

Mentor Orientation and Guide

For the AIA Atlanta Mentoring Program

2007 - 2008

Thank you for volunteering to be an architect mentor for a college student in the AIA Atlanta Mentoring Program!

The AIA Atlanta Mentoring Program is comprised of architect mentors who voluntarily meet with architecture and design students to share real-world experiences and life lessons, develop friendships and offer guidance as the students prepare for a career in the design professions.

Background

The program is designed to offer every interested student of architecture the opportunity to communicate one-on-one with a practicing architect. While it focuses on junior and senior level undergraduate students, all interested students are welcome. Currently, college freshmen to post-graduate students participate in the program.

The AIA Atlanta Mentoring program is voluntary. Students receive no credit and there is no minimum standard for contacts between the mentor and student. Your relationship with the student will be as formal or as casual as you decide between the two of you. Based on experience from previous years, we suggest that you personally meet with your student at least twice during the academic school year. Email and/or telephone correspondence can also supplement your contact quickly and easily. We have found that the most successful experiences have included personal meetings and direct phone/email contact. We expect you will use a combination of techniques that meets your schedule and availability.

This is not a recruitment program for the AIA, nor is it a substitute for, or in competition with, the Intern Development Program (IDP). Also, this is not a job placement program. Students are not expecting a job to necessarily result from their involvement in this program, though employment may be a natural outcome of the relationship you build with your student.

There is no cost for students or mentors to be included in the program. It is free.

Currently, Bill Abballe, AIA, is coordinating the efforts of the program to connect mentors and students. He is always available to be a resource for you as you begin your mentoring relationship with your student. He will also be in touch with you during the course of the year to ask your feedback about the program and how it is working for you and your student. There will be two brief evaluations each academic year, typically in January and April.

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Your Student

Based upon the questionnaire that was completed by each student, we have paired you with the student named in the email message. We have shared your name with this student. Your student is expecting you to make the initial contact, via email, written correspondence, or phone call.

Please contact your student and get to know him/her. Set up a time that you can meet face-to-face, if possible. Learn more about the student's interests, class projects, career direction, etc. Take an interest in what he/she is doing. Remember that your student is looking for straight talk and real-world perspectives on a career in architecture.

Some Tips

Here are some tips for a successful student-mentor relationship:

- 1. Be responsive. Respect each other.**
Students and mentors are all busy people. When you contact each other, respect each other enough to respond promptly. When relationships wither, it is almost always because the student or mentor has not been responsive.
- 2. Identify the kind of communication that works best for you.**
Email may be the best way for you to communicate. Or perhaps its over a cup of coffee or lunch. Decide what suits you both.
- 3. Be honest. Trust.**
For this relationship to have real value, you must be real with each other.
- 4. Be willing to give. Mentoring is a two-way relationship.**
Every successful relationship is two-way. This is no different.
- 5. The First Contact**
Students expect you to contact them first. Don't wait too long to make contact.
- 6. Leaving a Message**
Do not leave a message for a student to call you when they get a chance. This sends a signal of disinterest, not convenience.

If a student does not return your contact, please let me know so we can help. Sometimes students have to leave school and the word may not get to you right away. Sometimes they just need a reminder.
- 7. Problems?**
Whenever we hear of problems or questions, we will work to get the situation smoothed out as soon as possible.

What To Talk About

Finding interesting things to discuss will usually not be a problem, but here are some topics students want to talk about (obviously this is only a partial list, but it can get you started):

- 1. Him/Herself**
Ask your student about his/her background and pathway into the study of architecture. What inspired him/her to want to be an architect?
- 2. You**
Students want to know your pathway into the profession. Talk about your inspirations, motivations, interests, life goals, etc.
- 3. The Job Market**
Where are jobs available? How does someone become marketable? How do you put together a great resume? Portfolio?
- 4. Traditional Practice vs. Jobs Outside Traditional Practice**
What opportunities are out there beside traditional practice, i.e. education, corporations, government, business, public policy, etc?
- 5. Graduate Schools**
What are some good graduate schools to consider?
- 6. Big Firm vs. Small Practice**
What are the pros and cons?
- 7. Income**
What do architects really make?
- 8. Balance**
Are all-nighters normal? How do you balance personal and professional lives?
- 9. Inspiration**
What inspires/motivates you to achieve?

Would you like to help the AIA Atlanta Mentoring Program?

If you would like to be involved in the organization of the program as it grows, please call Bill. There is plenty to do!

Thank you!

On behalf of your student and the AIA Atlanta Mentoring program, we would like to thank you for volunteering your time and experience to build into the life and career of a future architect.

If you have any questions, please contact Bill Abballe, AIA.

“Nurturing professionals of tomorrow through a culture of mentoring.”