

Alumni Mentorship Network Proposal

Submitted by

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Background:

For nearly 180 years Acadia University has produced successful alumni. These have included a Nobel Prize winner, Lieutenant Governors, influential entrepreneurs, musicians, public servants, and more. Acadia graduates have consistently proven to be among the most qualified in the world. A strong alumni network is good for the university's brand. It has potential to stimulate enrollment, advance fundraising opportunities, and engage the thousands of Acadia alumni around the world. Research of a similar initiative at St. George's School in Vancouver, BC has informed this proposal, with the objective of making it effective and easy to implement.

Objectives:

Goals of this project would include the following:

Short term:

- Make this initiative easy to establish regarding a small investment of human and capital resources
- Increase alumni engagement
- Build on momentum of arrival of President Ricketts through internationalization

Long term:

- Market Acadia's alumni connection to prospective or incoming students
- Strengthen ties with potential future donors and increase alumni engagement
- Build on momentum of arrival of President Ricketts through internationalization

Strategy:

The strategy to accomplish the above objectives would be to establish an Acadia Alumni Mentorship Network that would encompass the following methods.

Clientele:

Mentors would be Acadia alumni who are well established in their career fields and wishing to maintain a degree of contact with the university. Only alumni who demonstrate an interest in taking part in such a network and fill out the application will be involved.

Mentees would be students who will be graduating the coming year. Mentees must actively take initiative and seek the advice of their mentor- it is not the responsibility of the program to shepherd mentees to prospective mentors.

Process:

A Google Forms would have to be created and posted to a public portion of the Acadia Students' Union website. Funding for the addition to the website would come from the Young Alumni Committee, who have expressed interest in assisting with the project. At the top of the form a statement would read *"The Acadia Students' Union supports a diverse and engaged workforce"* as a disclaimer. A further statement would read that *"There is to be no inappropriate behaviour in this program by either party, and both parties must adhere to a professional relationship"*. Said Google Forms would include questions regarding personal information, including:

- Full name
- Acadia graduation year
- Email address
- Phone number
- Current employer/school & year of study
- Other degree(s) and year(s) of graduation
- Cover letter & resume

Mentors and mentees would rank their top choices from first to third. This would allow the Gatekeepers to accurately pair those with the best natural fit. However, mentors will have the final say in who they are paired with. Further questions would serve to narrow down the prospective mentee's field of interest and what they are looking to achieve out of the mentorship network. Keeping the application rigorous weeds out those who are not interested and keeps the talent pool a manageable size. Upon completion of the form, it would state very clearly that the expectation for this pairing is not for a job to result from it. In addition, a clause would be inserted that states *"The Acadia Students' Union reserves the right to terminate any pairing or remove participants."*

Since there is nobody is being paid anything, the Nova Scotia Labour Standards code will not be of concern. Between each mentor and mentee there will be a written agreement to underline the expectations within the relationship, what the ASU would like them to do and what they are agreeing to do.

Upon acceptance into the program the mentor will sign a written agreement adhering to the university's sexual harassment policy. Students are already under the jurisdiction of this policy by virtue of paying tuition, therefore they do not have to explicitly sign on to it. Depending on the occupation a confidentiality agreement would be drafted, as occupations like law, accountancy, or other professions require a level of discretion.

Recruitment of Mentors:

The BOG rep and CRO will write and sign handwritten letters to prospective mentors using information provided by the Alumni Office and Acadia Students' Union.

Layout:

On a page under the control of the ASU, profiles of mentors would be included. This would include a brief 100-word bio, and three key words describing their career field. Introductions

would be short and eye catching. This page could also be a powerful marketing tool for promoting successful alumni of Acadia University to the wider public and enticing prospective students.



Doug Allan '04

- Accounting
- Assurance
- Public Practice

Doug graduated from St. George's in 2004 and headed east to Montreal to complete a Bachelor's of Commerce from McGill University with a Major in Accounting and a minor in Finance. After graduation, he went to work with Ernst & Young LLP in Vancouver articling to obtain his Chartered Accountant designation. He wrote his exams in 2010, finishing on the Canadian National Honour Roll and as the BC Valedictorian for his year. Since then, he has continued to grow as a professional at EY over the past 8 years, focusing on assurance services for Vancouver based companies ranging from technology start ups to multi-billion dollar global institutions. Giving back to the accounting community and developing the profession is a passion of his. He volunteers as Treasurer for Presentation House Gallery in North Vancouver and consults with CPA Canada on accounting education in Canada. He is married to his wife Michelle and has one son Hudson, and another baby due imminently.

When he was making a decision on how he would start his career, the advice and support of various mentors was instrumental in guiding him along. His goal is to provide some insight into careers in business, especially in public practice accounting, and hopefully give some Georgians the same mentorship he received.

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This 'playing card' style will present a variety of options to prospective mentees. Each mentor would have a profile where they could elaborate on their accomplishments, background, and expertise. This would give mentees more choice. Mentees would then submit their application, cover letter, and resume for review.

Application Assessment:

The form would be reviewed bi-weekly by the Student Board of Governors (BOG) Representative, the Community Relations Officer, the ASU Building Manager, and two students at large appointed to the Alumni Engagement Committee. A background check through Google will be conducted for all prospective mentors, and if there is anything that is deemed a red flag they will be informed that they will not be eligible to participate in the program. Once an application is complete, in addition to resume and cover letter, the responses are sent by a

Gatekeeper to the respective mentor identified in the application. The mentor can choose to accept or reject this application based on whether or not they feel the mentee is a good fit.

If the mentor decides this a good fit and accept the request, they inform the Gatekeeper of their decision. The Gatekeeper then informs the mentee and tells them to *immediately* contact the mentor. Every 6 months a Gatekeeper checks in with each duo to see how they're doing. The Gatekeepers check into the database approximately once every two weeks, to ensure that there is no backlog of applications.

Concerns of accountability and liability have been raised. The ASU BOG rep and Community Relations Officer will be the driving forces behind this. Both are accountable to SRC, and the BOG rep to the Acadia Board of Governors, for successes and failures. **The ASU Building Manager will provide continuity to the project within the Union, overseeing the Alumni Engagement Committee and ensuring that the project continues with minimal investment in time on part of the position.** The rigorous application process for mentors and mentees addresses liability concerns, in addition with the Gatekeepers reminding participants that a job is not the end goal of a partnership. **It should be stressed that once a match is made, the Gatekeeper has to remind the mentee that this should not be a match made to ask for a job. Though a job may result from it, that should not be the purpose of engaging in a partnership. The ASU will reserve the right to terminate pairings or expel mentors or mentees from the program at their discretion.**

Resources:

The project would have two elected (BOG Rep & CRO), **one hired (Building Manager), and two appointed (students at large)** individuals dedicated to the maintenance of the network, henceforth known as Gatekeepers. Said network could be created using Google Forms, an easy-to-use software that requires minimal maintenance. **Funding for the addition of pages onto the ASU website would be provided by the Young Alumni Committee.** Gatekeeper responsibilities would include:

- Checking the network every 2 weeks for applications
- Sending the information of prospective mentees to mentors
- Informing mentees of successful pairings with mentors
- Checking in once every 3-6 months with mentor-mentee groups
- Updating the website with new mentor profiles

Acadia Students' Union:

It would become the responsibility of the **Student Board of Governors Representative** and the **Community Relations Officer** to be the elected and accountable faces of the project by creating and co-chairing an ASU ad-hoc committee, titled the "Alumni Engagement Committee". The **ASU Building Manager** would also take part in the committee, as that position will provide continuity to the project, ensuring that those on the committee were doing their jobs. The committee would send out an all-student email for 2 (two) **students at large** to help administer the program.

Publicity:

Having a well-advertised launch party advertised 4 to 6 months in advance to re-engage alumni or recent graduates is crucial. It also serves as a marketing and donation tool, solidifying the relationships between recent graduates and Acadia, making donation 10-20 years down the road more likely.

Implementation

Timeline:

- August 2017
 - o Discuss project in detail with ASU
- September-November 2017
 - o Build Google Forms & website pages for Mentors and Mentees
 - o Approval from SRC for project proposal

- November/December/January 2017
 - o Launch party for Acadia Mentorship Network

Timeline can be adjusted to consult with appropriate stakeholders

Evaluation:

This project would be reviewed every 2 - 4 months of the first two years by the Alumni Engagement Committee. Pending success, the evaluation period would occur at the end of each academic semester, in December and April. There will ideally be 15-20 matches within the first year. A survey will be sent out to the mentors and mentees of each cohort to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the initiative. Experience from St. George's shows that 60-70% are successful while 30-40% fall off the radar. The program must be sustained for several years before returns through donations or enrollment will be visible.