



THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

MASTER OF URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING

MENTORSHIP PROGRAM MANUAL



Welcome!

Thank you for your interest and participation in the UF MURP Mentorship Program. Our goal for this program is to help our students strengthen their professional career networks through mentor relationships with practicing professional planners. Our mentorship program is part of a larger professional development program that includes workshops, internships, the AICP Candidate certification program, and experiences, such as attending at APA Florida and APA national conferences.

We designed this mentorship program manual to give both the mentor and mentee information and resources to design a meaningful and purpose-driven mentorship experience. In this manual there are both guidelines and recommendations. While participants should plan to abide by the set guidelines, we support mentors and mentees going above and beyond to make the most out of their professional relationships.

If you have specific questions about the program, please contact either Dr. Laura Dedenbach, AICP, Graduate Coordinator for on-campus programs, at laurajd@ufl.edu, or Kyle Dost, AICP, Associate Director for the online program, at kyledost@ufl.edu.

We look forward to a great academic year ahead, full of professional development and academic achievement.



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1. PROGRAM INFORMATION

Minimum Requirements for Mentors & Mentees:

- Mentees must be active students in at least their second year of the UF MURP program. Mentees must also be student members of the American Planning Association (APA).
- Mentors must be members of the APA. It is preferred that mentors also be AICP certified and/or practicing planners for at least three years.

Participation Guidelines:

- The timeframe for completing the mentorship program is October to April.
- Monthly meetings may be virtual or in person:
 - Consider an in-office shadowing experience
 - Consider an out-of-office shadowing experience, such as a day in the field working on a project with a client or stakeholder
 - The first meeting will take place at the program kick-off event in conjunction with the Bartley Memorial Lecture in October
 - The final meeting will take place at the URP Student Awards ceremony in late-March/early-April
- Resumé and cover letter review by mentor
- Completion of an evaluation report on the mentoring experience (both mentors and mentees)
- Upon request by the mentee, the mentor will write a letter of recommendation (but only if the mentor agrees to do so)
- There are no formal obligations or events after the program ends, but participants are encouraged to continue an informal relationship

Program Contacts:

- **On-Campus MURP Program Mentorship Coordinator:**
Laura Dedenbach, Ph.D., AICP, Instructional Assistant Professor, Graduate Coordinator
laurajd@ufl.edu or (352) 294-1493
- **Online MURP Program Mentorship Coordinator:**
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Program Timeline:

1. September: Sign up; notification of matches
2. October: Kick-off event; first meeting
3. November: Target for meeting
4. December: Target for meeting (optional given school schedule and holidays)
5. January: Target for meeting
6. February: Target for reviewing resumé and cover letter
7. March/April: Final event at URP Student Awards Ceremony
8. April: Complete program evaluation (survey link to be provided)

UF MURP Responsibilities:

- Provide program goals and responsibilities
- Administer matching of mentors and mentees
- Host Fall kick-off event
- Host Spring conclusion event
- Promote the program
- Conduct an annual evaluation

Mentor Responsibilities:

- Initiate and maintain active contact with the mentee from October to April
- Provide preferred approaches to communication
- Organize at least three meetings and required resumé/cover letter review
- Commit to attend kick-off event and conclusion event
- Respect time commitments of mentee, especially class attendance
- Share personal knowledge and experience
- Reach out to UF MURP if any problems occur

Mentee Responsibilities:

- Maintain active contact with mentor, plan agenda for meetings, and stay focused
- Do not ask for or expect a job or internship from your mentor
- Keep mentor informed and ask for clarification when needed
- Take advantage of the opportunities your mentor provides
- Cancel and reschedule appointments in advance if needed. Respect your mentor's time.
- Reach out to UF MURP if any problems occur

Helpful Tips for Mentees:

- Identify preferred ways to communicate (email, phone, etc.).
- Mentors believe in this program, and more importantly, believe in you.
- The outcome of this experience will depend on how much effort you put into the program; creating and maintaining a successful professional relationship is vital and yet takes time.
- You set the parameters as to how you want to utilize your time as a mentee.
- Research the organization your mentor works for so you can be well-informed.
- Dress appropriately when meeting with your mentor. If shadowing in the office or meeting for lunch, business casual dress is appropriate. If conducting fieldwork, ask your mentor for guidance.
- Please be mindful that our mentor is a busy professional. Just like you, they may not answer emails or phone calls right away.
- Be sure to thank your mentor for their time and guidance.
- Contact UF MURP if your mentor is not responsive.

Canvas:

- Mentees will access their mentorship program assignments and information through the Mentorship Program Canvas Shell.

2. PROGRAM EVENTS INFORMATION

Fall Kick-off Meeting

At the fall kick-off meeting, mentors and mentees will have a chance to meet and understand the goals and requirements. Time will be provided to meet one-on-one. This is a good opportunity to work out a communication plan and find out about one another. You might also want to set a meeting date for your first mentorship meeting.

First Mentorship Meeting

In preparation for the first mentorship meeting, please consider the following:

Mentors: Consider the learning opportunities you can offer the mentee. Be prepared to discuss options for potential office and field shadowing experiences. Be clear about preferred communication styles. Work out a plan for how often you will communicate and interact with your mentee. Be aware that your role as a more advanced professional in the field can be intimidating. Be proactive in showing your interest in mentoring!

Mentees: Before meeting with your mentor, please be sure to know who they are and learn a little about their organization. Think of major goals or outcomes you want from your mentoring experience and write them down to discuss with your mentor. Send your resume to your mentor before you meet with them.

Last Mentorship Meeting/URP Awards Banquet

The final mentorship meeting should ideally take place at the URP Awards Banquet in late-March/early-April in Gainesville. At this event, the department recognizes significant student achievement(s) and confers scholarships and awards. If appropriate, mentors should consider nominating their mentees for such awards, once announced.

3. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ideas for Interview Questions

Here are ideas for questions to ask your mentor over the course of your mentorship program:

- What is your background, education, previous and current job experience?
- Why did you choose planning as your career?
- What technical skills do you have (for example, budgeting, law GIS, urban design, writing, graphic communication, etc.)?
- Do you have certification, registration, or license in planning or another professional field?
- What professional organizations or certifications are helpful in your career?
- What are your major career accomplishments?
- What are the major challenges that you see for planning in the future?
- What is your self-described management or leadership style?
- To what do you attribute your success?
- What is your favorite part of the job? Least favorite?
- What do you see as a growing demand or trend in planning?
- What skills should I develop to be competitive in the workplace?
- What educational or career advice do you have for me?

Resume and Cover Letter Review & Critique

As part of this program requirement, mentees should provide mentors with a sample cover letter for a hypothetical or real job, plus a resume.

Talking Points for Mentors

- Does the cover letter demonstrate why the applicant is qualified for the job?
- Is the cover letter well organized?
- Is the cover letter and resume format acceptable to the mentor?
- Does the cover letter or resume have any misspellings or typos?
- Is the resume easy to read and appealing to the eye? If not, what are some suggestions?
- Would this resume end up in the “In” pile during a job search? If yes, for what position? If not, why?
- What is the candidate missing either on the resume or in their skill set / background that could be beneficial to entering this work?
- What are the main questions/concerns/warning signs that the candidate should address on their resume (gaps, unrelated work experiences, too many job changes, general confusion, etc)?
- Is there too much unnecessary data on the resume that is distracting from their qualifications for the field?
- Are there any critical sections that are missing or lacking important information: contact information, experience, education, or other sections that the mentor might prefer to see when reviewing candidates like job objective, professional profile, honors and awards, professional interests and memberships, or keyword summary?
- Does the resume have a specific theme related to the position or field? What are some suggestions in building a compatible theme?
- Are there any accomplishments that you think the student may have that are not properly captured on the resume? If so, please generate a conversation to uncover those areas and why they are important.
- Is the resume exciting? Are there action verbs that jump from the page? Are there keywords that catch your attention?
- Do you feel that the mentee could benefit from additional assistance from the UF Career Connections Center?