



BLUE DEVIL BRIDGES

MENTOR GUIDE

DSG's Alumni-Student Mentorship Program

@dukestudentgovt

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 Duke 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 volunteering to be a mentor for Duke students! We hope that your conversations will help guide and empower current students to thrive, enrich your own Duke experience, and serve as a bridge between alumni and current students.

Whether you experienced Duke as an undergraduate or graduate/professional student, our current undergraduate students are very excited to hear about your path, throughout your time at Duke and beyond.

THANK YOU for your support of this program and our students!!

PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS



This program is meant to be flexible and **the best structure is what works well for you and your mentee**. 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.

Take time to get to know your mentees and learn about their unique education and career goals. Mentees have been instructed 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 your career journey, or it can be a quick text, phone, or email check-in.

6 TIPS FOR DEVELOPING THE MENTORSHIP RELATIONSHIP



1. SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES

You can create a trusting environment through sharing stories about your own professional and personal journeys. Be open to sharing the challenges you faced, your failures, and how you overcame them.

2. ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

We suggest asking questions that are open-ended and call for a reflective response. This will help you identify your mentees' needs, values, and interests and help them make connections.

Ask questions that will help you understand the student's experience & perspectives better. For instance, If you don't know much about the student's major, a program they are involved in, or even encounter Duke jargon you are not familiar with— feel free to ask for clarification.

Your mentee's Duke experience may be different from yours.

For instance, if your mentee is an international student, please note that international students often face unique circumstances when planning for life after graduation (e.g., visa restrictions). Ask open-ended questions to better understand your mentee's goals (e.g., if they are interested in working in the U.S.). Don't make assumptions about their expectations or experience level. As a mentor, you can play a crucial role in helping your mentee by sharing your experiences, encouraging questions, and being open to learning about specific challenges.

6 TIPS FOR DEVELOPING THE MENTORSHIP RELATIONSHIP



3. OFFER OPTIONS VERSUS SOLUTIONS

Help your mentee process their own ideas. Offer suggestions and options to help them make decisions. Encourage and support mentees by helping them plan for success and overcome roadblocks.

4. BE A SOUNDING BOARD

Allow your mentee to explore their thoughts, ideas, and curiosities with you. This will often help them clarify their thinking and gain insights about a situation as they discuss it with you. If your mentee is in their first or second year, consider reminding them that they have time and don't need to have all of their plans finalized yet.

5. PROVIDE RESOURCES

Share additional resources with your mentee, including people, articles, tools, and web-based information. You can't be an expert on all things, but you can point the mentee in the right direction to get what they need. You are also serving as the mentee's "bridge" to the larger Duke alumni community. Feel free to introduce them to colleagues and encourage them to seek out other Duke alumni who could also help. Think of yourself as a learning facilitator and connector.

6. OFFER CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

Provide honest, thoughtful, and supportive feedback that helps your mentee acquire insight to further develop specific qualities or skills.

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 provide open, friendly support.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

No one has contacted me, what should I do?

We ask our mentees to take the initiative to reach out to their mentor for the first interaction. If you haven't heard from them in a reasonable timeframe, feel free to reach out to them.

What if I haven't gotten a response from my mentee?

Everyone is juggling many priorities - school, family, work, and life in general. If you've reached out and have not received a response, send a gentle reminder. If your mentee hasn't responded to your initial communication after a few weeks, you can reach out to 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 mentor?

We understand that things come up, so if your situation has changed, please let us know and we will make reassignments as needed.

What if I'm not happy with my match?

We know that the matching function has limitations, and we are committed to helping each of you make the best connection possible. In those cases, please contact us at bluedevilbridges@duke.edu to discuss your priorities. Your time is valuable, and we want you to feel you are getting the best experience out of this program.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

My mentee is an international student, what can I do to better understand and support their needs?

International students often face unique circumstances when planning for life after graduation. As a mentor, you can play a crucial role in helping your mentee navigate these challenges, even if you did not experience the same challenges as a student.

- **Visa Restrictions:** Visa policies may influence undergraduate students' major selection decisions and work eligibility. While understanding the basics of work authorization programs like F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT) and Curricular Practical Training (CPT) can help you provide more informed guidance, mentors should avoid giving specific visa advice. Instead, encourage students to consult with Duke Visa Services for accurate and up-to-date information.
 - **Cultural Differences:** Duke's international students come from various backgrounds. Some may have experience working in the U.S., others may lack confidence in navigating U.S. workplace etiquette, communication styles, and networking.
 - **Ask Open-Ended Questions:** Learn about your mentee's goals and aspirations. Don't make assumptions about their expectations, knowledge or experience level.
 - **Share Your Experiences:** Share your own experiences with job searching and career development to provide additional insight.
 - **Encourage Questions:** Some international students may feel reluctant to ask questions or seek clarification. Encourage your mentee to ask questions about U.S. workplace norms, networking, and general career advice.
 - **Be Supportive:** Offer encouragement and guidance as you are able, and refer students to relevant resources, including [Duke Visa Services](#), [Duke International Student Center](#), and the [Duke Career Center](#).
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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) CONTINUED

What if I am concerned about my mentee?

If you are concerned about a student's health or behavior, and your concern is not an emergency, please submit a Duke Reach report:
<https://students.duke.edu/wellness/dukereach>

You may also refer students to the following services:

- **Counseling and Psychological Services** - Students can either call 919-660-1000 or visit in person.
- **TimelyCare** - A free, 24/7, tele-mental health platform. Students can seek an urgent appointment or participate in ongoing virtual therapy with a mental health practitioner.

If there is an emergency, please call Duke University Police at (919) 684-2444.

What if I have additional questions about the Blue Devil Bridges program, how to better support my mentee, etc.?

To learn how to better support your mentee, or to look for conversation ideas, you can always refer back to this Mentor Guide. If you have any additional questions about mentorship or this program, please contact the Blue Devil Bridges Team via email.

For more questions...

Email us at: bluedevilbridges@duke.edu

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



It's crucial to create a safe and supportive environment for your mentee to share as much or as little as they feel comfortable. Share and discuss any valuable takeaways from your Duke experience with your mentee, as well as any tips or resources that helped you on campus.

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

- Do you have short-term goals you'd like to achieve in the next semester or year? How can you measure your progress toward these goals?
- What do you enjoy doing in your free time? Any hobbies or interests that you're particularly excited about?
- Are there any specific areas where you'd appreciate mentorship or support?

EXAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

- *If you could pursue any dream project or venture, what would it be & why?*
- *Have you declared your major yet? If so, what factors helped you make your decision?*
- *Have you discovered any specific areas of interest within your major that you'd like to explore further?*
- *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 completed any internships or gained relevant work experience in your field? What did you learn from those experiences that you think will be valuable in your career?*
- *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?*
- *Is there specific advice or guidance you're looking for at this stage of your career and academic journey?*
- *Are there any skills or knowledge areas you feel you need to develop further for your chosen career path? How do you plan to address these gaps?*
- *What strategies are you using to expand your professional network?*
- *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?*
- *How do you currently balance your academic commitments with personal life and relaxation?*
- *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?*

EXAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

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- *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 completed any internships or gained relevant work experience in your field? What did you learn from those experiences that you think will be valuable in your career?*
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LEARN AS YOU GO!

The above-mentioned questions are simply conversation starters and points of inspiration. How you structure your mentorship conversations depends on you and your mentee's particular interests and needs.

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- *How do you prefer to learn and develop new skills? Are there specific methods or environments that work best for you?*
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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 mentee will empower current students , enrich your own Duke experience, and help bridge our alumni community with current students. Whether you experienced Duke as an undergraduate or graduate/professional student, our undergraduate students are very excited to hear about your path throughout your time at Duke and beyond. THANK YOU for supporting this program and our students!!!

We hope your connection will help students will become more comfortable building relationships within the Duke community, understand different experiences, paths, and perspectives, and gain clarity about their career path and guidance on how they spend their time at Duke.

This experience can be tailored to what works best for you and your mentee. 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 mentee. If you ever have questions or need help, reach out to us at bluedevilbridges@duke.edu



Further Resources and Helpful Links:

- [Duke Career Center](#)
- [Guide for Duke Alumni Mentors](#)
- [Habits of Extraordinary Mentors](#)
- [Duke Alumni Network LinkedIn group](#)
- [Duke Career Center Informational Interview Guide](#)
- [Identity, Culture, and Belonging at Duke](#)
- [Duke Visa Services](#)