Disability:IN North Carolina
InRoads to Employment | Mentoring Guidebook
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Forward

This guidebook was developed by Disability:IN North Carolina under a grant from the NC Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD). The guidebook is one of the deliverables of the InRoads to Employment Grant which began on March 1, 2018 and ended on February 28, 2021. InRoads to Employment was designed to showcase innovative strategies for expanding employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in North Carolina, with a special emphasis on youth with developmental disabilities. InRoads to Employment focused on three major deliverables including 1) developing at least two pilot paid apprenticeships, 2) assisting two school systems to develop Pre-Employment Transition Services. and 3) creating a postsecondary mentoring program. Each of these three model programs were detailed in individual guidebooks that are distributed by the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities to encourage replication of these strategies. The guidebooks are also available for download on at DI-NC.org.

Disability:IN North Carolina is the only private non-profit, <u>business to business</u> network devoted to disability employment inclusion in the workforce, supply chain and marketplace. Founded in 2012, DI-NC's mission is to empower businesses to achieve disability inclusion and equality. We serve NC employers through business networking, education and training, consultation and support and sourcing opportunities that diversify both their talent pipeline and vender list to include individuals and entrepreneurs with disabilities. Our strength comes from our business members and sponsors across NC committed to creating disability inclusive corporate cultures. Our members are ranked among the best places to work for disability inclusion in North Carolina.

Purpose of this Guidebook

This guidebook on mentoring is designed to encourage community colleges and universities in North Carolina to develop mentoring programs for students with disabilities to help them connect to businesses and employers to enhance their career development and assist them to secure employment after post-secondary education. The guide can also be used to foster collaboration between the disability services and career service departments of community colleges and universities across the state to better serve the unique needs of students with disabilities. This guide is intended to introduce and define mentoring programs and to describe how Disability:IN North Carolina designed and implemented a model demonstration, known as CommunAbility Mentoring, in partnership with UNC-Charlotte. Disability:IN North Carolina is moving forward to expand our model, CommunAbility Mentoring to other colleges and universities throughout North Carolina.

It is beyond the scope of this guide to describe in detail the different types of mentoring programs. Mentoring services are widely practiced by intermediary organizations and businesses for a wide variety of purposes. Likewise, additional research is needed to further identify the evidence based best practices that define a successful mentoring program. This guide does contain a fairly extensive list of additional resources to assist others to explore different models of mentoring programs to expand the potential for others with disabilities who may benefit from mentoring services.

Introduction to Mentoring Programs

Mentoring is an established practice that is used to advance a wide variety of outcomes for individuals from children to adults with and without disabilities. Mentoring consists of establishing relationships between experienced individuals (the mentors) who provide advice, support and guidance to novices or less experienced recipients (the mentees) of the mentoring services. Mentoring is used by youth groups or non- profit organizations to encourage and support young people to advance in their school- work, explore different career fields and provide emotional support during stressful transitions.

Businesses may also participate in mentoring programs or design and administer their own programs to enhance their recruitment efforts and/or prepare younger employees to climb the career ladder. Businesses often use mentoring programs to build their talent pipeline and

DIFFERENT USES OF MENTORING PROGRAMS

1. Diversity & Inclusion of women, minorities, and people with disabilities
2. Developing Leadership (in general or for targeting groups such as women, minorities, or people with disabilities in the workforce)
3. Staff orientation & On boarding
4. Graduate programs (to encourage career advancement)
5. Succession Planning
6. Knowledge Retention
7. Transition periods (adjusting to business or organizational changes) (Cronin, 2020).

recruit a diverse pool of candidates. Community service is also one of the reasons that businesses will engage in mentoring programs, especially programs that benefit young people.

There are several different types of mentoring programs that align with the different purposes of mentoring including **informal** as well as **formal mentoring.**   Turning to experienced managers or co-workers with more experience to gain advice or direction is an example of informal mentoring. Informal mentoring relies on loosely defined associates, friends, managers and co-workers who provide support, friendship, guidance and direction on a mostly "as needed" basis. Informal mentoring is not typically based on regular or fixed meeting schedules. Informal mentoring is a common practice that is almost universal in its use by people with and without disabilities at some point in their careers. Most people turn to co-workers, colleagues and even managers for advice and guidance from time to time.

Formal mentoring is defined as an organized program designed to match people with mentors who can help them achieve a goal or target. Formal mentoring is usually provided within a structure of regular meetings or contacts between the mentor and mentee with a defined start and end date for the duration of the mentoring relationship. Formal mentoring can be face-to-face or virtual connections and can take place in group and/or individual, one-to-one sessions.

Value of Mentoring Programs for Businesses

Mentoring programs yield multiple benefits for businesses that use them. (Beshti, 2019) Businesses participate in a variety of mentoring activities including programs hosted by the company (for training and staff development purposes) as well as mentoring programs that focus on recruitment or community service. Regardless of whether the company hosts their own program or participates in mentoring services that are organized by other partners, business leaders recognize many benefits from mentoring for current and future employees. In today's

Types of Mentoring Programs

There are three general types of mentors including peer mentors, career mentors, and life mentors.

peer mentors: Peer mentors offer support and guidance that is informed by the lived experience of a peer who has "been there/done that". Peer mentors have navigated the same or similar path of their mentee and are able to ease the stress of the mentee by offering their insights on the path ahead.

career mentors: Career mentors focus on the mentees professional goals and provide guidance and direction on navigating decisions that affect the mentees career path. Career mentors may be managers or senior leaders or co-workers who have several years of experience from which to guide the mentee.

life mentors: Life mentors act more like "life coaches" and provide a sounding board for the mentee to discuss things that affect their overarching life goals.
A mentoring program can consist of one or more types of mentoring roles. For example: a peer mentor could also offer career guidance.   (Tjan, 2011).

competitive environment, businesses face the continuous challenge of attracting and retaining top talent. One way to recruit talent is through a mentoring program that also brings the added benefit of extending the longevity – and loyalty – of employees who serve as mentors.

"According to the Association for Talent Development, more than 70 percent of Fortune 500 companies have some type of mentorship program that is hosted by the business. (Jones, 2017)**."**

The benefits of mentoring are not confided to the mentees. Businesses and the mentors themselves also derive considerable benefit from participating in mentoring programs. A 2013 study, "Career Benefits Associated with Mentoring for Mentors," published in the *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, mentors versus non-mentors were more satisfied with their jobs and had a stronger sense of commitment to the organization as a whole when they were engaged in mentoring program. (Rahashi Chocsh, 2013)

Characteristics of Successful Mentoring Relationships

Because mentoring relationships are between individuals, each is unique; however, all effective mentoring relationships have certain things in common. Formal mentoring programs are usually time-limited and can range from just one day to several weeks or months during which mentors and mentees may connect with each other to discuss the goals and objectives of the mentee. Generally speaking, the longer, the relationship continues, the more positive the outcome. A notable exception to the longer mentoring programs is the Mentoring Day Program developed by The American Association of People with Disabilities

(AAPD). Regardless of the length of a mentoring program, studies show that mentees who perceive high-quality relationships with their mentors experience the best results.

"AAPD/s Mentoring Day (DMD), established in 1999, is a large-scale national effort to promote career awareness for students and job seekers with disabilities through career exploration and ongoing mentoring relationships." AAPD 2020, Disability Mentoring Day Toolkit. (AAPD toolkit, 2020)**.**

BENEFITS TO MENTORS

Research documents that **mentors** derive the following benefits from their experience:

- Increased self-esteem
- A sense of accomplishment
- Creation of networks of volunteers
- Insight into the needs and career aspirations of the mentees (Rahashi Chocsh, 2013)

Need to Improve Employment Outcomes for Young Adults with Disabilities

The need for effective strategies to connect students with disabilities to businesses who can hire them cannot be overstated. In North Carolina there are 756,600 people with disabilities (age 16-64) and only 32.8% are employed. **The National Center for Education Statistics reports that about 12 % of all individuals who graduate with a baccalaureate have a disability** (Education, 2018)**.** Unfortunately, students with disabilities often find that they face greater challenges entering the job market then graduates without disabilities. Achieving a college or university degree does not guarantee that young people with disabilities will enter the workforce with ease.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics,

"People who have completed higher levels of education were more likely to be employed than were those with less education. At all levels of education, however, people with a disability were much less likely to work than were people with no disability. For example, ***28.5% percent of people with a disability who had completed at least a bachelor's degree were employed in 2018; among college graduates with no disability, 75.5 percent were employed."*** **(US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019)."**

Employment Rates of Graduates With and Without Disabilities
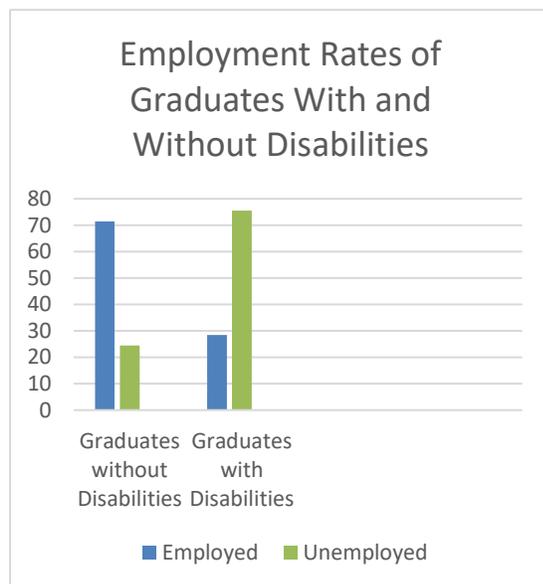
Mentoring Programs for People with Disabilities

Mentoring is an intervention that has been widely advocated as a strategy to reduce the barriers for successful educational and vocational opportunities for people with disabilities though the benefits of mentoring have not been well-researched. (Stumbo,2010/2011). The participation of Individuals with disabilities in postsecondary education (community colleges and universities) has grown significantly in the last decade.

"Studies show that higher education increases the likelihood of better employment outcomes." Stumbo, N. J., et all, Evidence Based Practices in Mentoring Students with Disabilities: Four Case Studies, *Journal of Science Education for students with Disabilities,* Vol 14, No.1-Winter, 2010/2011.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL MENTORING PROGRAMS

- <u>Clear and honest communication</u> is encouraged between the mentor and mentee by the program leaders.

- <u>Realistic objectives</u> are developed to guide the relationship and program leaders hold mentors and mentees accountable for reaching their objectives.

- <u>Structured Plans </u>are created that outlines the role of the mentor and mentee and provides a timeline and support for the relationship to develop (Johnson, R.C. & Paul, K.A., 2015).

The **Center for Creative Leadership** created an informative, at-a-glance look at the benefits of mentoring – for managers as mentors – through a creative infographic available at https://www.ccl.org/blog/mentoring-matters-for-managers-infographic/. However, research also show that the pursuit of higher education brings increased pressure of higher academic requirements and the stress of new environments and routines for college students.

Students with disabilities are uniquely vulnerable to the stress associated with higher education because of the added challenges they face navigating the accommodations they require to manage the disability in a new and different environment.   Students with disabilities sometimes find that they struggle to keep up with the academic demands when the disability supports and accommodations, they need may be more diffuse and elusive on a college campus.

Mentoring programs are one type of intervention that can help to reduce the stress of navigating the demands of college. Well-designed mentoring programs can also help address the unique challenges that students with disabilities face during their college years. Mentoring programs can also provide a bridge to better prepare students with disabilities to transition from college to careers after college.

Mentoring and Careers After College (Allarakhia, 2019)

For many college students, finding mentors is vital to the college experience because mentors offer support and can be a launching pad for career development during and after college.

"Research indicates that mentoring is especially effective in helping youth with disabilities transition into the workplace and adulthood. The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy(ODEP) has funded pilot projects to expand the capacity of community and faith-based organizations to promote mentoring programs for youth with disabilities through intermediary organizations. " (Labor, 2020)

Despite the importance of mentors, many students fail to realize how critical they are until after graduation when new support networks need to be established in the workplace. Like many social skills central to human relationships, some students find it natural and easy to cultivate mentoring relationships and other individuals find it difficult to navigate social relationships with friends, let alone forge a mentoring relationship that is meaningful and focused on career development. Establishing mentoring relationships is often an overlooked skill because informal networking is an organic process that people tend to take for granted. The presence of certain disabilities (autism, anxiety disorders, communication impairments) can increase the challenges these individuals with disabilities face in forming social relationships in school, work and life.

Disability:IN North Carolina and CommunAbility Mentoring

As a business- led membership organization, Disability:IN North Carolina companies frequently appeal to our organization to assist them to find and recruit talent from the pool of qualified graduates with disabilities. Contrary to popular myth, progressive employers are not trying to "screen

COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH AUSTIM

The social challenges for a student on the autism spectrum include problems understanding the perspectives of others, sharing personal space and making eye contact.

Many high functioning individuals with an autism spectrum disorder have extreme social anxiety and have difficulty negotiating with others and interacting with working in pairs or groups. (Marci Wheeler, 2020)

out" candidates with disabilities from their candidate pool. In fact, many businesses are seeking ways to actively recruit candidates with disabilities as part of a wider commitment to disability inclusion and diversity as well as to enhance the strengths of their workforce. DI-NC also hears from students with disabilities that they are concerned that self-disclosure of a disability will disqualify them from consideration during these recruitment events. The result is the businesses cannot find the candidates they are seeking because the candidates are reluctant to identify themselves as having a disability, creating a stalemate that hurts both the business and the student.

It is very common for businesses to express frustration to DI-NC with how difficult it can be to identify candidates with disabilities during the typical college recruitment events, job fairs and "meet and greet" sessions that are held on the campuses of colleges and universities across the state. Many students with disabilities (autism, anxiety disorder, mental illness and even physical disabilities) find these brief social events place them at a disadvantage as compared with their non-disabled peers who may sail through these events. The typical recruitment events on campus are short term meetups designed much like "speed dating." These events lack the structure and time required to build stronger, more meaningful connections between the business that is recruiting talent and students with disabilities. Disability:IN North Carolina decided to develop a mentoring program for college students with disabilities to address this problem from both the businesses as well as from the student's perspective

CommunAbility Mentoring Program @UNC-Charlotte

In December 2019, Disability:IN North Carolina (DI-NC), the Career Center, and the Disability Support Services at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, began to collaborate on the development of a mentoring program for students with disabilities. The goal was to match the students with business mentors to support their transition to careers that were in similar industries to their mentors. As referenced in the introduction, the CommunAbility Mentoring Program was developed by Disability:IN North Carolina as one of the deliverables of the InRoads to Employment Initiative. DI-NC met with three different community colleges before developing the relationship with UNC Charlotte.
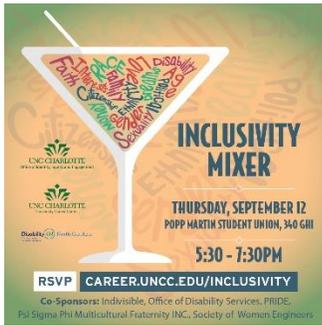
UNC CHARLOTTE Inclusivity Mixer

The Inclusivity Mixer is UNC CHARLOTTE's premier diversity recruitment event. The event was started in Spring 2017.

We had a total of 22 employers and 67 students attend the first event. As of Fall 2019, we had 75 employers and nearly 300 students attend.

We discovered that the community colleges were not prepared to engage in developing a pilot mentoring program for students with disabilities. Specifically, staff at the community college who work for disability support services and the career centers play multiple roles for the community college and have less time and fewer resources available to collaborate with us to build out a new program model. Perhaps in the future, community colleges will be better resourced to devote time to developing mentoring as a program offering for students with disabilities as DI-NC is still interested in developing this model. Prior to partnering with DI-NC, staff from the UNC Charlotte's Career Center and Disability Support Services had already partnered on some other recruitment efforts that paved the way for us to collaborate on CommunAbility Mentoring. The University Career Center and Office of Disability Support Services has collaborated on initiatives in inclusion through our annual **Inclusivity Mixer**, for recruitment of diverse students by Employers. We have also focused on panels to educate employers and Career Center staff on assisting students and alumni with disabilities in their job and internship search.

UNC Charlotte recognized that more collaboration was needed to continue to expand the partnership between these departments and increase employment outcomes for students with disabilities after graduation. Developing CommunAbility Mentoring program proved to be the ideal strategy for expanding UNC Charlotte's collaboration across these departments on campus.

Figure 1 Beth Butler, Executive Director, DI-NC, addresses UNC CHARLOTTE students and businesses at the 2019 Inclusivity Mixer.

CommunAbility Mentoring aligns with   the University's objectives to enhance diversity awareness, access, and inclusion strategies by connecting students with disabilities to business leaders and the community. CommunAbility Mentoring also viewed as beneficial to enhancing the universities interface with businesses in search of talent. UNC Charlotte recognized that by partnering with DI-NC, UNC Charlotte could also enhance its institutional presence with business leaders throughout Charlotte Mecklenburg who are actively promoting disability inclusion and employment strategies.

Figure 3 Matthew French, Assistant Director for Employer Relations, UNC- Charlotte

To develop the program, DI-NC first focused on expanding the collaboration between the Career Center and Disability Support Services to increase the participation of students with disabilities in activities that would foster their career trajectory after college. The UNC Charlotte's Career Center expressed the desire to provide more robust, targeted training (on topics such as self-disclosure, accommodations, and job search strategies unique to students with disabilities, etc.) to Career Center staff to enable them to better understand and meet the needs of students with disabilities. Disability:IN North Carolina designed and delivered training on disability disclosure and disability inclusion strategies for both the Career Center staff during the Spring, 2020.

Going forward DI-NC has plans to develop additional training for UNC Charlotte to include outreach to professors and other university employees on disability inclusion and cultural transformation.

"My role at UNC Charlotte's University Career Center is to focus on the development of employer relationships. With that focus I also assist them on their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion recruitment initiatives. To tap into the talent pool, employers need to make meaningful connections that impact students on campus. That is where CommunAbility Mentoring comes in to help our employers make stronger connections with students and increase their positive brand image on campus."   Matt French, Assistant Director for Employer Relations, UNC- Charlotte.

The goal of the initial training sessions focused on building the capacity to engage students with disabilities in career development opportunities and develop stronger career networks with students in the future. Staff from the Disability Support Services were also included in these training sessions. Between training sessions, Disability Support Services continued to provide on campus technical support to the Career Center to advance their understanding of the unique needs of specific students with disabilities. During the summer, DI-NC and staff from the Career Center and Disability Support Services developed recruitment strategies to identify students with disabilities and find business leaders from similar fields for these students who would commit to mentoring students. While the CommunAbility structure was being developed, DI-NC and the Career Center Staff decided to leverage resources in order to secure funding to enable the Career Center to hire a graduate assistant and offer additional disability inclusion training.

Figure 4 Xuan Troung, Career Coach for Disability Outreach, Career Center, UNC-Charlotte

One of our goals was to find the resources to hire a student with disabilities as a peer counselor to provide leadership and peer support for students with disabilities seeking assistance from the Career Center. The leadership at the Career Center felt that hiring a student with a disability would clearly demonstrate the Center's commitment to disability inclusion would provide a role model for other students with disabilities as well as for students without disabilities, other administrative staff and even faculty. With the funding we obtained through the grant we were able to hire a Graduate Assistant to help the University Career Center oversee the CommunAbility Program, provide scholarships for students to attend the annual DisabilityIN NC Conference, and provide staff with training on disability inclusion. DI-NC and the Career Center Staff collaborated to develop a proposal in response to the UNC Charlotte's Chancellor's Diversity Challenge Fund 2020**.** The funding enabled the Career Center to hire Xuan Troung, a graduate student with disabilities to partner with DI-NC on the development of CommunAbility@UNC Charlotte. Xuan is working on her Master of Social Work degree and is due to graduate in May 2022.

By the start of the fall semester, in late August 2020, CommunAbility was ready to launch with the first group of business leaders as mentors, and senior level students with disabilities (our mentees).

THE ROLE OF THE CAREER COACH FOR DISABILITY OUTREACH

I was hired by the Career Center (UNC CHARLOTTE) as a Career Coach Graduate Assistant (GA) to focus on Disability Outreach, a role before this semester did not exist. We decided to work with programs that already existed and included disability related material to them. This included:

- Adding two new topics to the Meet Up Program (a 30-45-minute meeting that discusses a career related topic). They include:
  - Self-Disclosure
  - Disability and Networking: Building Community & Relationships
- Having disability as a panel topic at UNC CHARLOTTE's Inclusivity Week
- Bringing awareness of barriers with virtual events such as closed captioning, screen readers compatibility, and sign language interpreters
- Sending out a campus wide survey on the accessibility of the Career Center

One of my main responsibilities was to help oversee UCC's and Disability:IN's newest collaborative mentoring program CommunAbility. So far, the feedback has been positive. We've seen an internship opportunity arise, relationships forming, and hopefully all resulting in

How CommunAbility Mentoring Works

The goal of CommunAbility Mentoring is to create an inclusive and productive community by expanding economic opportunity for students with disabilities through meaningful relationships with business mentors. The Disability:IN North Carolina / CommunAbility Mentoring program matches business mentors to university students with disabilities for mentoring sessions that take place during their senior year.

The mentors for this program are business leaders (with or without disabilities) or individuals with disabilities with leadership abilities derived from peer mentor training and lived experience. Ideally, business mentors are recruited from the industries that represent the student's major or career field.   The business mentors build relationships with students, fostering confidence and supporting them to achieve their career goals. Business mentors also support students to expand their knowledge of financial literacy, self-disclosure and accommodation plans and foster their confidence to achieve their career goals via effective job search and networking strategies

CommunAbility Mentoring Program @UNC-Charlotte |Business Recruitment

The CommunAbility Mentoring Program began to serve students in early August 2020 and will continue through to the end of the Spring semester in April 2021.* Group mentoring sessions were conducted monthly, followed by individual mentoring sessions, by phone, or online. Using the Characteristics of Successful Mentoring Programs (, DI-NC and UNC Charlotte implemented the following best practices.

- **A highly qualified staff:** The staff of DI-NC are highly qualified to implement the program (see attached bios) . DI-NC is the subject matter expert for businesses on disability employment and inclusion. Whereas the staff of UNC CHARLOTTE's Career Center are the experts in supporting students through their transition for college to work. The skill sets and experience of the partners were major contributors to the success of the CommunAbility Mentoring Program.

- **Screening of mentors:** Business Leaders who were interested in becoming mentors were required to apply to the program using the mentor application (see attachments). After applications were submitted, DI-NC contacted each applicant to review their qualifications, discuss any past experience with mentoring, and explore more specific information about the industry they represent in order to match them to a mentee with the same or similar career interests.

- **Structured and regularly monitored mentoring matches:** CommunAbility Mentoring provides for monthly group mentoring sessions during which mentors and mentees take part in a group training session on a topic of interest. Following the topical presentation, the business mentors meet separately with DI-NC staff to discuss how individual mentoring sessions are progressing, identify issues of concern and clarify roles. UNC Charlotte Career Center staff meet with the student mentees to discuss any concerns they may have, and to get their feedback concerning the benefits of the individual mentoring sessions they are attending with their mentors between group sessions. After each group session, notes are distributed to both mentors and mentees and all participants are encouraged to contact DI-NC and UNC Charlotte Career Center between sessions to continue to monitor the mentoring experiences of both mentors and mentees.

- **Training for mentors, both before a match and ongoing:** CommunAbility Mentoring provided orientation training for all mentors that was led by DI-NC. On-going training is provided for both mentors and mentees during each of the group mentoring sessions as described above.

- **A focus on the needs and interests of the mentees, not the expectations of mentors:** Throughout the program it is made clear that the focus of CommunAbility is to prioritize the needs and concerns of the student mentees. Often business mentors hope to recruit talent from the mentee pool and become more connected to the recruitment opportunities offered by the UNC Charlotte Career Center. Participation in CommunAbility Mentoring can also contribute to the " brand lift" that businesses gain from community service, this is an ancillary goal that is not a central focus for the program.

- **Appropriate levels of visibility and accountability built into the mentoring relationship:** Both mentors and mentees taking part in CommunAbility must sign the statements that attest to their compliance with ethical guidelines. Mentors were asked to sign the ethical guidelines outlined in the UNC Charlotte Volunteer Duties and Requirements form. Whereas student mentees were asked to reaffirm their

TRAINING TOPICS FOR GROUP MENTORING SESSIONS

The Americans with Disabilities ACT (ADA)

Self-ID

Self -Disclosure

Managing Visible Versus Invisible Disabilities

Asking for Accommodations: Before, during or after interviews, & After the job offer

Creating & Managing Your Professional Brand

Leveraging Linkedin and other social media

Building Your Professional Network of Support

Job Search and Interviewing Strategies (DI-NC, 2020)

commitment to the Student Conduct Statement required of all participating UNC Charlotte students. At periodic intervals throughout the program, surveys are completed by both mentors and mentees to assess the benefits of the program, hold both parties accountable for their participation and to advance continuous program improvement.

The Role of Business Mentors

Clearly defined roles for both the mentors and the mentees are critical to the success of CommunAbility Mentoring. Detailed below are the role of the business mentor followed by a description of the role of student mentees.

How CommunAbility Works for Business/Mentors

CommunAbility Mentor Responsibilities
- ✓ Sign the Disability:IN NC CommunAbility Mentoring Agreement
- ✓ Commit to evaluations of the mentee's assignments after each mentoring session
- ✓ Participate in just two in person meetings* including:
  - Orientation & training for up to ½ day. (Mentors and mentees will be introduced during the orientation training) (virtual)
  - Closing/graduation celebration (2 hours) for mentors and mentees to celebrate their graduation from the program at the end of the semester

Mentees and mentors may choose to hold additional meetings if desired, but this is not a CommunAbility requirement

- ✓ Commit two hours per month to the mentor experience per each semester (Fall and Spring- runs from September to May).
  - 1 hour per month participation in a virtual mentoring training and networking video conference call
  - 1 additional hour of telephone access to support your mentor to complete assignments or practice lessons learned.
- ✓ Provide a personal reference for your mentee at the end of the mentoring program

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the orientation training, group meetings and graduation celebration were conducted virtually throughout 2020 and early 2021.

**Mentees and mentors may choose to hold additional in person meetings if desired, but this is not a CommunAbility requirement.*

The Role of Student Mentee

Responsibilities of the Mentees (Students or With Disabilities)

✓ Complete all assignments designed to improve your knowledge of topics covered
✓ Maintain a journal of your work for each mentoring session.
✓ Sign the CommunAbility Mentoring Ethical statement
✓ Commit to monthly evaluations of your mentor's participation
✓ Participate in just two in person meetings* including:

- Orientation & training for up to ½ day. (Mentees and mentors will be introduced during the orientation training)
- Closing/graduation celebration (2 hours) for mentors and mentees to celebrate their graduation from the program

✓ Commit two hours per month to the mentor experience per each semester (Fall and Spring- runs from September to May).

✓ Commit 2 hours per month to the mentor experience for 9 months (most groups run from September to May).

> 1 hour per month participation in a virtual mentoring training and networking video conference call
- 1 additional hour of telephone access to get help from their mentor to complete assignments or practice lessons

✓ Write a thank you letter to your mentor at the end of the mentoring program

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the orientation training, group meetings and graduation celebration were conducted virtually throughout 2020 and early 2021.

Implications for Future Replication

CommunAbility is a turn- key program designed to make it easy for colleges and universities to replicate the program elements. CommunAbility is also time efficient and accessible. Most of the time spent with mentors is conducted via video teleconferencing, cutting transportation costs and the time constraints of in person meetings. Virtual meetings can also eliminate many of the disability- related logistical challenges that students with disabilities encounter (such as finding accessible transportation, accessing off site meeting locations, securing accessible communication services) that are inherent to in person meetings. It has been said that technology can "level the playing field" for individuals with disabilities. Conversing, the internet

creates an environment where people meet on screen and can showcase their strengths via virtual conversations before any unconscious bias regarding disability enters the picture.

Disability:IN North Carolina is planning to explore the development of CommunAbility Mentoring program for secondary youth with disabilities. DI-NC is planning to register the trademark for CommunAbility Mentoring and to copyright the curriculum guide we are using for training sessions for mentors and mentees. Going forward, Disability:IN North Carolina is working to expand the program by partnering with other colleges and universities across the state.

Resources

The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) /National Mentoring Day

The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) sponsors Disability Mentoring Day. This annual event promotes career development for students and job seekers with disabilities through job shadowing and hands-on career exploration. Both public and private employers provide one-on-one mentoring for students to learn about the preparation necessary to qualify for a range of jobs opportunities. Disability Mentoring Day is held annually each October, but the program can be implemented by employers at any time throughout the year. For more information regarding ways in which employers can participate, visit the Disability Mentoring Day website.

Other sources of information about mentoring include:

- **National Disability Mentoring Coalition**

- **MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership**

Paving the Way to Work: A Guide to Career-Focused Mentoring (*http://www.ncwd-youth.info/paving-the-way-to-work*) focuses on issues relevant to mentoring older youth who are transitioning into adulthood. The Guide identifies the Guideposts for Success for successful transition.

Examples of Successful Mentoring Programs | Together Mentoring Software

http://www.togetherplatform.com/blog/examples-of-successful-mentoring -programs

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