Insight From Our Students

As I left my first meeting with my mentor, Dr. André Churchwell, I slowly began to process all of the stories, advice and resources he had gone through in a span of just thirty minutes. In that short time, he spoke with me about the original research behind the basilisk lizard’s ability to run on water, his father, Robert Churchwell’s life and legacy as an African-American reporter in the South, and both the broad and specific details of applying to medical school, to name just a few. Since our first meeting, I’ve had the chance to meet with Dr. Churchwell several times and, recently, to shadow him in a clinic setting within the Vanderbilt University Medical Center. I share these stories because I’ve gained tremendously from interacting with Dr. Churchwell and I’m extremely grateful to him and to the School of Engineering for creating this opportunity for me.

I want to encourage my peers and, especially, the engineering students who are sophomores, to make the most of the Alumni Mentor Program. After sharing this experience with my friends at home, many, including those who attend other prestigious engineering schools, expressed a desire to have access to similar resources. As students, the responsibility for initiating contact with our mentors and maintaining a lasting relationship lies in our hands. By the same token, our mentors can aid our efforts by consistently making time, even as little as fifteen minutes, to call or meet us in person. One approach that works well is finding a regular block of time, such as 5 p.m. on the second Tuesday of every month, to convene. Additionally, use each block of time to the fullest. For students, this means coming prepared with thoughtful questions; for mentors, actively finding connections between students’ interests and your resources/network. Ultimately, I believe this is a rare and invaluable opportunity that will not only continue to demonstrate the excellence and innovation of our school but also benefit past, present and future students.

-Aditya Karhade, Biomedical Engineering, Class of 2015

Upcoming Alumni Mentor Program Events

Interactive Workshop for Student Mentees - Maximize Your Mentor Relationship!
Find your own style and learn there is more than one way to build a connection and develop a successful relationship with your mentor and your network as a whole. Space is limited—participate either Tuesday, March 18 OR Wednesday, March 19 from 3:30-5:00 p.m. in FGH 138. RSVP required via DoreWays (Events > Workshops tab). *Hosted by the Center for Student Professional Development

Alumni Mentor Program Spring Appreciation & Networking Reception
Although our program runs through August, we’d like to again invite all participants to gather with us in Featheringill Hall on Friday, April 4 to celebrate your efforts and the success of this first year. The reception will run from 4:30-6:30 p.m. and offer informal 1-on-1 time for mentoring pairs/small groups as well as time for networking with other attendees. Light refreshments will be served. So that we may plan accordingly, we ask that EVERYONE please RSVP online either way by Friday, March 21.

Conversation Topics & Activities for This Month

- Discuss with your mentor whether you both plan to attend the Alumni Mentor Program Spring Appreciation & Networking Reception and individually submit your RSVPs online.
- Register for and attend a “Maximize Your Mentor Relationship” workshop. Afterward, start practicing what you learned with your mentor and other new or existing contacts in your network.
- Revisit your Student Development Plan (Online Handbook, pg. 23-24). Discuss your progress with your mentor and make changes/additions as you both see fit.

* Students — Strongly consider establishing a regular monthly/bimonthly meeting day and time with your mentor. If this isn’t feasible, always have your calendar ready and intentionally set the next meeting before concluding a phone, video or face-to-face conversation with your mentor. *