**7.14 Mentorship Program – Illinois Section**

**College Student Outreach**

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| **1. Section, Branch** | IL Section |
| **2. Section/Branch Size** |  |  |
| **3. Project Contact** |  | |
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| **4. Project Category** | College Student Outreach | |
| **5. Project Description** | The ASCE-IL Section Mentorship Program was aimed to pair university students with a working professional through a mentor/protégé relationship.  The program was designed to help our student members gain personal career insight on the profession and the benefits of a professional membership through their mentors. In addition, this gave Mentors an opportunity to share their knowledge and gain a better understanding of the younger generation entering the workforce.  Our Section goals were to:   1. See an increase of attendance at ASCE events 2. Build networking relationships between student and professional members of ASCE 3. See an increase in the transition from to student to professional ASCE membership. | |
| **6. The Process**  (What you did, When and How) | The process of this program included:   1. Creating a Mentorship Committee 2. Advertising for mentors to our ASCE professionals, and for protégé’s to our university students at the Illinois Institute of Technology, University of Illinois at Chicago, and Northwestern University. 3. Reviewing applications and pairing mentors/proteges by their engineering discipline and common interests. 4. Challenging pairs and including an incentive to participate in meetups and ASCE events together for the duration of the program (Nov – April) 5. Planning an end of the year dinner for all participants that completed the program requirements. (This was cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19. Successful pairs received Amazon gift cards in lieu of the dinner.) | |
| **7. Those in Charge** (Committee, Task Committee, Etc.) | Mentorship Committee | |
| **8. Time Frame**  (When Started, When Completed) | October – Advertise for program and applications  November – Assign Mentor and Protégé Pairs  November through April – Mentorship Program timeframe  April – Mentorship Program Dinner (cancelled in 2020)  May – Awarded gift cards to successful pairs | |
| **9. Success Factors**  (The Parts that Worked Really Well) | What worked best was creating a networking relationship between students and professionals through our Mentorship pairs based off civil engineering discipline and common interests. In addition, creating a goal for Mentors/Proteges to achieve motivated pairs to get together and attend various events.  Another highlight of the program was the Mentorship Program Dinner. This was a formal event to invite those that completed the program to a sponsored dinner. We are fortunate, in the past, to combine this event with our ASCE-IL Section Spring Dinner where the ASCE President Elect was a guest speaker. This dinner gave us an opportunity to recognize our Mentorship Program Participants, highlight the values resources of being an ASCE professional member, and create another networking event between students, professionals, and our ASCE Board Members. | |
| **10. Setback Factors**  (The Parts that did Not Work Well) | There were a few pairs where either the Mentor or Protégé moved away, or the Mentor/Protégé felt their pair was not an ideal fit. In these situations, the Mentorship Committee searched for new suitable pairs. | |
| **11. Creativity**  (This is something off the wall that we did) | We created an incentive for Mentor/Protégé to be active in their Mentorship Program. Pairs that completed and logged a certain number of events with each other (ASCE events, outreach, social gatherings) would be invited to a sponsored dinner at the end of the program. In 2020, due to COVID-19 health and safety concerns, we encouraged virtual meetings and extended the program so that the pairs could continue to meet and engage during these unprecedented times. | |
| **12. Administration**  (What was most Important?) | Having a committee to initiate the program, review applications, pair students and professionals, overseeing the participants, and planning the dinner was important to the success of the program. | |
| **13. Follow-Up**  (What was most important?) | After completion of the program, a survey was sent to all participants to solicit feedback for future improvement of the program. We also had more mentor applications than protégés this year. We plan to open the protégé program to recent graduates within the IL-Section for the 2020-2021 year.  The Dinner also served as a common gathering place for all participants to meet each other’s’ pairs and share their experiences. We received a lot of vocal feedback during this time. | |
| **14. Recommendations**  (What you should ALWAYS do with this project?) | It’s important to have some type of committee or leadership driving this program. This group helps pairs Mentors/Protégé’s in ideal situations, problem solve any issues during the program, and keep constant contact with program participants to motivate them to continue to be active. | |
| **15. Cautions**  (What you should NEVER do with this project?) | Be clear this is a professional networking experience and students and professionals only benefit from each other’s commitment. Some pairs may not work out, so it is best to plan for situations where a new pair may be required. | |
| **16. The Outcome** | The most valuable lesson we learned is Students want to be mentored and Professionals are willing to teach and guide the students.  We had a total of 10 successful mentorship pairs in the 2019-2020 school year. Most pairs were active in the program with a good motivational push throughout the year from the Mentorship Committee.  Through surveys and the end of the program dinner, we received many comments that this program was a wonderful experience helped initiate a great networking relationship between professionals and those younger entering the workforce. Many of our professionals ended up hiring their protégé as interns for their company.  Overall, this program has been a success and we plan to do this annually. The changes we would make would be to advertise this program earlier in the year and allow the Mentorship Program time-frame to last longer than 4 months. | |
| **17. Ongoing Activity**  (Would you do it again?) | Yes. We hope to continue this program on an annual basis when the new school year begins. In the 2020-2021, we plan to open the program to recent graduates (as proteges) in the IL-ASCE Section. | |
| **18. Speaker Contact Information**  (person from your Region who would be willing to speak about the Best Practice) |  | |
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| **19. Additional Comments** | We created a Mentorship Program Guide for participants to keep as a reference throughout the program. | |

