MENTORING HANDBOOK 2014
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Introduction

The objective of Penn State’s Computer Science and Engineering Mentoring Program is to forge a mutually beneficial connection between alumni mentors and current students. Through participation in the mentoring program, both mentor and student will share knowledge and ideas, thereby working together to build and expand new skill sets. Both mentor and student work together to facilitate an environment that encourages mutual personal and professional growth.

Purpose of This Handbook

This handbook provides an overview of the mission and conduct of the Computer Science and Engineering Mentoring Program. The handbook acts as a resource for mentors and students on initiating their participation in the program and conducting their interactions within the program.

Program Description

Mission

The mission of the Computer Science and Engineering Mentoring Program is to facilitate the professional development of computer science and engineering students by providing those students with guidance, counsel, and networking opportunities.

Overview

The Department of Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) and the Computer Science and Engineering Alumni Society (CSE-AS) jointly sponsor the Computer Science and Engineering Mentoring Program. The program provides students with opportunities to interact with computer science and engineering alumni on a one-on-one basis and to receive advice and recommendations related to the academic and professional development of the student.

The mentoring program is administered by the Computer Science and Engineering Core Team Members. The Core Team Members are responsible for matching students and alumni mentors by background and professional interests to maximize the benefits of the mentoring process.

Participation and Eligibility

Students

All computer science and engineering undergraduate and graduate students are eligible to participate in the mentoring program on a voluntary basis. The program is also open to students that are interested in careers related to computer science and engineering.
**Mentors**

Alumni mentors are members of CSE-AS and serve on a voluntary basis.

**Rules and Responsibilities**

To begin the student-mentor relationship, both parties work together to establish guidelines and goals. The pair establish parameters for the relationship, such as preferred appointment time, frequency, and most convenient methods of communication. The pair also establish high, but not unreachable, goals to work together toward achieving. If either the mentor or the student finds the match to be less than ideal, it is his or her responsibility to approach the Core Team Members.

Below is a general breakdown of the roles and responsibilities of students and mentors. For more, refer to the documents referenced in Appendix A, designed to assist students and mentors in establishing and effectively cultivating a student-mentor relationship.

**Students**

Open communication is the foundation of a productive student-mentor relationship. It should be fun but professional. Students need to be enthusiastic and assertive in communicating their individual interests and needs. One of the greatest ways in which a mentor may be an asset to a student is by sharing real-world work experiences. Students can take advantage of this asset by asking questions about the workplace and how best to prepare for specific work environments.

Students may discuss a range of topics with mentors, from school work and career goals to extracurricular activities and relationships with other students, faculty, and staff. However, remember that while mentors play many different roles throughout the relationship, the mentor is not a parent or counselor. Students are responsible for their decisions, not the mentor. Most importantly, students must keep their commitments and remember that their mentors have volunteered this time to be of service to them.

**Mentors**

The five main tasks of a mentor are to: 1) establish a personal relationship, 2) help the student to develop career skills, 3) assist the student in obtaining resources, 4) increase students’ abilities to interact with other social and cultural groups, and 5) to encourage development in new field-related competencies. Most importantly, the mentor must foster an environment of open communication. If face-to-face contact is not possible, regular contact by e-mail will help to forge the necessary personal connections.

Mentors must keep in mind that students have different personalities and learning styles. As a result, they may need different kinds of support from their mentors. To develop a positive working relationship, the mentor should develop an understanding of the student’s learning style and adjust accordingly.
Mentoring Process

The Mentoring Program consists of three primary phases as shown here in Figure 1.

First, both alumni and students must register online. After registration, the Core Team Members will pair alumni and students in what they deem to be the most beneficial matches based on background and interests. Both student and mentor will have a chance to evaluate that match before mentoring begins.

Figure 1: The Mentoring Process
Registering

Students

A student begins the process of obtaining a mentor by registering for the program online at:

http://www.cse.psu.edu/alumni-friends/mentoringprogram/studentregistration

Along with basic contact information, the student shall enter background information such as areas of technical interests and career interests. Information provided by the student is used to identify a mentor with a background and interests consistent with or complementary to those of the student.

Mentors

CSE-AS members can volunteer to be mentors by registering online at:

http://www.cse.psu.edu/alumni-friends/mentoringprogram/alumnimentorregistration

To assist in matching mentors and students, mentors provide background information similar to that requested of the student.

Matching

The Core Team Members analyze the registration information submitted by students and alumni mentors to define optimum student-mentor matches. The student and mentor are notified of their corresponding mentor and student and their contact information. The stage is now set for the mentor to contact the student and the process of mentoring can begin.

The mentor makes first contact. Ideally, this initial meeting will be held face-to-face; however, if this is not possible, it is acceptable for the meeting to be conducted by telephone. The mentor can contact the student within one week of receiving notification of the student-mentor match. The initial meeting should be arranged for a time no later than two weeks after receiving notification.

During the initial meeting, the student and mentor should assess their satisfaction with the match. They should discuss their backgrounds, interests, and professional goals. They should also consider what kinds of goals should be set for the duration of the mentoring relationship.

After the initial meeting, both the student and the mentor should feel as if they have some common ground both personally and professionally. If the student and/or the mentor do not feel the match is appropriate, the Core Team Members should be notified. They will then match the student with a new mentor.
Mentoring

The mentoring phase of the Computer Science and Engineering Mentoring Program is continuous and lasts as long as the mentor and the student wish to maintain the relationship. However, at the end of each year while the student still attends the university, the student and the mentor are asked to submit a satisfaction survey to the Core Team Members. The Core Team Members will review the student-mentor relationship and consider re-matching if that relationship has not met expectations.

The success of the mentoring phase is highly dependent on the relationship between the student and the mentor. Face-to-face mentoring meetings and joint participation of the student and the mentor in appropriate social or professional events strengthen this relationship. Additionally, it is critical to the success of the mentoring process that the student asks questions and shares professional interests and goals.
Appendix A - Reference Documents

The following documents are posted online to assist potential mentors and students.

Guidelines for Students

A guide designed to assist students in developing and effectively utilizing the mentoring relationship. Includes sample questions students may ask in the early stages of the student-mentor relationship.

http://www.cse.psu.edu/alumni-friends/mentoringprogram/studentguidelines

Guidelines for Mentors

Describes the role of a mentor and summarizes best practices employed in developing an effective student-mentor relationship.

http://www.cse.psu.edu/alumni-friends/mentoringprogram/mentorguidelines

Alumni-Student Mentoring Program Goals and Action Plans – Form and Guidelines

An optional form used by students and mentors to 1) identify specific goals of the mentoring relationship and 2) detail an action plan to achieve those goals, including guidelines and examples.

http://www.cse.psu.edu/alumni-friends/mentoringprogram/actionplan

Resources for Mentors and Students

Resources and contacts for mentors and students useful for issues beyond the scope of the mentoring program.

http://www.cse.psu.edu/alumni-friends/mentoringprogram/resources

Stay Connected

To connect and stay connected with the CSE-AS, you can follow our Twitter feed, like and follow our Facebook page, and connect with our LinkedIn group. We’re using social media to share insights, invite your participation, and connect CSE alumni with each other and with CSE students.

Twitter: http://www.twitter.com/psucse_as

Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/psucseas

LinkedIn: http://www.linkedin.com/groups?home=&gid=6727782