

## TRU Career Mentoring

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IT'S WHO YOU KNOW

## Student Handbook

**This handbook is a resource designed to support students in maximizing TRU Career Mentoring Activities.**



## Purpose of the Career Mentoring Program:

# TRU Career Mentoring

*It's Who You Know*

- NETWORK** with industry professionals
- LINK** education and career.
- NAVIGATE** today's job market
- PREPARE** for career
- RECEIVE** Career tips and strategies

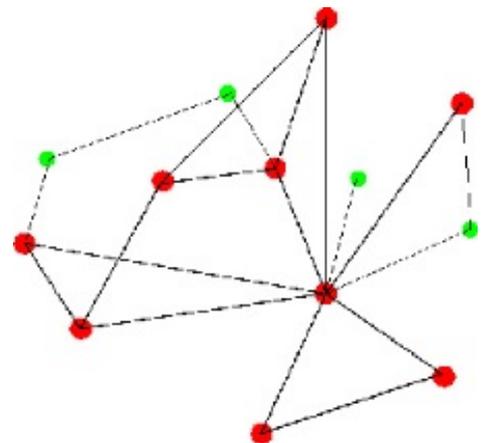


## Create Your Own Career Luck <sup>1</sup> and Enhance Your Career Development

Through participating in the **TRU Career Mentoring Program: Networking 411 Events** the networking, career research and preparation you partake in - is like seeing and opening inter-connected doors. Opening these career doors can provide greater career insight, understanding, and generate new ideas.

As you partake in your career conversations, explore the edges of possibility as new career thoughts evolve and develop. Effective career development, with you as the lead author, is best when these networks are connecting or even colliding.

Therefore: talk to as many different people as possible. The more questions you ask the better diversity of information you gather AND the more effective you get at networking. Also, the more events you attend, the more you become familiar to industry professional and the stronger your network becomes.



<sup>1</sup> Inspired from Steven Johnson's *Where Good Ideas Come From*, 2010.

These strategies and growth will not only expand your career knowledge and self-reliance exponentially but will fully accelerate your career development.



Image Source: <http://www.skulpt.com/images/doors-options.jpg>

## What is Career Mentoring?

- Career mentoring is a learning and developmental partnership between someone with significant career experience, and wants to help guide a student or alumni with less career experience and knowledge
- Mentoring is a voluntary relationship where mentors share their career experiences and knowledge with students who wish to learn and benefit from that information
- Focused on student learning and career knowledge acquisition
- A mentor can make a positive impact in someone's life by providing wisdom and advice
- Please keep in mind a career mentoring session is not a recruitment process or job interview



"Mentors have informed every good decision I have made, they have been my guides, allies and friends."

Christopher Seguin  
Vice President Advancement

### Student's Role:

- A desire to gather career advice
- Determine your specific goal(s) for mentoring activity (more information to follow)
- Be active, engaged and responsible in mentoring activities and conversations
- Come prepared to mentoring events with questions related to career research
- Remain open to new career ideas and advice
- Learn from mentor's experiences and knowledge
- Practice active listening skills (paraphrasing, perception checking, summarizing)
- Show appreciation and thank your mentor for their time
- Give critical thought to the career information you receive and weigh it against other information you have gathered
- Understand that your career path is *your* responsibility



### Establishing Your Career Mentoring Goals:

- Determine what type of career information you hope to gather and communicate this with your mentor
- The type of information you can gather can include, but not be limited to:



- Determining how to leverage the skills you are acquiring as a student in the labour market
- Conducting primary research on the labour market
- Enhancing your understanding of effective work search strategies
- Learning more about a specific company or industry
- Improving your professional networking skills
- Grow your professional network
- Gain knowledge on how to better integrate into a chosen profession



## Arranging a Meeting

- Students should initially contact mentors via email:
  - Briefly introduce yourself and your program
  - Thank them for offering to be your mentoring
  - Provide several options for meeting times
- Ask your mentor how they'd like to meet:
  - Face to face (ideal)
  - By email
  - Skype
- Suggestions:
  - Meet in a public place (office, coffee shop etc.) – if face to face meeting
  - Be flexible with your time; mentors are often very busy



## Prior to a Specific Mentoring Activity:

- Revisit and adjust your career mentoring goals
- Research the potential mentor(s) and where they work - for a Networking 411 event mentor information will be shared at [www.tru.ca/careermentoring](http://www.tru.ca/careermentoring)
- Research can consist of:
  - Visiting their LinkedIn profile
  - Reviewing their company website
    - Look at what work they do, service they provide or product they sell
    - Who are their customers
    - How did the company/organization start
    - What are their values? Mission Statement?
  - Googling potential mentors names and businesses
- Prepare questions to ask. For example you can ask
  - How did you get started in this work? How did you find your job?

- What are the duties/functions/responsibilities of your job?
  - What do you like most about your job?
  - How is the economy affecting this industry?
  - What is the best career advice you've received?
  - Did you have a mentor? Have you been involved in mentorship programs before?
- A more detailed list of **Conversation Starters and Sample Career Questions** begins on page 10.



### Initial Introductions:

Beginning a conversation with a career mentor can be intimidating. Consider the following template as a way to “break the ice.”

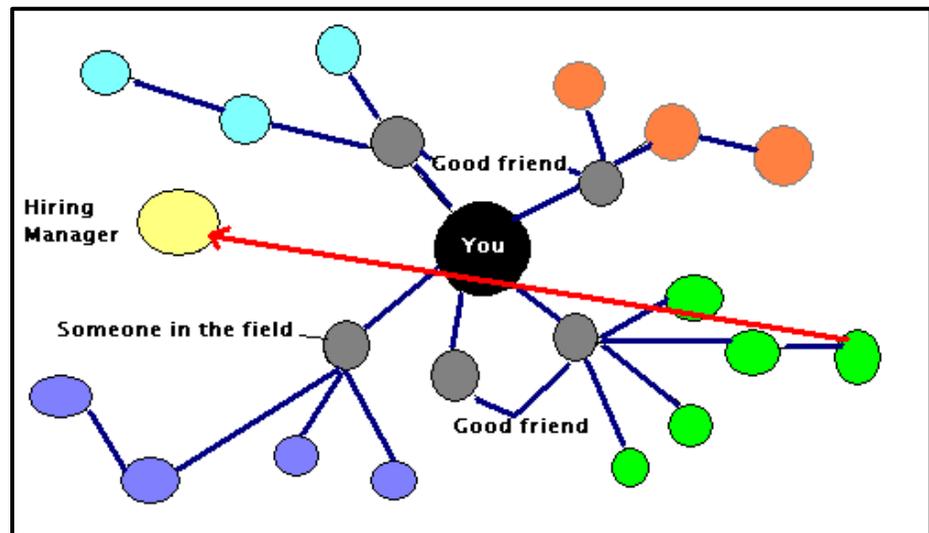
- Offer an overview of your education, relevant work history, volunteer and extra-curricular activities (clubs, committees, etc.)
- Share why you are participating in this career mentoring activity
- Mention your short-term and long-term career aspirations
- Ask the mentor an open-ended question such as:
  - How did you come to volunteer for this event/programs?
  - Have you been to other career mentoring events/programs?
  - Can you tell me a little about your career development?



## Overview of Common Career Mentoring Topics Discussed:

- **What are my career options with this education?**
  - Discuss the range of career options and pathways
  - Explore the skills, personality traits, and experience needed for these positions
  - Develop a list of potential career options to explore
- **Networking**
  - Ask for advice on how to network in this industry/occupation
  - Discuss strategies to build specific career relationships
  - Ask for suggestions on contacts to meet, events to attend and/or relevant organizations to join

The image on the left is a visual example of how networking can grow and develop, your career understanding and professional network..



- **What would an effective career development plan look like in the immediate months following graduation?**
  - Discuss the transition from university to work
  - Explore career development pieces and strategies to include in this plan, including elements such as:
    - On-line branding
    - Resumes
    - Cover letters
    - Networking
    - Job search strategies and actions

## Mentoring Follow-Up:

- At end of an event or a meeting verbally thank for taking the time to offer advice and career information
- Follow-up with a hand written thank you card
- Continue to touch base, for example e-mail an update, or words of thank you, as appropriate.
  - If they suggested you speak with a colleague in another department or different city, let them know you followed through and the information was useful
  - Or if they suggest you change your resume, send them an updated version
- It is also a nice touch to let them know when you secured work (or started a new education program, or developed a career portfolio, etc.) again thanking them for their role in the process.



## Would Another Conversation With the Mentor Be Valuable?:

After a TRU Career Mentoring event students often tell us they wish they had more time with one or two of the mentors they met. If this is the case with you, be proactive and explore a second (or even third) meeting a mentor(s) to gather more career advice.



- Contact possible mentors via email or by telephone:
  - Briefly introduce yourself and remind them how you first met
  - Thank them for the career advice they have already offered
  - Tell them why you would like to meet with them again
  - Provide several options for meeting times and locations
  - A sample meeting request is below:

*Hello Chris,*

*Thank you so much for the career advice you shared last week at the TRU Career Mentoring Breakfast event. I found your career insight and advice very valuable. As an imminent TRU BBA Alumni looking to pursue a career in financial advising I was hoping we could meet again so I could ask you a few more career questions, specifically around work search strategies you would recommend. I was wondering if you might have some time to later this week, perhaps for coffee on Thursday or Friday morning?*

- Ensure you come to this next meeting prepared with specific goal(s) and questions in mind

## Having a Second Meeting? Consider These Mentoring Activities:

- Ask for an office/facility tour.
- Have mentor review your resume and complete a mock interview
- Ask if it is possible to job shadow them for an hour, an afternoon, a day...
- Meet your mentor's colleagues who may provide beneficial advice
- Meet for coffee or brown-bag lunch and share career aspirations
- Connect on linked in – you can even ask for advice on your LinkedIn profile



## Additional Career Mentoring Support!

If at any point you have any career mentoring questions or inquiries, please do not hesitate to contact the Career Mentoring team. We are dedicated to the success of your mentor/student relationship and are here to support you. Help is just a phone call or e-mail away!

Arlene Olynyk  
Alumni Officer  
(250) 828-5498  
[careermentoring@tru.ca](mailto:careermentoring@tru.ca)



## More Conversation Starters and Sample Career Questions to Ask:

Review this list, selecting the questions you feel most important to ask during the conversation. Having a few questions ready to ask will help begin a conversation. Once the conversation starts rolling it is advisable to let the conversation flow naturally. You will get more career advice with a more natural and authentic discussion. At the end of your time, you can refer back to your questions to ensure you have asked the questions you hoped to.

### **Work Environment**

- What does a typical day look like?
- What are the duties/functions/responsibilities of your job?
- What kinds of problems, challenges and/or successes do you encounter?

### **Pre-requisites/Education**

- How did you get started in this work?
- What jobs and experiences led to your present position?
- Can you suggest some ways a student could enhance their skills before completing school?
- What work or volunteer experiences did you have before you entered this occupation?
- Which have been most helpful and why?
- What skills are most important for a position in this field?
- What are the educational requirements for this job?
- What other types of credentials or licences are required?
- What types of training or professional development do employers encourage and support for their employees?
- How well did your university (or college) experience prepare you for this work?
- What courses have proved to be the most valuable for your work? What courses would you recommend a student take?
- How important are grades/GPA for obtaining employment in this field?
- Which professional journals and organizations would help me learn more about this field?
- What kinds of experience, paid or unpaid, would you encourage for anybody pursuing a career in this field?

### **Occupation/Company Information**

- What are the most important personal satisfactions and dissatisfactions connected with your occupation?
- What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying? Most challenging?
- What do you like and not like about working in this industry?
- Why did you decide to work for your company?
- What do you like most about this company?
- What do you find exciting (or not) about this position? Why?
- What does the future of the company look like?
- How does a person usually progress in your company/field?

- In what ways is this industry changing?
- What is the employment outlook in this field? Is the demand for people changing? In what ways?
- What trends in the field would be most likely to affect someone just entering this career?
- What are the typical entry-level job titles and functions?
- What geographical regions seem to have the best employment options? In your opinion, is it better to look for work in Vancouver, Toronto, other

### **Personal Qualities Suited for this Occupation/Company**

- What skills or personal characteristics do you feel contribute most to success in this industry or position?
- What characteristics make people stand out in your workplace (for good and bad reasons)
- What sacrifices have you had to make to succeed I this field, and do you feel the sacrifices were worth it?
- When people leave this career, what are the usual reasons?
- What kinds of people experience the greatest success in this field?
- What are more important – technical skills or soft skills (attitude, work ethic, personality, etc.)?
- What is the most important thing that someone planning to enter this career should know?

### **Job Search**

- How did you secure your employment? Your career story and goals... (through their stories excellent advice is usually shared)
- Do you have any work search advice for a summer/recent grad interested in this field/position?
- How would you approach a job search for this organization/industry/city/country?
- What are the various jobs available in this field? And what positions would be most suitable for a student/recent graduate to consider starting with?
- What strengths, qualities, skills, etc. is your company looking for?
- What is the best work search advice you have received?
- Does volunteer work make an impact in the hiring process, and if so what advice do you have for finding career related volunteer opportunities?
- Would it be too forward to e-mail you my resume for some expert feedback?
- How is the economy affecting this industry?
- How do I find information on the jobs not posted?
- How important is networking in this line of work and where are the best networking opportunities?
- Are there any clubs or organizations I should join to better connect with individuals in this line of work?
- Do you promote from within – what role will our education have in promotions
- Do you recommend starting at the bottom, or applying for positions with more levels of responsibility?



- Who is involved in the hiring process in your organization?

### **Career Building Advice**

- What is the best career building/managing advice you have received?
- What would you change about how you have managed your career?
- Have you made deliberate moves to enhance your career?
- How has LUCK impacted your career?
- Are you doing the job now that you thought you would when you were 18 years old?
- Have you set specific targets or goals for your career building?
- What role has education (formal and informal) played in your career building?
- Have you experienced career changes or shifts? And if yes what motivated these changes?

### **Closing Questions**

- Who else do you suggest I speak with?
- If I have additional questions, can I contact you?
- Are there others in your company that agree to do informational interviews?

### **Specific Questions for International Students**

- Is there specific advice you would offer an international student in their work search?
- As an international student have you noticed companies in this industry that have hired international students in the past?
- Knowing it is more difficult to secure work as an international student are there activities I should be doing now to improve my career opportunities?
- How can I leverage my education, experiences and international experience for employment opportunities?
- Are there any specific companies you know of that hire international students...
- Can you give me advice on companies that support permanent residency?