



**OUT FOR UNDERGRAD
DIGITAL CONFERENCE**

Mentor Discussion Guide

SEPTEMBER 8-10, 2023 | NYC

Hi there!

Thank you for offering your time and talent as a mentor for the O4U Digital Conference. This guide will serve as a resource to you as you plan and facilitate your mentorship group sessions. Please review the information below and familiarize yourself with each session's discussion topics prior to arriving at the conference. If any questions arise, feel free to reference the Key Contact session to get in touch with the appropriate contact.

Again, thank you for your willingness to serve at this year's conference! We look forward to seeing you in New York.

This document is a guide for how to structure your mentorship sessions.

It is not a script, but rather a loose direction for how best to facilitate the conversation between you and your mentee.

We ask that you stick to the topics of each session, but please feel free to adjust the structure, timing, and/or specific questions based on the needs and interests of your mentee.

While you'll be leading the conversation and asking your mentee questions, please remember that this should be a conversation! Feel free to respond to questions, talk about your own experiences, and give space for your mentee to ask you things they're curious about.

If mentees are comfortable and give permission, we recommend mentors take light notes during and/or after each session to refer back to and continue building on in future discussions.

A couple of reminders:

- This is a safe and brave space for sharing - please don't let mentorship conversations leave the room.
- Please try to use the correct pronouns when referring to others. If you don't know their pronouns, **don't assume** - please ask for someone to remind you.
- Please avoid using gendered language such as "you guys" - easy alternatives are "you all" or "you folxs".
- Some students never plan to come out. Your job is neither to convince them to do so nor to discourage it.

Key Contacts



If your mentee shares something that is concerning to you, or if you think that they could benefit from additional support, please reach out directly to:

Amanda Zielinski Slenski, O4U Chief of Staff
Slack or (586) 344-5668 (*Text Preferred*)



For urgent mental health concerns, please reach out to:

Dr. Sara Rabinovitch
Slack or (617) 543-58868



If you have any non-urgent questions or concerns at any point in time, please reach out to:

Garrett Tan, O4UD Programming Team Lead
Slack or email (Garrett.Tan@OutforUndergrad.org)

Snowball Fight: Breaking the Ice

(Students Only)

This session will be self-led by your group of students as an icebreaker on day 1. The students will do quick introductions with each other (names, pronouns, school/year/major, and if they have attended an O4U conference before).

The icebreaker questions will cover:

- Why did you decide to apply for and attend O4U?
- What are you most nervous about for this weekend?
- What are your goals for this weekend?
- What is your secret talent?
- What is your favorite song, show, movie, or book right now?

While mentors won't be participating in this activity, we're giving mentors an overview of the session to provide some context for interactions that students may have had with each other prior to the first mentor-led session.

Session 1: Introductions & Intentions

(Context: Mentor-facilitated after Susan X Jane Antiracism Discussion)

Session Goals:

- Establish guidelines and norms for participating in mentorship groups
- Get to know one another
- Discuss Susan X Jane's presentation
- Go over imposter syndrome
- Set goals for the conference weekend and beyond

Welcome and Introductions (10 min)

- Mentors + Students Introduction
- Names/Pronouns/School or Profession/Major
- Chat through session goals listed above
- **Ice breaker:** What's one takeaway you have from Susan X Jane's keynote?

Rules of Engagement (2 min)

Take a couple of minutes to set the stage and talk about how to communicate effectively in mentorship groups.

Mentor should read these out loud to the group:

- This is a safe and brave space for sharing - please don't let our conversations leave the room.
- Please try to use the correct pronouns when referring to others. If you don't know their pronouns, **don't assume** – please ask for someone to remind you.
- Please avoid using gendered language such as "you guys" – easy alternatives are "you all" or "you folks".
- Remember that everyone is at a different stage of their journey as an LGBTQ2+ individual¹.
- All lived experiences are valid, even if they are different from your own.

Antiracism in the Age of AI Discussion (10-15 min)

The breakout questions hit on the areas of action from Susan X Jane's presentation that participants can explore to keep thinking about these issues in their journey.

Choose 1-2 questions from the list below to discuss with your group. No right answers, but be sure to hear from everyone in the group if you can to include multiple perspectives. Be sure to keep an eye on time.

1. Culture in the Craft

- How can you keep a lens of antiracism while you develop your craft and skills for your career and future workplaces?
- What opportunities do you have or want to help you learn more about equity inclusion and justice? How can you build connections this weekend to learn more?

¹ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two-Spirit+

2. AI and Equity

- How do you think advancement in AI will affect the work you do or the companies you are interested in working for?
- What impact can the consequences of new technology have on people who don't have equal access to thrive now?

3. Using your Voice

- Where is your voice the most powerful? Where is your voice most needed?
- What can you do to incorporate inclusion into the content you already make?

4. Commitment and Culture

- What is something you are committed to doing well—working out, achieving in school or work, or a personal project you like to do? How do you make sure to keep that commitment?
- When you fall off, what do you do to refresh your commitment to this thing you care about? How can you bring your experience maintaining a commitment to the work of acting to create diversity, inclusion, and equity?

Imposter Syndrome (10-15 min)

Discussion question: Is anyone familiar with the concept of imposter syndrome?

Wait to hear student responses and then feel free to share definitions directly with students:

Imposter Syndrome: "A collection of feelings of inadequacy that persist despite evident success. 'Imposters' suffer from chronic self-doubt and a sense of intellectual fraudulence that override any feelings of success or external proof of their competence. They seem unable to internalize their accomplishments, however successful they are in their field."

Optional: one mentor may share an example of imposter syndrome in their own life

Discussion questions:

- Have you experienced imposter syndrome? How did you react?
- Do you have any tactics that you use to mitigate imposter syndrome? How do you recognize when you're experiencing it?³

Setting Goals for the Conference (10-15 min)

Discussion question: Take a moment to reflect and/or write responses to the following questions:

- Where would you like to be in 6 months, 12 months and/or 5 years?
- How can we ensure that you make the most out of your time at O4U Digital?

Give students some time to think and write if desired then regroup to discuss.

Optional: Have students share out their goal(s)

Discussion questions:

- What excites you the most about this goal? What scares you most about this goal?
- What resources can you use to help you get there? Is there anything I can do as a mentor to help you reach these goals?

If you have extra time, you can:

- Go over key takeaways from the conversation
- Give students the opportunity to ask you for advice on how to approach the remainder of the conference

²<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/imposter-syndrome>

³<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/impostor-syndrome-tips>

Session 2: Authenticity & Being LGBTQ2+ in the Workplace

(Context: Mentor-facilitated after Industry Education and Interview Prep Sessions)

Session Goals:

- Discuss what authenticity means to you
- Discuss Code Switching
- Discuss Stereotype Threat

Welcome Back (5 min)

- **Ice breaker:** What was the biggest takeaway from today's sessions? What's the most interesting thing you learned today? *(Note: students may have attended different sessions so takeaways may differ)*
- Chat through session goals listed above

Authenticity (5 min)

Discussion question: What does authenticity mean to you?

Optional: One mentor may share what authenticity means to them

Transition: You'll now discuss two psychological phenomena that prevent people from being authentic (in the workplace): stereotype threat and code switching

Stereotype Threat (10-15 min)

Discussion question: Is anyone familiar with the concept of "stereotype threat"?

Wait to hear student responses and then feel free to share the definition directly with students:

Stereotype threat: Stereotype threat is when individuals fear they may confirm negative stereotypes about their social group. This fear can negatively affect their performance and reinforce the stereotype, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. Stereotype threat contributes to achievement and opportunity gaps among racial, ethnic, gender, and cultural groups — particularly in academics and the workplace.⁴

Example: If an individual is worried that performing badly on a test will confirm people's negative beliefs about the intelligence of their race, gender, culture, ethnicity, or other forms of identity, they are experiencing stereotype threat.⁵

Optional: one mentor may share an example of stereotype threat in their own life

Discussion questions:

- Can you recount a time you've experienced stereotype threat (in school, work, in public, etc)? How did you feel and react?

Code Switching (10-15 min)

Discussion question: What is code switching?

Wait to hear student responses and then feel free to share the definition directly with students:

^{4,5} <https://www.simplypsychology.org/stereotype-threat.html>

Code switching: Code-switching involves adjusting one's style of speech, appearance, behavior, and expression in ways that will optimize the comfort of others in exchange for fair treatment, quality service, and employment opportunities. Code-switching isn't specific to race, gender, or socioeconomic status, although most times, it involves a member of an underrepresented group (consciously or unconsciously) adjusting their language, syntax, grammatical structure, behavior, and appearance to fit into the dominant culture.⁶

Example: In a conservative environment, a queer person might modify their speech and mannerisms to align with traditional gender norms, concealing aspects of their identity whereas they express themselves more openly within LGBTQ2+ circles.

Optional: one mentor share an example of code switching in their own life

Discussion questions:

- Can you recount a time you've code-switched (in school, work, public, etc.)? Were you aware that you code-switched? Why did you, and how did you feel?

Mitigation Strategies (10-15 min)

Acknowledge that these phenomena happen often, and it's most important to be aware of them and to find strategies to mitigate them.

Optional: Mentors may share examples with students of how they manage and overcome stereotype threat and code switching.

Discussion question: What do you think are ways to mitigate/overcome stereotype threat?

Some tactics to mitigate stereotype threat that you can share⁷:

- Interventions such as teaching about stereotype threat and growth mindset
- Implementing self-affirmation assignments
- Highlighting positive role models

Discussion question: What do you think are ways to mitigate or overcome code-switching?

Some important aspects of code-switching that you can share⁸:

- **It is important to note that not all code-switching is bad.** Adapting our cultures to one another is a way to form common values and shared communication strategies. The problem is in the unilateral direction of assimilation, and the undue burden placed on marginalized groups to accommodate the comfort and ease of those in power.
- We have to acknowledge what the dominant culture is and challenge our assumptions. This requires a lot of listening, receiving feedback, and enough psychological safety on a team to address the topic openly.

Wrap Up (5 min)

Discussion questions:

- What were your biggest takeaways from this session?
- How can you use what we've talked about today to be more authentic in your personal and professional life?

⁶ <https://www.betterup.com/blog/code-switching>

⁷ <https://www.simplypsychology.org/stereotype-threat.html>

⁸ <https://www.integrativeinquiryllc.com/post/the-problem-with-code-switching-addressing-the-dominant-culture>

Session 3: Career Development

(Context: Lunch Session directly before Career Fair)

Note: If you are a mentor who will also be representing a firm at the career fair, this is a great opportunity to remind students they will have a familiar face when they enter the room! If you're comfortable, you can offer to let your mentees come up and do a practice round at the career fair to get experience giving their elevator pitch in a real environment.

Session Goals:

- **Most importantly: make students feel empowered for the career fair!**
- Prepare for the career fair through a role-playing activity
- This session has 2 discussion options that students can choose from:
- Discuss how to decide what type of career you want to pursue
- Discuss how to find future mentors
- Say goodbyes and find ways to stay in contact

Welcome Back (5 min)

- **Ice breaker:** Reflecting on your previous interests and what you learned this weekend, how have your career interests evolved?
- Chat through session goals above and decide which option mentees would like to focus on

Activity: Career Fair Prep (10 min)

Context: Students learned how to approach different employers in the Career Prep Session earlier in the day. Now we're going to spend a few minutes roleplaying and preparing for the career fair. .

Instructions

1. (3 min) Ask students to identify one employer they'd like to connect with at the career fair (reference Student Sponsor Guide in Linktree, which can be found through the QR code on your nametag.
2. Ask students to write 1-2 questions they'd like to ask them after they introduce themselves.
3. (6 min total - 3 min each) Ask students to partner 1:1 and pretend to interact as if one of them was the sponsor. After 3 minutes, have the students switch if they haven't already.
4. (1 min) Reflect how that went and ask students what they learned. Did they learn any new questions/strategies when meeting sponsors?

Option 1: Career Deep Dive

(20 min)

(This is a good option if the mentees are interested in the mentor's industry/job/company)

Discussion questions (for students):

- What are you hoping to get out of your first job?
- Do you have any reservations about this industry/job/company?
- Within your company or industry, what do you want your professional brand to be? What skills do you want to be known for?

Q&A with mentors: Leave time for mentees to ask mentors about day-to-day professional life. If no questions asked, feel free to answer the following questions:

- What does a day in the life look like for this job?
- What are the necessary skills to develop early on in this career?
- What does career progression look like?
- How to find a mentor/sponsor within a company?
- How do you network within your company outside of your team?
- Who can the mentor connect the mentees with to learn more/answer specific questions?

Option 2: How to Find Future Mentors

(20 min)

(This is a good option if the mentees have expressed a need for additional support)

"Coach" vs "Mentor" vs "Sponsor"

Go over the distinction between these terms. You may hear these terms thrown around interchangeably, but it's useful to understand the differences

- **Coaches teach:** Typically someone closer to your seniority level, coaches help you learn a skill / how to do the job day-to-day
- **Mentors listen and advise:** There are a wide range of people who can be a mentor, as there are likely a variety of people you could benefit from learning from.
- **Sponsors advocate:** Sponsors are often more senior to you and have more power/authority in the company. They typically have worked with you to the extent that they feel comfortable advocating for you. They become personally invested in your advancement and may provide opportunities for you (i.e., put your name on the table for promotion).

Different people can play different roles for you - usually, there is no one person who does everything. However, people can play more than one role, and their role can evolve (i.e., after working with a mentor for a while they may become a sponsor).

Optional: mentors may share some of their own personal experiences around being a mentee in a coach/mentor/sponsor relationship

Self reflection questions (for students):

- Is there anyone you already know who you want to learn a skill or get advice from?
- Is there anyone who knows you well enough to advocate for you? If not, how can you develop those relationships in the future?

Discussion questions:

- Have you already found coaches/mentors/sponsors in your lives? Do you have any tips that you can share with the group?

Staying in Touch & Conclusion (5 min)

Highly recommended: Make sure that students have a way to contact you! Please only share your contact information if you're comfortable doing so. A couple of options:

- Share your personal or work email
- Connect on social media (LinkedIn recommended)

Closing questions:

- What was your highlight of the O4U conference?
- What did you learn from this mentorship group?

Optional: Coordinate with your co-mentors to send a follow-up email or create a LinkedIn group