

## **PUNSAN Mentor Program Guidelines**

PUNSAN, the Purdue University Nutrition Science Alumni Network, offers alumni members of PUNSAN the opportunity to mentor students currently enrolled in or recently graduated from Purdue's Department of Nutrition Science. Invitations to participate will be extended to undergraduate members of the Nutrition Society and graduate students participating in the Nutrition Science Graduate Student Organization (NSGSO). Students who participate in the mentor program may choose to continue the year following graduation.

The PUNSAN Student Mentoring Program is overseen by the PUNSAN Student and Young Professional Mentoring Committee Chair in coordination with the Nutrition Science Department PUNSAN Faculty Liaison, the Nutrition Society faculty advisor, the PUNSAN Undergraduate Student Representative, and the PUNSAN Graduate Student Representative. (These student representatives are active officers in the respective student organizations.)

Each fall the PUNSAN Mentoring Committee will obtain names and email addresses from the student organizations and will send an email invitation to participate in the mentor program. A similar invitation will be sent to all alumni of the Nutrition Science Department. Invitations will include a copy of these guidelines and a link to a survey to enroll in the program. The survey results will be used to form small mentoring groups composed of several alums and a small group of students. Students in the same mentoring group will be in the same year of study.

Once the groups have been determined, the committee will send out the group lists with names, email addresses, and phone numbers of each group member. With this mailing mentors and mentees will receive further instructions about setting up virtual meetings and discussion ideas. The committee will contact mentors and mentees at least once each semester and will survey all participants at the end of the school year to obtain feedback on the program and suggestions for future years.

### **Why participate?**

**The reasons for participating are well summed up by these quotes from mentees:**

*"I hope to gain an understanding of how I might reach my goals for the future and receive advice for how to get the most out of my education."*

*"I would love to have a mentor within my field that might be able to help me make connections and achieve personal growth."*

*"I hope to learn more about various areas of expertise/specialties to see if I might have the same interest, as there are so many different areas available to work in, the options seem overwhelming."*

*"I hope to have a mentor that I can approach with questions and they can provide answers or resources to answer my questions."*

*"As of now, I am unsure of what I want to do in the future with my degree, so hearing from someone with experience would help immensely."*

*"From working with a mentor, I hope to observe the connections that are made between the academic material I learn in school and its application to the real world."*

### **And from these quotes from mentors:**

*"Throughout my academic career, mentors played a critical role in helping me identify degrees and careers that would align with my interests and passions."*

*"It allows me an opportunity to share from my experience and to learn from them. I find it energizing and the connections have always been worthwhile."*

*"I would love to help a student because I have been in their shoes! I would love to give a student the support to make their dreams a reality!"*

*"I felt stressed and lost about the future while I was in school. I would love to help like-minded students navigate their way to a fulfilling career."*

*"Providing career advice to future graduates is the least one can do to give back to the university."*

*"I had amazing mentors at Purdue that helped me get to where I am now."*

### **What is a mentor?**

"A mentor is someone who takes a special interest in helping another person develop into a successful professional. ... The notion of mentoring is ancient. The original Mentor was described by Homer as the "wise and trusted counselor" whom Odysseus left in charge of his household during his travels. Athena, in the guise of Mentor, became the guardian and teacher of Odysseus' son Telemachus.

In modern times, the concept of mentoring has found application in virtually every forum of learning... A mentoring relationship develops over an extended period, during which a student's needs and the nature of the relationship tend to change. A mentor will try to be aware of these changes and vary the degree and type of attention, help, advice, information, and encouragement that he or she provides."

<https://www.nap.edu/read/5789/chapter/2>

### **A mentor's role involves:**

- Being an encourager and supporter
- Asking good questions and being an active listener, demonstrating empathy
- Being generous with sharing expertise, experience, and wisdom
- Being a role model, demonstrating ethical behavior
- Being respectful and trustworthy

### **What is a mentee?**

A mentee seeks to learn, grow, and develop, in order to reach personal and professional goals through working with a mentor.

### **A mentee's role involves:**

- Taking responsibility for learning
- Asking good questions and being an active listener
- Respecting and appreciating the mentor's time and generosity
- Setting goals to work on with the mentor
- Being open to receiving advice and feedback

<https://www.insala.com/Articles/top-10-tips-for-being-a-good-mentee.asp>

## **Expectations:**

- Groups of mentors and mentees will arrange their initial virtual meeting within one month of being matched. Making contact between group members can be via email, phone, or text. Options for virtual platforms will be provided with the mentoring guidelines.
- At the initial meeting, mentors and mentees will become acquainted, determine initial goals, and schedule one or more future meetings. Suggested topics for discussion will be provided by the Mentoring Committee. (See below for initial meeting ideas.)
- The PUNSAN mentor chair will check in with all groups of mentors and mentees one month after the program is initiated to assure contacts have been made and initial meetings arranged.
- Mentoring groups are encouraged to meet approximately once a month during both semesters. Regular meetings allow for deeper relationships and the potential to achieve greater success.
- Job shadowing or other career-related experiences are possibilities but not expectations.
- Any concerns about the mentor-mentee program can be brought to the attention of the PUNSAN mentor chair, the Nutrition Society faculty advisor, the Nutrition Science Department Head or PUNSAN Faculty Liaison.

## **What should we talk about during our first “meeting”?**

Your initial meeting should focus on getting acquainted. Potential questions include:

- Where did you grow up? Did others in your family attend Purdue?
- What led you to study nutrition? What attracted you to Purdue and the department?
- What are your interests outside of nutrition/school/work?
- What was the mentor’s career path and current position?
- What are the mentee’s career interests and goals?

Discuss the mentee’s primary goals for working with a mentor. What do they hope to gain from the relationship? What help do they need most?

Make a plan for the next meeting. Arrange a date and time to meet again and determine if additional follow-up is needed regarding any discussion points or questions. Attend meetings as often as your schedules and interests permit.

## **Help us improve the mentor program:**

Please keep a record of how often you meet, what is most beneficial, and any ideas for improving the experience. This will assist us in collecting this information at the conclusion of the school year and making plans for the future.

## **If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:**

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