accordingly.

Thank you so much for your willingness to be a part of this program, and I am so excited to meet you!

Warm regards,  
[Your Name]

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## **6 TIPS FOR PROACTIVELY MANAGING YOUR MENTORSHIP**

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### **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. COMMUNICATE YOUR NEEDS AND GOALS**

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.

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### **4. 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.

### **5. 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. Your mentor can serve as a “bridge” to the larger Duke alumni community.

### **6. 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. Strive to be open to new ideas, knowing that constructive feedback is essential to continuous professional development.

# RESPECTING AND SUPPORTING



## DIFFERENT IDENTITIES AND PERSPECTIVES



Remember that everyone has different perspectives and the Duke community is made up of people from many different places and of a wide variety of cultures, backgrounds, and beliefs. Those with different identities will have different experiences at Duke and in life. Ask lots of questions and be open and friendly.

# SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



It's crucial to create a safe and supportive environment for your mentor to share as much or as little as they feel comfortable. Above all, **express gratitude to your mentor.** Send thank you notes and let your mentor know the impact they've had.

Below are some starting questions or topics to discuss with your mentor. **Feel free to come up with your own as well; these are only provided to help jumpstart your conversation, as needed:**

- 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?
- 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 is typically looked for in your field?



## EXAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

- *If you could pursue any dream project or venture, what would it be & why?*
- *How do you prefer to learn and develop new skills? Are there specific methods or environments that work best for you?*
- *Are there any specific industries or roles you're excited about?*
- *What skills or strengths do you believe set you apart from your peers?*
- *Have you encountered any challenges or uncertainties regarding your academic and career path? How do you plan to address or overcome these challenges?*
- *Are there any current trends or emerging technologies that you find intriguing?*
- *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?*
- *How do your personal interests align with your career goals? Do they intersect? How?*
- *Can you share a significant challenge you've faced and how you overcame it? What did you learn from that experience?*
- *What are some of your core values and beliefs? How do they influence your career choices?*
- *Do you have any strategies for self-improvement that you find particularly effective?*
- *Are there any wellness practices that you find helpful for maintaining health and well-being?*

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

## **Who is supposed to reach out to initiate the mentorship?**

We ask that you take the initiative to reach out to your mentor for the first interaction. In our initial pairing email, you will have access to your mentor's contact information.

## **What if I haven't gotten a response from my mentor?**

Everyone is juggling many priorities - family, work, and life in general. If you've reached out and have not received a response, send a gentle reminder. If your mentor hasn't responded to your initial communication after a few weeks, you can reach out to [bluedevilbridges@duke.edu](mailto:bluedevilbridges@duke.edu) and we can assist or re-match you.

## **What should I do if scheduling conflicts arise?**

Communicate proactively. If a meeting needs to be rescheduled, work together to find an alternative time that suits both of your schedules.

## **What if I no longer have time to be a mentee?**

If your situation has changed, please let us know and we will make reassignments as needed. It is important to respect the time that your assigned mentor has put in to receive the pairing.

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# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) CONTINUED

## **What if my mentor has different interests than me?**

We know that the matching function has limitations, and we are committed to helping each of you make the best connection possible. Sometimes the pool of alumni may not have what you are looking for, but a new perspective will teach you something you never expected. However, if you truly feel it is not a good connection, please get in touch with us at [bluedevilbridges@duke.edu](mailto:bluedevilbridges@duke.edu) to discuss your priorities.

## **How formal is the mentorship?**

One of the criteria for matching is the desired frequency of meetings and how long you and your mentor wish to sustain a mentor/mentee relationship. Ultimately, the proximity of you to your mentor is up to you both. We do expect you to represent Duke University with cordial and positive communication, and if you wish to continue the mentoring relationship, our mentee guide will provide advice on navigating that.

If the pairing is a strong connection, hopefully, you will choose to stay in contact well beyond the program launch. That being said, how long you stay in contact is up to you and your mentor.

## **For more questions...**

**Email us at: [bluedevilbridges@duke.edu](mailto:bluedevilbridges@duke.edu)**

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# SUMMARY

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & LINKS

***Mentorship programs are often fulfilling and helpful for both mentors and mentees. We hope you enjoy connecting with a fellow Blue Devil!***

We hope your connection with your mentor will empower you, enrich your own Duke experience, and help bridge our alumni community with current students. Whether they experienced Duke as an undergraduate or graduate/professional student, our alumni are very excited to hear about your interests and path throughout your time at Duke. THANK YOU for participating in this program!

We hope your connection will allow you to become more comfortable building relationships within the Duke community, understand different experiences, paths, and perspectives, and gain clarity about your career path and how to spend your time at Duke.

This experience can be tailored to what works best for you and your mentor. We have provided questions for you to consider asking and tips for best practices within this guide, but we know many of you are well-positioned to make this a successful experience for you and your mentor. If you ever have questions or need help, reach out to us at [bluedevilbridges@duke.edu](mailto:bluedevilbridges@duke.edu)



### ***Further Resources and Helpful Links:***

- [Duke Career Center](#)
- [Duke Advising](#)
- [Additional Guide for Mentees](#)
- [Duke Alumni Network LinkedIn group](#)
- [Duke Career Center Informational Interview Guide](#)
- [Identity, Culture, and Belonging at Duke](#)
- [Additional Mentoring Programs](#)