I believe the key to a successful mentoring relationship is communication. Despite the fact that my mentor, Jim Johnson, lives in Houston, Texas, we’ve maintained frequent contact. We generally have a phone conference once every two weeks during which I provide a report on my summer internship search and Jim provides answers to any questions I may have as well as an update on potential opportunities for me. We also try to discuss at least one professional development topic unrelated to internships each time. We usually end the conversation by going over what was discussed and the tasks I have to complete. This structure has worked well for me as setting small goals encourages me to make consistent progress.

Having a knowledgeable person with a variety of real world experiences to help me sort through my thoughts about my future has been invaluable. Jim’s understanding of the type of career path I am looking toward has enabled him to put me in contact with the right people to help me get there. By introducing me to his contacts at various companies of interest to me, I have then been able to send my resume and cover letter to the appropriate people and correspond directly with them through that connection.

One tip I have for mentors is for them to share their resume and bio with their mentees. Learning about my mentor’s career path and where it led him in life spurred many questions about the idea of graduate school, working for different sized firms, employment overseas, and having jobs in different areas of engineering, which he has answered for me. Relatedly, a tip for every mentee would be to ask questions frequently. By establishing an ongoing and open dialog, there will be more opportunities for learning and growth.

-Lindsay Moschler, Civil Engineering, Class of 2016

Looking Ahead—Plans for Summer & Next Year

Whether or not you’re able to join us for the Spring Appreciation & Networking Reception on April 4, we hope each mentoring pair will soon convene to discuss and set concrete plans for staying in contact over the summer. During that same conversation, it’s our wish that you’ll also share thoughts regarding whether you’ll continue the mentoring relationship beyond the end of the program year in August.

Depending on your situation, mentors, and those students who will be returning to Vanderbilt in the fall as juniors or seniors, will have three options pertaining to your participation in the program:

1) You may choose to discontinue your participation by not submitting an application in the fall.
2) You may choose to participate but be matched with a new mentor/student when reapplying.
3) You may choose to discontinue your participation by not submitting an application in the fall.

Conversation Topics & Activities for This Month

☐ If meeting your mentor/mentee for the first time at the Spring Reception this Friday, exchange current pictures of yourselves beforehand to make finding each other on site easier.
☐ If you won’t be able to connect in person at the Spring Reception because one or both of you can’t attend, consider scheduling a time within the next two weeks to meet over a video chat platform like Apple FaceTime, Google Hangouts, or Skype.
☐ Establish a concrete plan regarding how and when you will keep in touch over the summer.
☐ Discuss whether you think you might wish to formally continue your current mentoring relationship beyond the end of the program year in August.
☐ Watch for an email containing the link to our end of the year survey the week of April 7 and then please take a few minutes to complete it before the stated deadline.

* Students — Before engaging in a video chat session with your mentor or a colleague your mentor has connected you with, review the tips found here and here. *

Visit us online at http://engineering.vanderbilt.edu/mentor
Questions or comments? Email us at vuse-mentor@vanderbilt.edu or call (615) 343-8061.