

Mentorship Program: Frequently Asked Questions

What is the mentorship program?

The mentorship program is one of the most valuable resources at the Polsky Exchange in which we connect our members in one-on-one meetings to industry leaders. Our mentors bring decades of experience in strategy, fundraising, healthcare, technology, sales and marketing, law, insurance, and other fields. Many have started companies themselves and all have worked with startups.

How do I sign up for a meeting?

Each Tuesday you'll get an email listing the mentor appointments coming up in the next two weeks. Click on a mentor's name to see their bio and book a slot. Note: Mentors whose slots are full may not be listed.

Can I bring a colleague, business partner, etc. to the meeting?

Yes!

How should I prepare for the meeting? Is there anything I need to bring?

Be prepared to make the most of the time by having a list of discussion topics or questions and being ready to describe and show what you're working on in a concise and thorough way. You should also do background research on the mentor and have a clear idea of what you're looking to get out of the meeting.

If you'd like to send materials or your website to the mentor ahead of time, send it to Steph Avalos-Bock (stephab@uchicago.edu) at least 24 hours in advance.

Can I meet with a mentor more than once?

Yes, though if you plan on meeting a lot, it's best to set up time outside mentor appointments to make room for others.

Do I need to check in for my appointment?

Please briefly stop at the front desk to pick up a feedback form. You can return it to the front desk after your appointment.

What if I need to cancel?

Please provide at least 72 hours cancellation notice. Our mentors are very generous in donating their time and energy, and many travel some distance. Missed appointments are an embarrassment to both the Exchange and our entrepreneurs, and they strain the relationships that our staff works so hard to build and maintain with the mentors. Without adequate prior notice, we are unable to fill your spot and the meeting opportunity goes wasted.

Can I ask a mentor to invest in my company?

As the saying goes, “If you ask for money, you’ll get advice, but if you ask for advice, you’ll get money.” Mentor appointments are a good way to begin building relationships that could lead to investment down the road. You wouldn’t ask someone for money the first time you met them, and it wouldn’t be money you want anyway.



Can I ask a mentor to sign an NDA?

Most mentors do not sign NDAs. Ideas are much less valuable than execution, and if someone can build your company just from hearing your idea, you probably need a better idea.

However, if you believe you have patentable IP or trade secrets, seek the advice of an attorney before disclosing your idea.



How can I follow up with a mentor?

We encourage you to follow up after your mentor meeting and continue building your relationship. During the meeting, it is appropriate to ask the mentor if you may follow up with them. Most are very willing, and you may request their email address.

Have More Questions?

Please contact
Steph Avalos-Bock at
stephab@uchicago.edu