Frequently Asked Questions

What is a mentor?
In MENTORSHIP GSA a mentor is a professional from your field whom you choose to have at least one meeting per month with for 6 consecutive months. This person will offer you advice, guide you in specific professional goals and support you over the 6-month period.

What is a mentee?
A mentee is a person who is guided and supported by an older and more experienced or influential person. In MENTORSHIP GSA the mentee is the graduate student.

What does a mentor do?
Your mentor offers encouragement and professional advice and acts as an informal coach, role model and connector to other professionals. They may assist you in identifying and/or developing skills, increasing knowledge, advise on career expectations and introducing you to colleagues in your area of interest. You may also be offered the opportunity to tour facilities and attend networking functions and events with your mentor.

How do I participate in MENTORSHIP GSA?
The first step is to read the MENTORSHIP GSA information document. Following this, interested students must set up a meeting with the GSA Employer Liaison to understand and discuss next steps. This meeting is called the “mentee orientation” and takes between 10-15 minutes.

If after the meeting the student confirms their wish to participate, they are guided to an application form and asked to identify three potential mentors that they would like to be matched with. The GSA Employer Liaison will review the application and, if the student is selected, invite him/her for an intake interview.

What benefits will I get by participating in MENTORSHIP GSA?
For the student mentee, you are:

• getting access to new contacts and community connections.
• building and expanding your professional network
• learning about Canadian business practices
• getting information, advice and guidance from a professional
• learning how your mentor got their job
• insight into different behavioral styles, both self and others
• improved communication skills

For the industry professional mentor, you are:
• connecting with the brightest of students
• possibly molding future leaders
• giving back to your community
• exposed to leading-edge research and technology
• developing personal leadership skills, coaching, and supervisory experience
• increasing connections and broadening your network

What is the mentee Orientation?
The mentee Orientation is a 10 - 15-minute meeting that students have with the GSA Employer Liaison to ensure that they understand the program and to address any potential questions they may have.

Is there a selection process for the MENTORSHIP GSA program?
Yes, there are 9 cohorts in an academic year. The cohorts are in September, October, November, January, February, March, April, May, and June. There is a cap of 12 applicants in each cohort, of which 8 will be accepted. The applicants that are not accepted will be asked to meet with the GSA Employer Liaison to discuss the reasons for refusal. If the applicant needs to improve on an area (communication/interview skills etc.) they will be directed to resources on campus to improve that area. If there weren’t any areas for improvement, the student will be put on the waiting list for the next cohort if they wish.

Are there any costs to participating in MENTORSHIP GSA?
The MENTORSHIP GSA program is free for all University of Calgary graduate students that are registered.

What is my time commitment?
Mentor and mentee are expected to meet at least 1 hour a month for 6 months. It is advised that mentor and mentee discuss the number of times that each would prefer to meet based on the expectations outlined in their first meeting. On average, mentees spend between 1 - 3 hours per month on the mentorship program.
**How do I find a mentor?**

First identify three people you might like to have as a mentor. You will need to provide the name of the company, institution, organization, or hospital etc. that they work at in Calgary. Researching the people will allow you to pick the one you think would be the best fit for you.

A good start would be to:

- Google your area of interest (ex. Oil and Gas, Economics, Music, Psychologists, Biology companies, etc.)

- Look at job posting sites like Indeed, Workopolis, or Monster and look at the job title you would one day like to have. Beware that sometimes these positions are posted by executive search firms and the business name may not be the company actually hiring.

- Use LinkedIn or other social media to identify company employees. Once you have a name, Google that person to see what you can find. Perhaps they're a University of Calgary alumni and/or have published articles.

- The University of Calgary has a Senate Office and the Senators are aware of MENTORSHIP GSA. Perhaps you would like to consider one of them as a mentor? You can find their biographies here.

- Look for companies in Calgary that offer business directories. Some companies will offer this for a fee.

**Does my mentor have to come from my faculty?**

No, in fact there may be a conflict of interest so we encourage you to look outside your faculty.

**What do I look for when identifying a mentor?**

Before choosing a mentor, think about what you hope to gain from him/her. A good mentor may not be the CEO or President of a company or the most renowned professor in your field but rather someone who will take time to learn about you, listen actively, and understand your needs.

**Does my mentor have to be in Calgary?**

In most cases yes, as one-on-one, face-to-face meetings tend to be most effective in building a mentor-mentee relationship. In some circumstances, we do allow for Skype meetings but it is encouraged to seek out mentors who are Calgary-based.

**How are mentor and mentee matched?**

After you’ve provided the names of your three preferred mentors, the GSA Employer Liaison will contact the first person on your list to inform them of your interest and send them the materials explaining the mentorship program. If they agree to participate
they will complete an Intake Form and the student will be notified. Should they choose not to participate, the GSA Employer Liaison will contact the next person on your list, and if necessary, the next.

Once the Intake Form is received, both mentor and mentee will complete an Insights© Evaluator and their personal profiles will be generated. In the first meeting the GSA Employer Liaison will debrief both mentor and mentee to ensure understanding of each other's preferred color preference to increase the probability of effective communication. Printed profiles will be distributed at this meeting.

**What is an Insights© Evaluator?**

The Insights© Evaluator is an on-line tool that has 25 evaluator ‘frames’ or questions. In each frame, you will be given 4 word-pairs to choose from. Select the pair that is most (M) like you, and the word pair that is least (L) like you. For the remaining two pairs, assign a number between 1 and 5, 1 being not at all like you, 5 being very much like you. Based on your answers, a unique Insights© profile will be generated for you.

**What is an Insights© profile?**

The Insights© profile we use in MENTORSHIP GSA consists of 18 pages of information on the individual’s “colour”, or behavioural and communication, preferences.

Any change begins with increased awareness of ‘self’. To this end, Insights© Discovery Personal Profile is used as a starting point. This amazingly accurate document supports the individual on a journey of self-discovery and a greater understanding of others leading towards effective interpersonal strategies. The system provides a common language for effective interaction and organizational effectiveness. Insights Discovery has impacted thousands of lives – and companies – across the globe. In Calgary, businesses and individuals pay approximately $600.00 per profile and debrief. This service is provided for free to students and mentors in the MENTORSHIP GSA program.

**How long does it usually take for mentees to be matched?**

It can take anywhere from 1 week to 1 month for a mentee to be matched with a mentor. MENTORSHIP GSA has deadlines in each cohort that we strive to maintain. This means, however, that the GSA Employer Liaison may have to match a mentee with a mentor from the roster, in which case a conversation would take place with the mentee.

**What happens if all 3 of the mentors that I identified refuse?**

This is rare, however if it occurs there is a roster of mentors that the GSA Employer Liaison can draw from after meeting and discussing it with the mentee.

**What types of activities do mentors and mentees do?**

Consider what you hope to gain from participating in MENTORSHIP GSA and ask your mentor to help you accomplish the goals you’ve set out. For example, if your goal is to increase the number of people you wish to know in the field of your interest, ask your mentor to take you along to events and meetings if possible.
Sample Activities for Mentoring

Activities are designed to expose mentees to many different professional situations to help them gain a better understanding of the dynamics of the business community. The mentoring relationship is viewed as an educational experience. The following are suggestions for establishing a supportive relationship:

- Breakfast/lunch/dinner meetings
- Internal/external business meetings with colleagues
- Corporate social events such as company picnics, annual parties, meet with mentor’s colleagues, networking to build up contacts
- Involvement in corporate/civic volunteer programs
- Professional development seminars
- Industry association meetings
- Mock interviews
- Inviting your mentor on campus, incorporate your mentor into a class project

Where do meetings with mentors take place?

It is important to accommodate the schedule of the mentor at all times (remember, time is money and based on the earnings of the mentor, one hour of time is equivalent to them giving you an hour of their wages). Past mentors have requested meeting in their offices, cafés, and sometimes are willing to meet on campus. In the times that there is a conflict with the date and time that a mentor has suggested, the GSA Employer Liaison will discuss alternatives with the mentor.

What if my mentor is unable to meet me once a month?

When recruited, Industry professionals are asked to commit to 1 hour per month for the period of 6 months. As they often have an extremely busy schedule, and sometimes due to unforeseen circumstances, if they are unable to meet with the mentee, they commonly arrange an alternative date and time. There will be no penalty if the mentor is unable to meet 6 months consecutively, however the mentee is expected to inform the GSA Employer Liaison of the circumstances in the 2-month and 4-month follow-up email.

What if I do not manage to complete all 6 months of the program?

If a mentee is not able to complete all 6 months of the program, they are expected to contact the GSA Employer Liaison and arrange a meeting to discuss the particulars of why this is not possible. Circumstances will determine the outcome of this event.

Failure to contact the GSA Employer Liaison, and simply “dropping out” of the program will result in the student being banned from applying to the program in the future.
Do I have to complete any assignments or provide feedback to the GSA Employer Liaison?

Yes, at the end of month 2 and month 4 the mentee is expected to respond to an email from the GSA Employer Liaison requesting information on the progress of the mentee, to confirm that a minimum of 2 meetings have taken place and that particulars regarding tasks that have been accomplished, and assurance that all is going well. Both mentor and mentee are expected to provide feedback at the end of month 6 by way of a survey.

Additionally, mentors have been known to assign tasks to the mentee, but these vary case by case and are not mandatory as part of the MENTORSHIP GSA program.

Can I participate in the MENTORSHIP GSA program more than once?

Yes, however, as this is a competition, and the goal is to involve as many graduate students as possible in MENTORSHIP GSA, the opportunity to participate more than once will be dependent upon the waiting list and number of participants in each cohort. There would not be another Insights profile completed if you have had one done in an earlier cohort.

How many students have participated in MENTORSHIP GSA before?

Since 2003, approximately 350 students have participated in the Graduate Student’s Association of the University of Calgary Mentorship Program. MENTORSHIP GSA was established in September 2016 and we had 50 graduate students participate in the program. Our goal in the 2017 – 2018 academic year is to include 60 students.