

THE EARTH INSTITUTE ALUMNI MENTORING PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The Earth Institute Alumni Mentoring Program connects students with alumni, who help students as they pursue sustainability careers. The alumni mentors help students from their former academic programs with networking in the field, and with understanding the sustainability job market, including the *types* of available job opportunities and the required skills. In this way, the Alumni Mentoring Program strengthens the ties between *students* and *alumni*, and fosters closer relationships between *alumni* and the *programs*.

In volunteering their time, mentors serve as a valuable resource to students, but they may gain insights that help them in their own careers.

The expectation is that this professional relationship will be focused on career development, and that mentors and mentees will work together to set forth clear expectations, goals and timetables. We hope that these relationships will expand and grow as both parties progress in their careers.

STRUCTURE

Alumni will be asked to provide information on their professional interests and area of expertise. This information will be shared with students, who will be asked to rank alumni mentors in order of interest. The Earth Institute will make matches and announce the pairings in December of each year. Students will be expected to reach out to alumni within two weeks to set up a meeting. The duration of the matches will be one calendar year, unless either the mentor or mentee requests a change per the guidelines below.

BASIC GUIDELINES FOR A SUCCESSFUL MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

- Mentees should reach out to their mentors within two weeks of being matched.
- Mentors and mentees should establish how frequently they would like to meet and how best to interact (email, phone, Skype, in person).
- Mentors and mentees should decide from the outset what they are looking to achieve through the mentoring process and discuss these expectations and set realistic goals together.
- This is a professional relationship based on mutual respect and trust. Discussions and information sharing should be kept confidential.
- Although mentors can direct mentees toward appropriate career opportunities, **it is not the responsibility of the mentor to find the mentee a job.**
- The mentor relationship should, ideally, develop into a friendly and long term career advising, not just short term job search assistance.
- A successful mentoring relationship requires an ongoing commitment on both sides. We expect that the relationship will last for at least one year, after which time it may continue if both mentor and mentee wish to extend it.
- Alternatively, either the mentor or the mentee can request a new match at the end of the year. If one person is unresponsive, or if the match isn't working, either person may contact the Earth Institute Alumni Team (ei-alumni@ei.columbia.edu) for assistance. The mentor and mentee ought to discuss any issues before requesting another match.

GUIDELINES FOR MENTORS

- Mentors should, at a minimum, be able to provide mentees with insights into their own career paths and industries, while providing career search and networking advice in their respective fields.
- If appropriate, offer to review the basics of the job search, such as resume and cover letter, and presenting oneself in an interview. Explain the essentials of a career search including networking, follow-up, thank you letters, and the critical importance of being patient yet persistent.
- Help mentee improve upon networking skills, which could mean inviting mentee to join in industry events, reviewing the mentee's online presence, encouraging the mentee's participation in relevant associations or conferences, and sharing go-to information sources (i.e. newspapers, magazines, blogs, Twitter, etc).
- If appropriate and feasible, the mentor can provide the mentee with contact information for networking, using the mentor's name as a reference.
- Assist in fine-tuning the mentee's job-search strategy. Discuss industry landscape, market opportunities/trends and pros and cons of the hiring scene; suggest related fields to consider; help assess how skill sets match roles, then discuss how these skills align with actual interests and target industry needs.
- Offer to help identify three or four key attributes, which the mentee could highlight when speaking with networking contacts or interviewers (a short two minute pitch, examples that highlight qualifications).
- Offer to rehearse with mentee prior to a major interview, presentation, pitch, and be available to debrief afterwards.

GUIDELINES FOR MENTEES

- Contact mentor within two weeks of being matched.
- Mentors volunteer their time, so mentees ought to be considerate of their time and abide by their availability. Mentees must arrive to meetings on time and be prepared for the meetings with their mentors.
- Mentee ought to return phone calls and emails from the mentor in a prompt manner; follow through with action points, time lines, and follow up between sessions; and send follow up and thank you notes, as appropriate.
- Mentee should discuss their expectations and what they'd like to gain from the relationship. Together, mentor and mentee should develop a clear set of goals and objectives (short, medium and long term).
- Mentee should research their industry of interest and utilize the one-on-one career counseling sessions available through the Earth Institute to craft resume and draft cover letters prior to meeting with the mentor. Doing so will help mentee make the most of the time with the mentor and to leave a positive impression.
- Mentee should ask for advice, welcome constructive criticism, and listen to what the mentor has to say. Mentee may respectfully discuss concerns, as the mentor-mentee relationship is intended to be a relationship based on exchange of ideas. Keep in mind that the mentor has years of experience to offer.
- Keep the lines of communication open, even if the initial goal is achieved. Hopefully mentor and mentee have built a valuable relationship that could serve both parties well in the future.