The CFANS Mentor Program - a signature program of the CFANS Alumni Society - connects students with alumni and other professionals to provide students with the opportunity to explore career possibilities, network, and enhance their professional skills.

“We have been able to talk about a variety of topics, and I have gained some valuable insight into what a career in industry could look like for me. I always end the meetings feeling encouraged.”

― CFANS Mentee

“I have learned much about myself as a mentor and about the responsibilities associated with that development process. I can provide guidance in ways that only come in hindsight. And, that is personally and professionally rewarding.”

― CFANS Mentor
About the CFANS Mentor Program

Each year, the CFANS Mentor Program matches about 200 students with alumni and industry professionals who share valuable career insights and guidance. Through this program of the CFANS Alumni Society, students explore possible career paths, learn how to build their professional networks, and enhance their professional and communication skills. The program is a great opportunity for students to get to know a professional in their field of interest and expand their network beyond the classroom, and a great way for alumni and professionals to reconnect with students.

The Mentor Program Steering Committee works to provide students and mentors with diverse professional experiences and recognizes the role that mentors have in training future leaders. These relationships have proven to be enriching and often longstanding.

In 2013, the Mentor Program received the University of Minnesota Alumni Association Award for Alumni Society Program Extraordinaire, and in 2014, the Mentor Program received National Agricultural Alumni and Development Association Award for Society Programming.

PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS

Time Commitment:
Mentor-student pairs are encouraged to have one quality interaction per month for at least one hour, October-May. For most mentor pairs, a successful relationship is developed through these regular meetings and conversations. However, the commitment should be determined by the pair and is subject to the pair’s scheduling needs.

Goals and Activities:
Mentees and mentors will spend part of their first meeting establishing SMART goals for the year, and find ways to achieve these goals through meetings and activities they engage in throughout the year. See goals handouts in this guide for more information.

Job-Shadowing:
Mentees will complete a half-day of job-shadowing by May 15, 2017. In some cases, long-distance mentors or mentors in certain industry areas may be unable to host a job-shadow due to distance or employer constraints. In these cases, the mentor will use their network to arrange a different job-shadow opportunity or the mentee will discuss alternatives with Mentor Program staff. Additionally, some mentors from companies or organizations with multiple mentor participants host mentees on a group site-visit as an alternate option. Make sure to take a photo of yourselves during the job-shadow and send it in to cfansaro@umn.edu!

What is a job-shadow? A job-shadow is career exploration opportunity for a student. Typically the student will visit the mentor’s place of work and learn what a half-day in the life of their mentor looks like. This provides students with insight that simply talking about the company, organization, or specific position often cannot. Students often listen, observe, and ask questions. Sometimes they are asked to assist with simple job duties. Mentors often provide short tours of their organizations, introduce students to colleagues, explain their daily activities, and answer any questions that come up.

Student Reflection Paper
Mentees will submit a one-page reflection paper about their job-shadow and mentoring experience by May 15, 2017. See Reflection Paper handout in this guide for more details.
What is Mentoring?

Mentoring IS:
• a commitment
• developing trust
• being open-minded
• gaining & sharing experiences
• strengthening communication & professional skills
• gaining perspective
• an opportunity for growth and learning.

Mentoring IS NOT:
• a guarantee of a job, internship, job recommendation, or life-long mentoring relationship
• just a resume-builder
• therapy or counseling
• supervision
• tutoring
• effortless.

Mentoring Dos and Don’ts

STUDENTS:

Do:
• set specific SMART goals
• prepare for your monthly meetings/contacts
• be explicit about your needs, limits, and time constraints
• be receptive to constructive feedback and advice
• ask your mentor about staying in contact after the end of the formal program, or, be prepared to end the relationship at the end of the program
• communicate with Mentor Program staff if you have any concerns
• realize that having a mentor is a privilege and work hard to take advantage of the opportunity.

Don’t:
• ask your mentor for a job, internship, or job reference
• be shy - mentors love to hear from you!
• assume your mentor has unlimited time for you - if you need feedback by a specific date, give your mentor advance notice and provide the date in your communications
• end the mentoring relationship prematurely.

MENTORS:

Do:
• provide support for your mentee as they work towards their SMART goals for the year
• help your mentee take initiative with the mentoring relationship
• listen to the needs of your mentee
• be explicit about your needs, limits, and time constraints
• ask before making a suggestion or giving feedback
• be prepared to end the mentoring relationship at the end of the program
• keep the door open for your mentee in the future
• communicate with Mentor Program Staff if you have any concerns.

Don’t:
• assume that your advice will be followed
• expect that your mentee will be enrolled in the major or program you graduated from
• expect that your mentee hopes to have the job or exact career path that you have or have taken
• expect that your mentee knows exactly what type of career path they wish to explore
• assume that your mentee does not need encouragement or reinforcement
• end the mentoring relationship prematurely.
First Meeting: Getting Acquainted

- Discuss your backgrounds, interests, and the student’s career goals
- Discuss your goals and expectations
- Establish a schedule for future meetings and discuss preferences for communication in-between (Phone? Email? Video chat?)

Conversation Topics

- Talk about the student’s skills and talents and how these can be applied in the industry
- Explore the needs and current trends of the industry and discuss qualifications for different types of positions in the field
- Talk about how your values have impacted your academic and career choices
- Discuss work/life balance
- Talk about training and skill development that would be helpful
- Explore professional associations and relevant organizations
- Discuss employers and work environments
- Talk about the transition from school to work
- Discuss professional standards and workplace etiquette

Networking Opportunities

- Attend a conference or professional association meeting together
- Mentor can help arrange meetings/coffee/lunch with mentor’s colleagues, either informally or as informational interviews
- Connect with fellow students, alumni, and friends via LinkedIn
- Attend a lecture or event on-campus
- Invite mentor to attend a class

Professional Skill-Building

- Conduct an informational interview and/or a practice interview
- Critique resumes/cover letters
- Practice proper professional etiquette for an interview, business lunch, or networking opportunity
- Participate in a webinar
- Search the internet together for job resources and other information related to your field
- Review a class project or assignment and talk about applying the content or skills to the workplace
- Practice for a class presentation
**Job-Shadow Reflection Paper**

**Instructions:** Students - You will write a reflection on your experience job-shadowing your mentor. This job-shadow should take place between October, 2016 and May 16, 2017. Your reflection will provide you with an opportunity to think more deeply about what you learned during the time you spent at your mentor’s place of work. First, briefly describe your job-shadowing experience. After this, your reflection may cover some or all of the following questions: How did the job shadow impact your career goals? Did it confirm your interest in the industry/field? How? Did it make you rethink your perceptions of this type of work? Why? Did anything about the experience surprise you? Did anything about the experience reassure you?

Submit reflection (at least 1 page, double-spaced) to cfansaro@umn.edu by May 15, 2017.

*Note: Future participation in the CFANS Mentor Program as a student is contingent upon your submission of the reflection paper.*

**Suggestions:**

- Prior to the job-shadow, discuss dress code, appropriate behavior in that particular workplace, and the events/activities you will participate in so that you are adequately prepared. Talk about what you would like to accomplish at the job-shadow.

- Bring a pad of paper and a writing utensil and take notes.

- Make observations about the physical work environment as well as the culture of the work environment.

- Ask questions! Here are some examples:
  - What kind of training did your work provide?
  - Who do you work with most closely? What is it like to work within a small unit/large unit? What is the company’s organizational structure?
  - What are your typical hours?
  - How do you balance your work and personal life?
  - How did you find this job?
  - What work do you do on your own and what type of work do you do in collaboration with others?
  - How would you describe the culture of your workplace?
  - What kind of advancement opportunities exist? What do you imagine your next steps to be?

Enjoy your job-shadow!
Developing SMART Goals

SMART goals can assist in framing the mentoring relationship for the year ahead. Plan on developing at least **three goals** for the year during your first mentor-mentee meeting. Your goals may change slightly over the course of the following months, but having them set out from the start can assist both mentors and students in developing focus for the mentoring relationship.

**SMART Goals are:**

**SPECIFIC**  
The goal statement should be concrete and action-oriented.  
What specifically are you trying to accomplish?

**MEASURABLE**  
How will you know when you have achieved the goal? How will you track and measure progress?

**ACHIEVABLE**  
The goal should require work, yet be attainable.  
Is the goal too big? Too small?

**REALISTIC**  
Do you have the ability and commitment to reach the goal?  
What additional resources will be needed to reach the goal?

**TIMELY**  
By what date will you aim to accomplish this goal?  
Choose a specific time-frame.

**Examples of student goals:**

- Learn about at least 3 careers in my area of interest and speak with people in those positions.
- Attend one ‘industry event’ with my mentor by the end of the year.
- Get my mentor’s feedback on one class project/presentation by end of spring semester.
- Update my resume for summer internship applications based on the input of my mentor.
- Research, explore, and get advice about available professional associations: purchase a student membership to at least one.
- Get advice on vet school applications and compile a resource document to reference during the application process.
Goals Worksheet for First Meeting

~ Submit goals to z.umn.edu/mentorgoals16 by December 1 ~

What are the student’s goals this year?
For example:
› Learn about 3 new careers in my field.
› Polish my elevator speech.
› Attend an industry event and practice networking.
› Get input on my application materials.

1. ______________________________________________________________________

2. ______________________________________________________________________

3. ______________________________________________________________________

What resources can the mentor provide to assist in reaching these goals?
For example:
› Introduce student to 5 colleagues.
› Review student’s application materials and conduct practice interviews.
› Attend 2 professional association or industry events to help student practice networking skills.
› Provide constructive feedback on academic projects.

1. ______________________________________________________________________

2. ______________________________________________________________________

3. ______________________________________________________________________

Communication preferences - email, cell phone, work phone, text, etc.?

____________________________________________________________________________

What is the appropriate “turn-around time” for responding?

____________________________________________________________________________
Planning for the Upcoming Year

Possible activities:
1. ______________________________________________________________________________________
2. ______________________________________________________________________________________
3. ______________________________________________________________________________________
4. ______________________________________________________________________________________
5. ______________________________________________________________________________________
6. ______________________________________________________________________________________
7. ______________________________________________________________________________________

Questions/topics to consider before each meeting:

**Mentors:**
- Are you providing access to....
- Providing opportunities to...
- Clarifying and setting expectations for unknowns such as...
- Helping connect them to....
- Engaging them by.....
- Preparing them for future success by...
- Helping them understand/interpret.....

**Students:**
- Do you have specific questions you want to get answered?
- Review notes from last meeting - Is there anything you had planned to prepare from your last meeting?
- What updates will you share?
- What’s coming up in the next few months that you’d like your mentor’s advice or support on?
• Q: Job-shadowing is not an option due to the mentor’s distance from the Twin Cities or the confidential nature of the mentor’s work. How can the mentee fulfill the job-shadowing requirement?

• A: If mentors live outside of the Twin Cities, the job-shadow requirement may be more difficult to coordinate. If mentors have professional contacts in the metro area, please reach out to them as they may be able to host a student or set up a job-shadow. If this is not possible, another option is asking the CFANS Alumni Relations office to coordinate an alternative experience. The student may contact Masha Finn at mfinn@umn.edu for support.

• Q: How can mentors help expand the student’s professional network?

• A: Introduce the mentee to colleagues and provide their contact information so the student can follow up and set up informational interviews with them. The mentor can also set up a group lunch or several coffee meetings with colleagues.

• Mentors can invite mentees to conferences, professional association meetings, or trainings. If the attendance fee is costly, it may be possible to get free admission or a discount because of the mentee’s student status. Sometimes, students can sign up to volunteer for part of the event and receive free entry.

• Attend CFANS and University events and lectures. CFANS alumni activities and events can provide great opportunities for you to network as well.

• Q: The match doesn’t feel like a good fit. What should I do?

• A: Though Matching Committees do their best to match mentors and mentees based on shared interests and backgrounds, not every fit is ideal. In a mentoring relationship, both the mentor and mentee can learn a great deal from one another despite differences. Try to find areas of commonality and focus on general professional skills if you find that interests truly do not align. If any issues come up in your mentorship this year please contact Mentor Program staff, who will work to resolve the situation.

• Q: My mentee/mentor is not responsive. What should I do?

• A: Please let us know of any communication issues. Sometimes it’s as easy as an email falling into a SPAM folder or correcting a phone number with a typo. No matter what the issue, we want to facilitate easy and open communication between mentors and mentees. Set up expectations early on to avoid any problems with communication during the year.

• Q: Where can I find more resources on resume and cover letter-writing, networking, informational interviews, etc.?

• A: You can find great resources on the Career & Internship Services website - careerhelp.umn.edu. Feel free to contact the office for additional information. Mentor Program staff would be glad to connect you with these resources as well.

• Q: Does the student expect to get a job or internship from this experience?

• A: There is no expectation that internships or employment will result from this experience. However, mentors may learn about job and internships over the course of the year and share postings with their student matches, as well as support them with constructive feedback as they apply for opportunities.
Upcoming Events at CFANS & the U

These dates are tentative. Please check www.cfans.umn.edu/alumni-friends/events-program for the most up-to-date information!

Tuesday, November 1, 5:30-7:30pm: Mentor Program Kick-Off Event

Tuesday, December 6: 5:30-7pm: CFANS Mentor Program Social

Wednesday, December 7, 12-1pm: Webinar: Ask a Career Coach Q & A

Friday, December 9, 12-1pm: CFANS Virtual Networking

Tuesday, February 8, 1-5pm: Environmental Internship & Career Fair, St. Paul Campus

Thursday, February 16, 5:30-7pm: CFANS Mentor Program Social

Friday, February 24, 10am-4pm: UMN Job & Internship Fair

Saturday, April 1, 8am-1pm: Classes Without Quizzes: featuring presentations from CFANS faculty

Thursday, April 6, 5:15-7:30pm: Mentor Appreciation Dinner

Wednesday, April 19, 5:30pm: Borealis Night of Excellence: Annual CFANS Awards Program

PLUS: Professional Associations, Industry Organizations, and Trade Shows (sample list):
Keep upcoming events on your radar!

- American Veterinary Medical Association
- Ecological Society of America
- Minnesota Agri-Women
- Minnesota Association of Agricultural Educators
- MN Section of the Institute of Food Technologists
- MN Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
- MN AgriGrowth Annual Meeting & Conference
- MN Milk Producers Association
- Minnesota Young Food Professionals
- National Agri-Marketing Association
- Northern Green Expo
- National Association of Environmental Professionals
- Shade Tree Short Courses
- Society of American Foresters
- Women’s Environmental Network

More professionals associations and orgs can be found at www.careerhelp.umn.edu
Contact Information & Resources

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**Resources:**

- **CFANS Mentor Program website:** [z.umn.edu/mentor](http://z.umn.edu/mentor)
- **Mentoring Guide Mobile App** from the UMN Alumni Association: [z.umn.edu/mentoringapp](http://z.umn.edu/mentoringapp)
- **Career and Internship Services:** [careerhelp.umn.edu](http://careerhelp.umn.edu)
- **Student Counseling Services:** [uccs.umn.edu](http://uccs.umn.edu)
- **Boynton Health Services:** [bhs.umn.edu](http://bhs.umn.edu)
- **CFANS Undergraduate Resources:** [cfans.umn.edu/academics/undergrad-resources](http://cfans.umn.edu/academics/undergrad-resources)
- **CFANS Graduate Resources:** [cfans.umn.edu/academics/grad-resources](http://cfans.umn.edu/academics/grad-resources)
- **CFANS events:** [cfans.umn.edu/outreach/events](http://cfans.umn.edu/outreach/events)
- **CFANS Alumni & Friends events:** [z.umn.edu/alumnievents](http://z.umn.edu/alumnievents)
- **University of Minnesota Alumni Association events:** [umnalumni.org/UMAA-Events](http://umnalumni.org/UMAA-Events)

Connect with CFANS Alumni & Friends & the Mentor Program on Social Media!

- [facebook.com/CFANSAlumniandFriends](http://facebook.com/CFANSAlumniandFriends)
- [@CFANSAlumni](http://twitter.com/CFANSAlumni)

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