Out For Undergrad 2022 Mentorship Program

Discussion Guide

Hi there!

This document is a guide for how to structure your sessions. It is *not* a script, but rather a loose direction for how best to facilitate the conversation between you and your mentee.

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

And 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.

And most importantly, 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. If you don't feel comfortable reaching out to Amanda, please use this **anonymous form** to share any concerns. We will ensure that the student is referred to Dr. Sara who serves as a resource for students with mental health concerns or who need additional support.

If you have any questions or concerns at any point in time, please reach out to anyone on the 2022 O4U Mentoring Team.

Amanda Zielinski Slenski *(Chief of Staff)*
amanda.zielinskislenski@outforundergrad.org
586-344-5668

Hannah Septoff *(Mentoring Team Lead)*
hannah.septoff@outforundergrad.org
8628120360

Dimitri Lippe *(Mentoring Team)*
dimitrios.lippe@outforundergrad.org
7163358328

Jordan Loeser *(Mentoring Team)*
jordan.loeser@outforundergrad.org
3174422537

Session 1: Introductions & Intentions – September

Goals of Session:
- Establish guidelines for a respectful, safe and brave space for sharing – ensure confidentiality throughout the program
- Get to know one another and find common ground / interests
- Articulate concerns, anxieties, fears and unknowns about the future
- Set goals for mentorship

Welcome (3 minutes)
- Check in
  - What 3 words express how you are feeling today?
- Chat through session goals

Introductions (7 minutes)
- Names/Pronouns/School or Profession
- Icebreakers – *pick and choose 1-3:*
  - What matters most to you in life and work? Why?
  - If you could live anywhere, where would it be? Why?
  - What type of music do you like to listen to?
  - What was the last TV show you watched?
  - If you could only eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be? Why?

Intentions (20 minutes)
- Why did you decide to apply for/attend the O4U Mentorship Program?
  - What excites, interests, or appeals to you about this program?
- **Reflect:** How do you feel about where you are now? *Could prompt on the following, but do not need to cover all topics for time:*
  - How are you finding your classes?
  - What did you spend your summer doing, and how did you feel about it?
  - What community is most important to you on campus?
  - Are you happy with your balance between school, work, social life, your own health/wellness, etc.? If not, what are you looking to change?
- **Set Goals:** Where would you like to be in 6 months, 12 months and/or 5 years?
  - What excites you the most about this goal?
  - What scares you most about this goal?
  - How can your mentor help you get there? - *Let mentee lead this conversation, and if they do not know / run out of ideas, the mentor should jump in*

Session 2: Career Development (30 Minutes) – October

Goals of Session:
- Discuss how you know what you want to do and/or how to find something you like to do
- Chat through strengths and areas you'd like to improve
- Discuss imposter syndrome
- *Allow mentee to choose direction:* Which of these sound the most interesting to you? What would you like to get out of a 'career development' session?

Welcome Back (5 minutes)
- Check in
    - What 3 words express how you are feeling today? *Mentor may also answer*
- Chat through session goals

Share Career Interests (5-10 minutes)
- *If possible, mentor briefly recap what career goals mentee shared last session*
- If mentee has clear goals:
    - How did you determine this goal?
    - What are your next 3 steps toward reaching this goal?
    - Feel free to get more specific, i.e., if mentee's goals involve interviewing for a job soon, share suggestions / advice for interviewing
- If mentee does not have clear goals:
    - Mentor may share their career journey and how they found / are still finding what they want to do
    - What classes / activities excite you most?
    - What do you value? *I.e., intellectual fulfillment from job, time to spend with friends and family, flexibility to work remotely, social impact, variety in day-to-day activities, etc.*

Strengths & Areas of Improvement (5-10 minutes)
- What are 3 of your strengths OR What would your friends say are 3 of your strengths?
    - How can you become even better at them?
    - How can these strengths support you in reaching your career goals?
- What are 1-3 things you would like to improve at?
    - What is one thing you can do to improve at each of these things?

Imposter Syndrome (5-10 minutes)
- What is imposter syndrome?
    - Go over the definition: "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. High achieving, highly successful people often suffer, so imposter syndrome doesn't equate with low self-esteem or a lack of self-confidence. In fact, some researchers have linked it with perfectionism, especially in women and among academics."
- Exercise
    - Have you experienced imposter syndrome?
    - What are some things you have accomplished in the last year? *If no answer, prompt:*
        - Completed a challenging class / project
        - Faced a difficulty in your personal life
        - Navigated a complex social situation

- Tried something new for the first time
- Pushed yourself to improve at something

Session 3: Authenticity (30 Minutes) – October

Goals of Session:
- Discuss what authenticity means to you
- Discuss what being vulnerable mean to you
- Discuss Code Switching
- Discuss Stereotype Threat

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Welcome Back (5 minutes)
- Check in
  - What 3 words express how you are feeling today? *Mentor may also answer*
- Chat through session goals

Authenticity (15 minutes)
- What does authenticity mean to you? *Mentor to share as well*
- What is stereotype threat? *Feel free to share definitions directly with student via Zoom chat, email, etc.*
  - **Stereotype threat:**
    - "Stereotype threat refers to being at risk of confirming, as a self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one's social group (Steele & Aronson, 1995). The term was first used by Steele and Aronson (1995) who showed in several experiments that Black college freshmen and sophomores performed more poorly on standardized tests than White students when their race was emphasized. When race was not emphasized, however, Black students performed better and equivalently with White students. The results showed that performance in academic contexts can be harmed by the awareness that one's behavior might be viewed through the lens of racial stereotypes."
  - Exercise
    - Have you experienced stereotype threat?
    - Have you ever noticed stereotype threat in school, work, in public, etc.?
- What is code switching? *feel free to share definitions directly with student via Zoom chat, email, etc.*
  - **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. Research suggests that code-switching often occurs in spaces where negative stereotypes of Black people run counter to what are considered "appropriate" behaviors and norms for a specific environment. For example, research conducted in schools suggests that Black students selectively code-switch between standard English in the classroom and African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) with their peers, which elevates their social standing with each intended audience. We also see examples of guidelines encouraging black people to code-switch to survive police interactions, such as "acting polite and respectful when stopped" and "avoiding running even if you are afraid.""
  - Exercise
    - Have you experienced code switching?
    - Have you ever noticed code switching in school, work, public, etc.?
- Additional discussion prompts
  - How would the 'real you' behave, and how does this change in different situations?

- Suggest that mentees hold onto these theories as they go about their days and as they explore career options (i.e., in career fair)

Vulnerability (10 minutes)
- What do you have to gain from being vulnerable? How can vulnerability help us grow?
- Why do we sometimes find it hard to be vulnerable?
- Do LGBTQIA+ folks face unique benefits and challenges with vulnerability?
- How can we intentionally make this space a place where we can be vulnerable?

Session 4: Being LGBTQ2+ in the Workplace (30 Minutes) – November

Note to Mentors: *Depending on where a mentee is in the job search process, spend more time on 'finding belonging' vs 'finding a welcoming workplace' sections*

Goals of Session:
- Discuss what it means to be LGBTQ2+ in the workplace
- How to find a sense of belonging in life and work (+ what to do in an unwelcoming workplace)
- How to find a workplace that celebrates/empowers who you are

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Welcome Back (5 minutes)
- Check in
  - What 3 words express how you are feeling today? *Mentor may also answer*
- Chat through session goals

What does it mean to be LGBTQ2+ in the workplace? (5-10 min)
- What would you feel comfortable wearing in a workplace?
- Do you change the way you speak in professional settings? How and why?
- Would you talk about your partner at work? How would you refer to them (i.e., 'partner' vs. 'girlfriend' vs. 'boyfriend' etc.)?

How do you find belonging in your future workplace? (5-10 min)
- Who?
  - Finding individuals / small group of people who you can be authentically you around
  - Find mentors who may have similar experiences and/or are validating and supportive of your experiences
  - At larger companies, there may be formal communities, i.e., ESG / Diversity Network
- What?
  - Speak to trusted peers, mentors and/or fellow ESG members about issues
  - If available and you feel comfortable, attend LGBTQ2+ / diversity events
  - If there are things you would like to change systematically in the organization (i.e., adding policies about anti-trans discrimination and pronoun usage), potentially speak to your trusted people and/or work with HR
- *Mentors, if possible, please share your personal experiences of finding belonging at work and/or what you did in an unwelcoming workplace*

How do you find a welcoming workplace? (10-15 min)
- What are you looking for in a workplace?
  - Things to ask yourself:
    - Will I insist on working for a company that I know is LGBTQ2+-friendly?
    - Will I consider companies that imply being LGBTQ2+-friendly?
    - Would I work for a company that does not have any formal considerations for their LGBTQ2+ employees?
  - What does working for a diverse company mean to me?
- What questions can you ask in an interview? *Prompt mentee and then offer suggestions*
  - "Would you say that your company has a diverse employee base?"
  - "Do you offer same-sex benefits?"
  - "Does your organization have an LGBTQ2+ support or social group?"
- What are some LGBTQ2+ friendly indicators you could look out for? *Prompt mentee and then offer suggestions, feel free to share list directly*
  - Equal employment opportunity policy

- Employment benefits (including transgender-inclusive medical coverage)
- Organizational LGBTIA+ competency (trainings, resources, or accountability measures)
- Public commitment to LGBTQIA+ support
- Human Rights Campaign's best places to work
- Capital Area Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (website contains a business member directory to help you identify LGBTQIA+-friendly companies in D.C.)
- Does the organization provide same-sex partner benefits?
- Is there an LGBTQIA+ employee resource group?
- Does the organization have at least one gender-neutral restroom?
- Does the organization sponsor or participate in activities or events that support the LGBTQIA+ community?

Session 5: Select Your Topic (30 Minutes) – November

Note to Mentors: *Allow the mentee to choose which topic to discuss today. We recommend deciding this ahead of time via email.*

Goals of Session:
- Mentor and mentee to connect further
- Mentee to choose a new topic most relevant to them and receive personal guidance / support on that topic
- Mentee may also choose to return to a previous session's topic to discuss in more depth

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Welcome Back (5 minutes)
- Check in
  - What 3 words express how you are feeling today? *Mentor may also answer*
- Chat through session goals

Option 1: Career Deep Dive (25 min)
A good option if the mentee is interested in the mentor's industry / job / company
- Questions for Mentee
  - What are you hoping to get out of your first job?
  - Do you have any reservations about this industry / job / company?
  - What do you want your professional brand within your company (or if applicable, in the industry)?
- Questions for Mentor
  - 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?
  - Who can the mentor connect the mentee with to learn more / answer specific questions?

Option 2: Resume Review (25 min)
If the mentee is applying for internships / jobs soon, this could be a good option. Ideally, the mentee sends a copy of their resume ahead of time and the mentor comes ready to provide feedback
- Check for the following:
  - 1 page long
  - Includes GPA, graduation year AND month
  - No headshot; no objective at the top
  - Simple formatting appropriate for industry (e.g., in business, no color or custom design)
  - Consistent format (e.g., margin, text size) without too much or too little whitespace
  - No overflowing lines (i.e., 1-2 words on 2nd line)
  - Bullets lead with verbs in a tense consistent with experience
- Work together on the following:
  - Keep bullet points to no more than 1 line for majority of resume
    - If there is an unclear description or it is too short / long, ask the student about that experience again
    - *Result: You may reiterate what they told you in a bullet to make their resume more clear*
  - General storytelling
    - Ask the student about their experience again
    - *Result: You may find they bring up something more relevant than what is on the page*

- o Quantify at least one bullet point per experience
  - Ask pointed questions to elicit something they can quantify
  - *Result: You may help them quantify more of their experience*
- o Frame verbs in context of their intended career path
  - Ask the student about how they completed the task
  - *Result: You may help them find a better verb that's better suited for their target industry*
- Identify next steps for the mentee after the session
- Resources
  - o [Resume Template](#)
  - o [Resume Examples](#)

Option 3: Open Discussion (25 min)
If mentee chooses this option, ideally ask them to prepare questions they want to ask you beforehand
- What conflicts have you experienced while working with people older or younger than you?
- How do you feel about change? Does it excite or scare you?
- Do you think you'll need to learn new skills in the next two to five years? If so, what will they be?
- How do you approach learning in the workplace? Is it a luxury or a priority?
- What do you foresee as the biggest challenge you will face in the next few years?

Session 6: Recap & Future Thinking (30 Minutes) – December

Goals of Session:
- Recap what we learned
- Thinking towards the future → goals, aspirations, next steps

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Welcome Back (<5 minutes)
- Check in
  - What 3 words express how you are feeling today? *Mentor may also answer*
- Chat through session goals

Recap (5-10 minutes)
- Intentions
  - Recap mentee's intentions for the mentorship program from Session 1
  - How did we do? What went well, and what could be improved?
- Visit previous discussion topics
  - Have you thought more about authenticity, impostor syndrome, code switching and/or vulnerability since our discussion about them?
  - Have you encountered any instances of impostor syndrome or code switching recently?
  - Do you want to practice more authenticity or vulnerability going forward? If so, in what part of your life?
- *If the mentee chose Resume Review in the last session:*
  - Do you have any follow-up questions?
  - Have you made any additional changes to your resume?

Goals Check-In (5-10 minutes)
- Check back in on concrete next steps toward mentee's career goals
  - *If possible, the mentor should recap some points the mentee raised in Session 2 about their strengths and career goals*
  - What have you learned about what your strengths are since the last time we discussed them?
  - Have any of your career goals changed or evolved?
  - Do the same 'next steps' we determined previously still apply, or should we set new 'next steps' for the near future?

How to Find Future Mentors (5-10 minutes)
- 'Coach' vs 'Mentor' vs 'Sponsor'
  - You may hear these terms thrown around interchangeably, but the distinction is useful to understand
    - **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)

- o 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, or their role can evolve (i.e., you work with a mentor for a while, and they become a sponsor)
- 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?

Staying in Touch & Conclusion (5 minutes)
- *If the mentor is interested in continuing the mentoring relationship*
  - o To what extent / in what capacity would you like to continue this mentorship?
  - o How often would you like to continue meeting (e.g., monthly, every 3 months, every 6 months)
  - o *If applicable,* where would you like to continue meeting (e.g., Zoom, phone, in-person coffee)?
- *If the mentor is not interested in continuing*
  - o Share the extent to which you would be open in future contact (i.e., if you ever want to transition to my industry, send me a message and we can chat)
- Connect on social media (LinkedIn recommended) if you are comfortable and haven't already