

Environmental Careers Mentorship Program AY 24-25 Summary Report

Executive Summary

The AY 24–25 Environmental Careers Mentorship Program successfully connected UC Davis Environmental Policy Analysis & Planning (EPAP) and Environmental Science & Management (ESM) students with professionals and alumni, fostering meaningful one-on-one relationships, professional development, and community building.

Key Highlights

- **Mentor Motivations:** 97% sought to support professional development; 89% aimed to guide career choices; 62% emphasized personal growth.
- **Mentee Goals:** 100% enrolled to learn about career options; 72% plan to pursue graduate school; 65% are interested in private-sector work.

Program Strengths:

- Structured deliverables and monthly meetings provided focus.
- Roundtables and office hours offered candid career insights.
- Mentors and mentees alike valued authentic relationships, networking, and seeing growth over the year.

Program Challenges:

- Scheduling conflicts, inconsistent engagement, and unstructured meetings.
- End-of-quarter deliverables often felt burdensome or poorly timed.
- Limited mentor-to-mentor connection and low Discord participation.

Suggestions for Improvement:

- Enhance structure with intermediate deadlines, resource sharing, and progress check-ins.
- Improve mentor/mentee matching and allow greater flexibility to connect with additional mentors.
- Increase professional workshops, networking opportunities, and community mixers.
- Streamline or adapt deliverables for relevance and reduce end-of-quarter stress.
- Strengthen outreach, advertising, and engagement tools.

Overall Takeaway

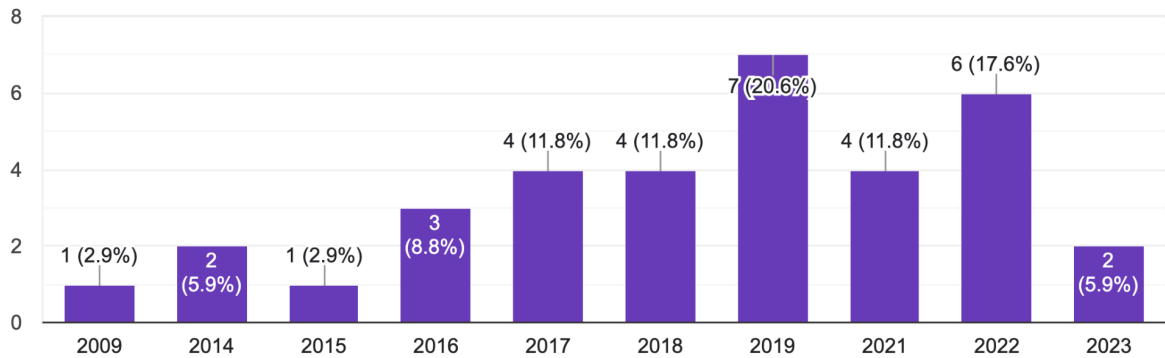
The program is widely appreciated by both mentors and mentees as a valuable bridge between academics and professional life. Continued success will rely on balancing structure with flexibility, expanding networking and workshop opportunities, and fostering a stronger sense of community among mentors and mentees.

Mentors

General Information

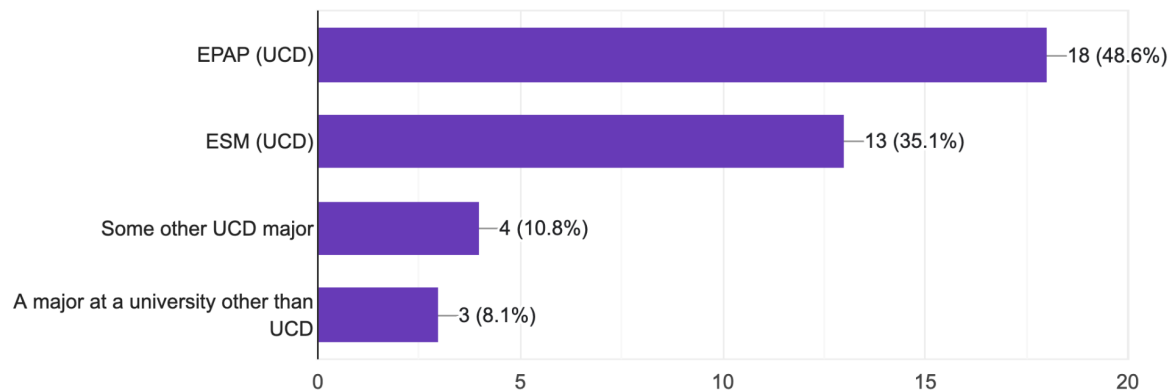
In what year did you graduate from your undergraduate institution?

34 responses



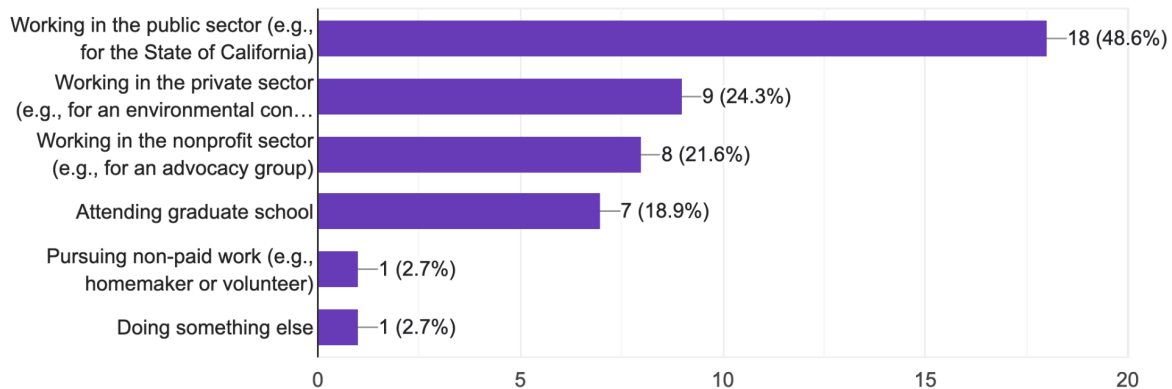
What was your undergraduate major?

37 responses



What best describes your professional status? (Choose all that apply.)

37 responses

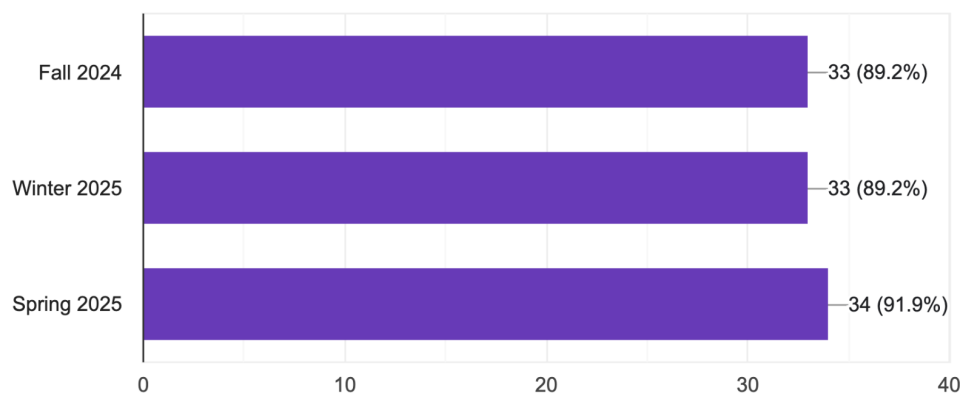


Why did you decide to be a mentor?

To provide students guidance about career options	89.2%
To provide students guidance about graduate school options	43.2%
To provide students guidance about how to maximize their time at UCD	48.6%
To answer questions about UCD	29.7%
To help students develop professionally	97.3%
To help students develop personally	62.2%
Some other reason	8.1%
I remember how undergrad was a lot of fun but could be very overwhelming at times. It means a lot for me to help guide the (slightly younger) generations through these formative years. Through mentorship, I hope that current Aggies will have an easier time than I had when I was at UCD!	
All of the above, and also to practice being a mentor, and excel in it.	
Because Gwen reached out	

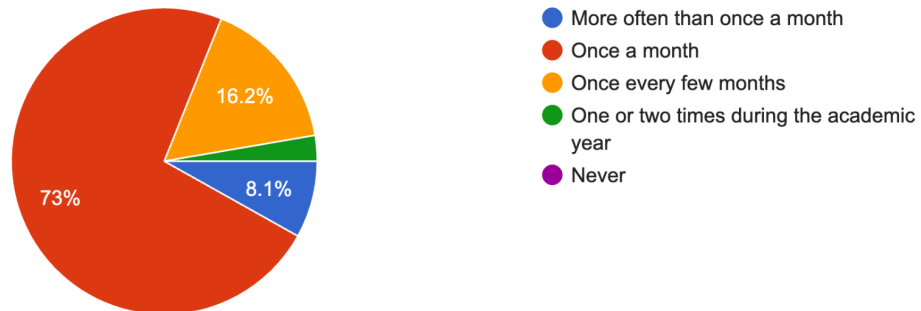
In which quarters did you serve as a mentor? (Choose all that apply.)

37 responses



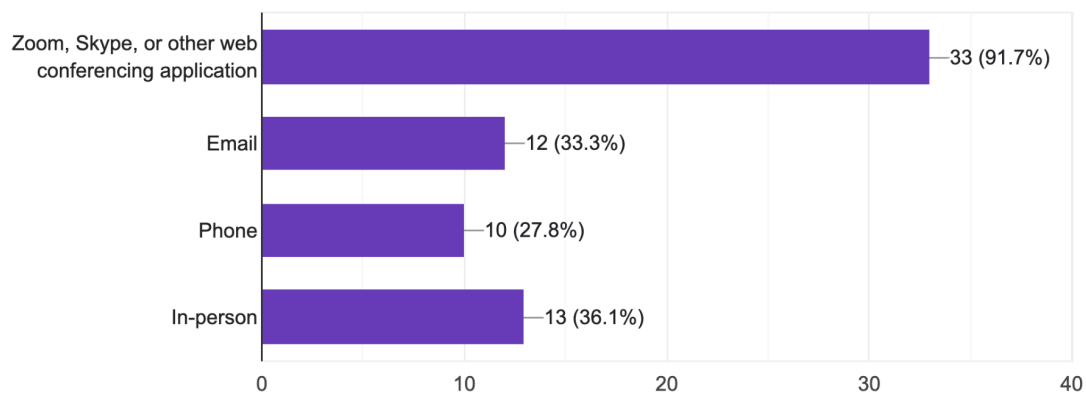
How often did you meet with your mentee, on average? (If you had more than one mentee, please average across them.)

37 responses



How did you meet with your mentee? (Choose all that apply.)

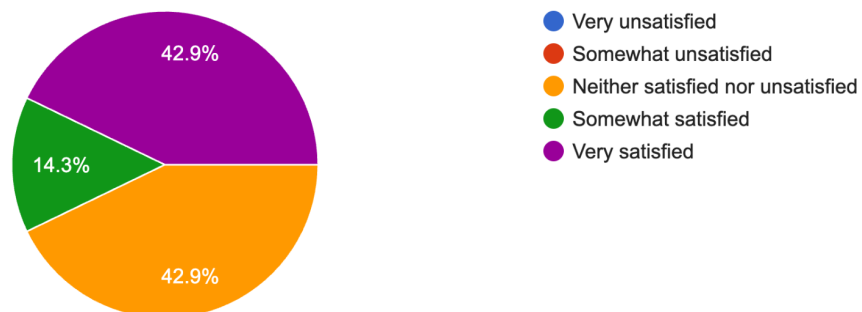
36 responses



Evaluating the Mentorship Program

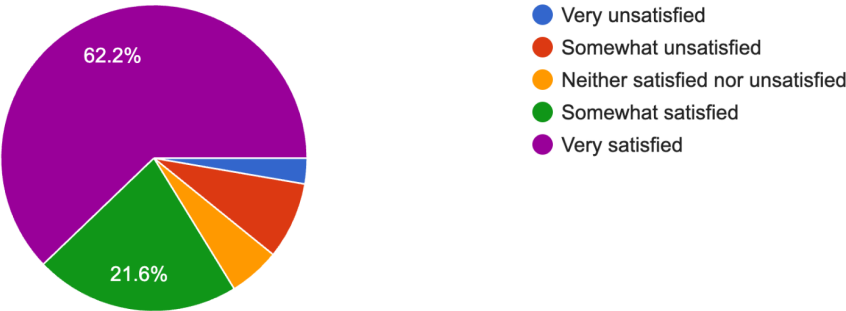
How satisfied were you with the quarterly roundtables?

35 responses



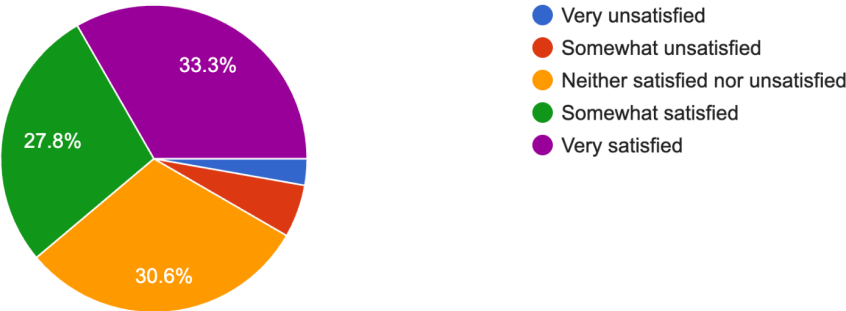
How satisfied were you with your relationship with your mentee?

37 responses



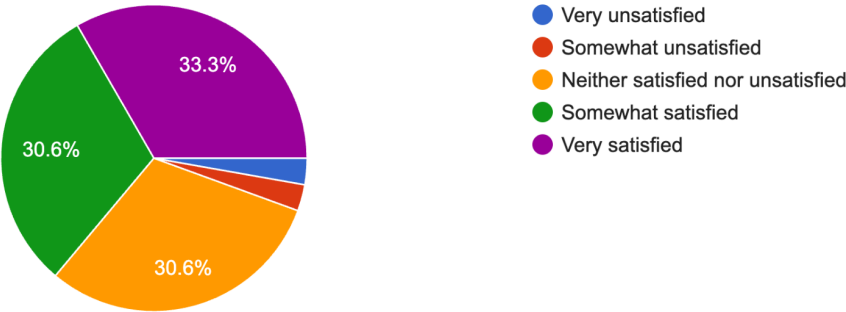
How satisfied were you with the Winter Quarter deliverable (the Individual Development Plan, IDP)?

36 responses



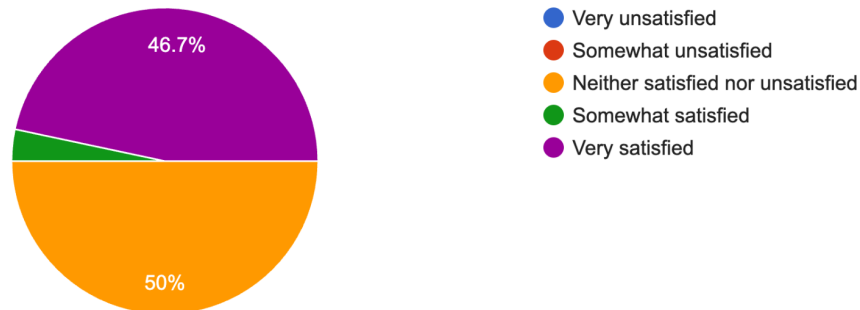
How satisfied were you with the Spring Quarter deliverable (the Personal Resiliency Plan or the Professional Development Portfolio)?

36 responses



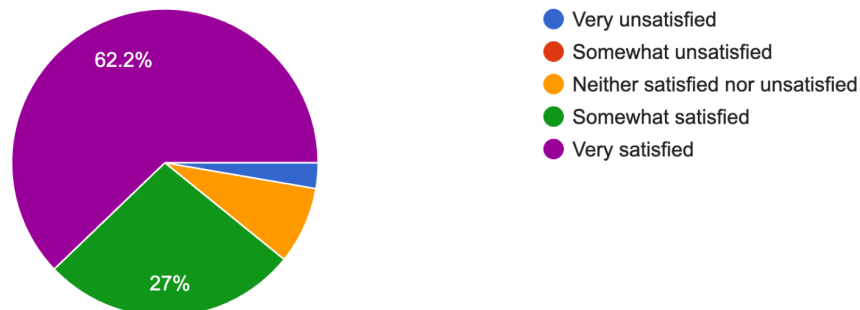
How satisfied were you with office hours with Dr. Arnold?

30 responses



How satisfied were you with the mentorship program overall?

37 responses



In future years, what roundtable topics do you think mentors and mentees would find helpful?

- A session focused on interview tips and strategies. It could be an interview with live mock interview sessions in breakout rooms.
- Networking 101 (might have been a topic last year), and/or introduction to different professional organizations from involved mentors (ideally that have student chapters or programs) like Association of Environmental Professionals, Women in Transportation Seminar, etc.
- I think we should have time to chat casually or have more interactive presentations. The one week on "community engagement" was actually not too engaging.
- Navigating an environmental career in the current administration of political uncertainty and federal budget cuts and maybe a panel of mentees so mentors can learn from what they are looking for in a mentor/what some of the challenges young people face and how we could help them to navigate those challenges.
- A round table centered around fostering community

- How to find your passion in the environmental field - digging deeper into specific environmental topics.
- Professional Identity & Storytelling (Crafting and Communicating Your Professional Story); Resume and Application Strategies (Cracking the ATS Code: Tailoring Materials for Impact); Interview Skills & Confidence Building (Demystifying the Interview: Practice, Presence, and Poise); Navigating Uncertainty & First Jobs (Your First Job Isn't Your Last: Growth, Learning, and Letting Go of "Perfect"); Professional Values & Workplace Culture (Finding a Job that Fills Your Cup: Values, Fit, and Well-being); Strategic Networking & Long-Term Relationships (Don't Burn Bridges: Networking as a Career-Long Practice)
- Imposter syndrome
- Graduate School

What did you find *most* beneficial about the mentorship program? (Summarized across responses)

- **Structured Guidance:** Mentors consistently appreciated the assignments, deliverables, and roundtable schedule, which gave meetings focus, direction, and shared goals.
- **Manageable Commitment:** A once-a-month meeting cadence felt balanced—enough time to connect while still being realistic alongside busy schedules.
- **Meaningful Connections:** Mentors valued building genuine relationships with mentees, often noting growth in trust, mutual respect, and even friendships.
Seeing Growth & Impact: It was rewarding to watch mentees gain confidence, improve materials, and become more intentional about career and professional development.
- **Mentor Learning & Skill Development:** Mentors reported sharpening their own coaching, communication, and leadership skills, while also learning from students' perspectives.
- **Broader Community & Support:** Participants appreciated the chance to give back, connect across generations of Aggies, and contribute to a culture of support—highlighting Dr. Arnold's strong communication and organization.

What did you find *least* beneficial about the mentorship program? (Summarized across responses)

- **Scheduling & Structure Challenges:** Coordinating meeting times was difficult due to changing student schedules, time zone differences, and lack of intermediate deadlines; some mentors felt meetings became unstructured or ran out of topics.
Mentee Engagement Issues: Many mentees were overloaded with coursework, busy during finals, or showed low motivation/professionalism, making it hard to prioritize the mentorship.
- **Limited Roundtable Access & Participation:** Some mentors could not attend due to timing or access issues, and many noted the lack of participation in Discord and limited opportunities for mentor-to-mentor connection.
- **Mismatch in Mentor-Mentee Pairing:** Several mentors felt disconnected from their mentees due to mismatched interests or priorities, which limited relationship-building.

- **Support & Feedback Needs:** Mentors desired more structure, feedback, and evaluation to help them improve their practice, as well as optional check-ins to reduce siloing.
- **Opportunities for Program Growth:** Suggestions included more structured deliverables, intermediate deadlines, better mentor-mentee matching, shared mentor reflection spaces, and collective learning opportunities.

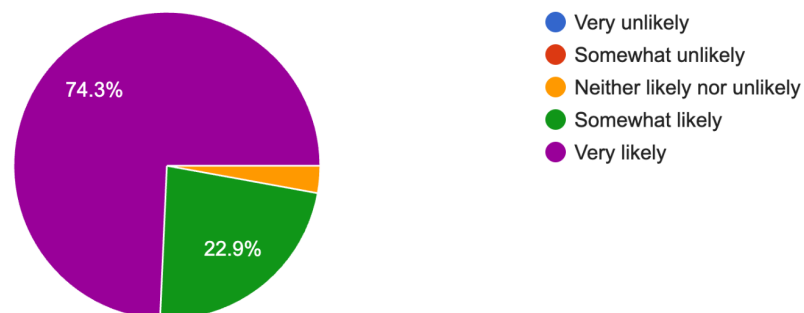
What suggestions do you have for improving the mentorship program in the future?

(Summarized across responses)

- **Enhanced Structure & Resources:** Expand deliverable options (especially for multi-year mentees), add intermediate deadlines, and provide shared folders or resource docs with worksheets, articles, and mentoring strategies.
- **Better Matching & Expectations:** Match mentors and mentees more closely by interest and preferred meeting format; set clear expectations about engagement, reciprocity, and professionalism.
- **Mentor Support & Collaboration:** Create mid-year mentor check-ins, opportunities to share ideas, and collective resource pools to learn from each other's approaches.
- **Community Building:** Offer more mixers (kick-off, mid-year, closing) with casual and fun elements (breakouts, games, etc.) to foster connection across the program.
- **Practical Improvements:** Limit mentors to no more than one mentee, send monthly prompts/questions to guide conversations, and allow tools like discussion trackers to measure progress.
- **Selective Participation:** Consider some screening to ensure mentees are genuinely committed to participating fully in the program.

How likely would you be to recommend the mentorship program to future UCD students?

35 responses

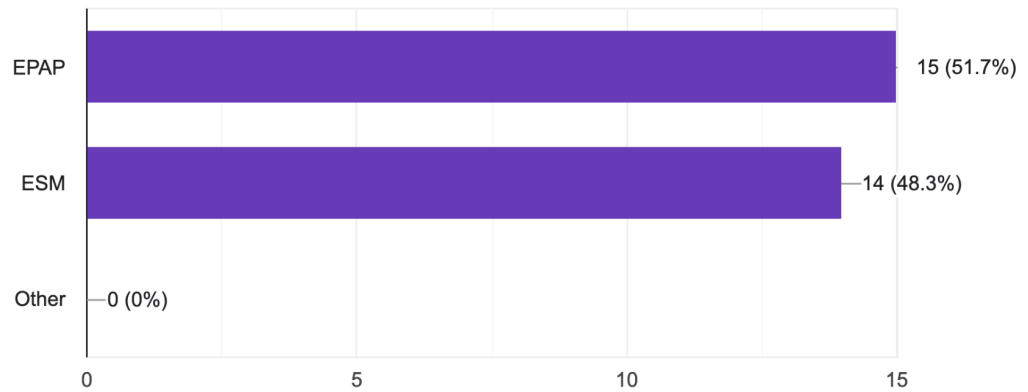


Mentees

General Information

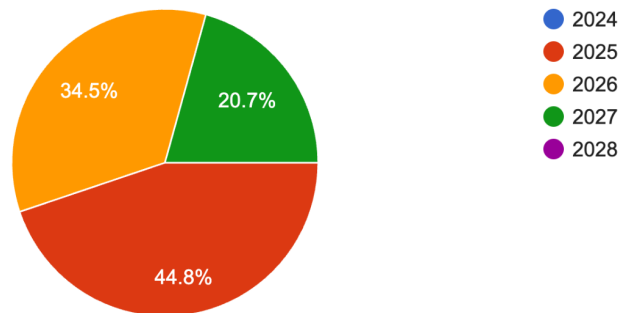
What is your major?

29 responses



In what year did you or do you plan to graduate?

29 responses



Which option(s) do you plan to pursue following graduation? (Choose all that apply.)

Work in the public sector	72.4%
Work in the private sector	65.5%
Work in the nonprofit sector	37.9%
Attend graduate school	72.4%
Pursue non-paid employment	6.9%
Do something else	20.7%

Unsure	17.2%
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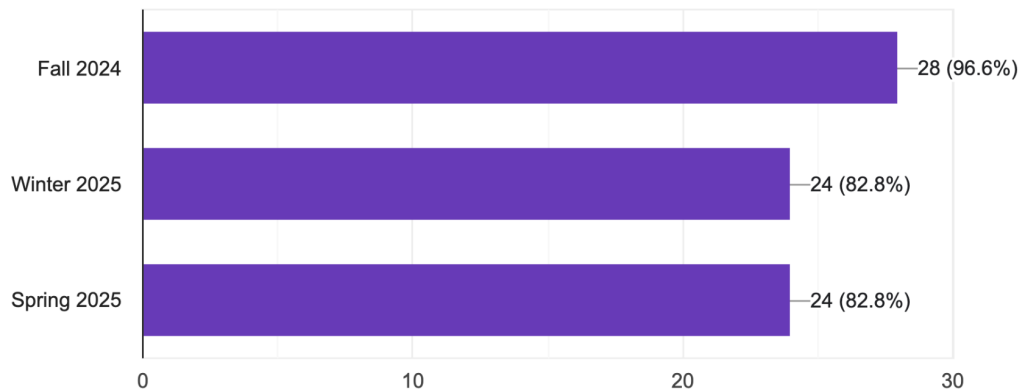
Why did you enroll in the mentorship program? (Choose all the apply)

To learn about career options	100%
To learn about graduate school options	44.8%
To learn how to maximize my time at UCD	55.2%
To get answers to questions about UCD	10.3%
To develop myself professionally	96.6%
To develop myself personally	34.5%
Some other reason	3.4%

How to deal with and succeed in a major that seems to be losing its place in a nation that is going insane.

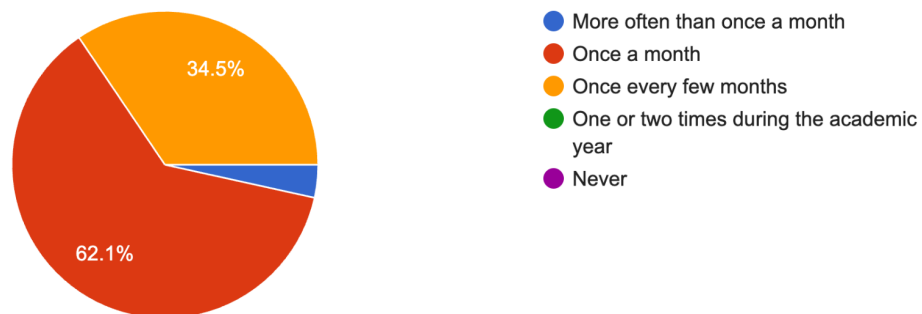
In which quarters did you enroll in the mentorship program? (Choose all that apply.)

29 responses



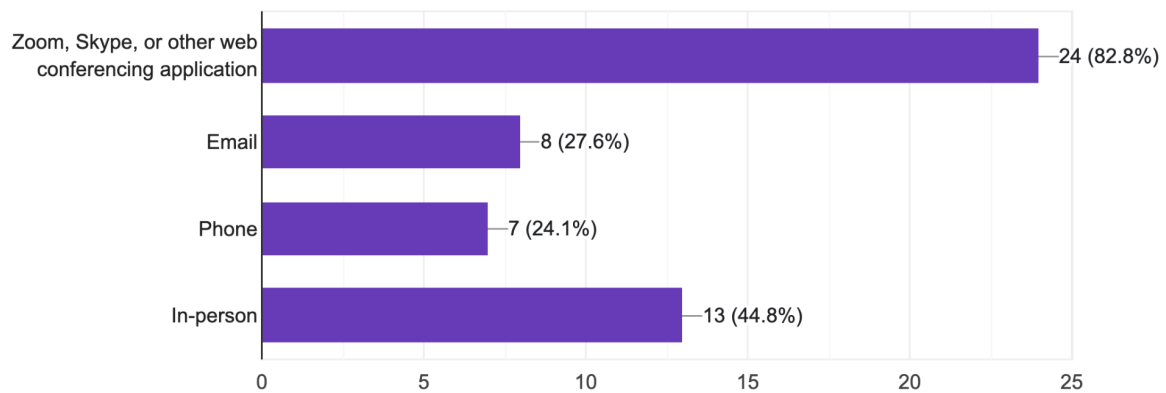
How often did you meet with your mentor, on average? (Please be honest!)

29 responses



How did you meet with your mentor? (Choose all that apply.)

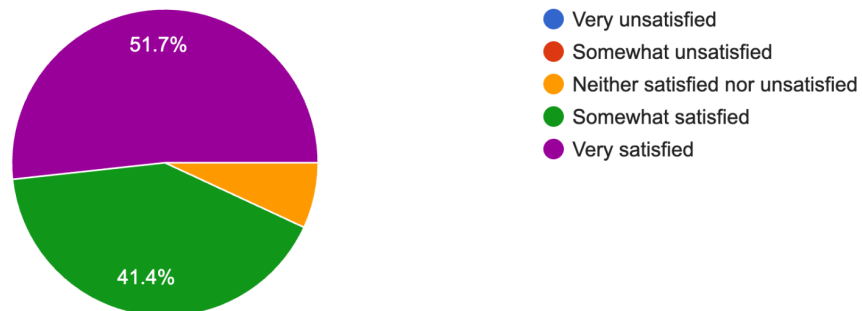
29 responses



Evaluating the Mentorship Program

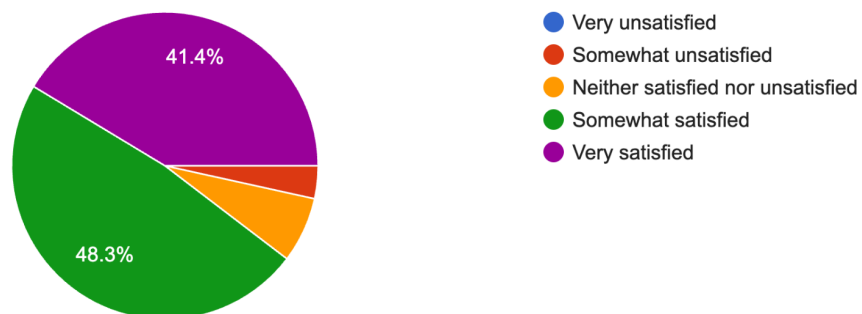
How satisfied were you with the quarterly roundtables?

29 responses

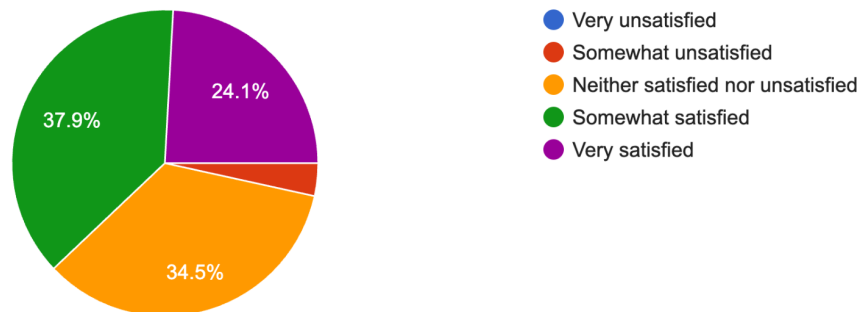


How satisfied were you with your relationship with your mentor?

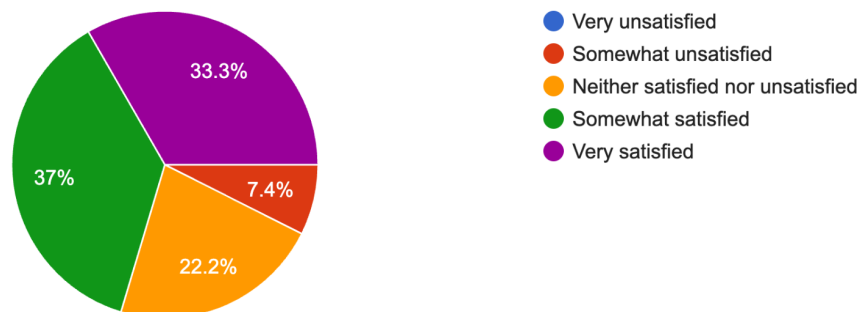
29 responses



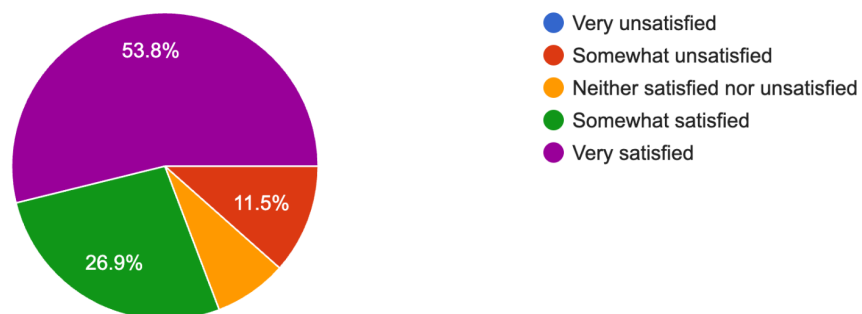
How satisfied were you with the Fall Quarter deliverable (the mentorship program reflection paper)?
29 responses



How satisfied were you with the Winter Quarter deliverable (the Individual Development Plan, IDP)?
27 responses

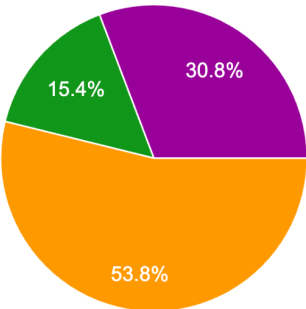


How satisfied were you with the Spring Quarter deliverable (the Personal Resiliency Plan or the Professional Development Portfolio)?
26 responses



How satisfied were you with the quarterly snack breaks?

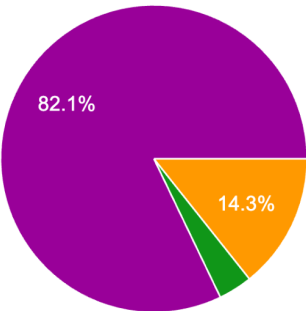
26 responses



- Very unsatisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied

How satisfied were you with office hours with Dr. Arnold?

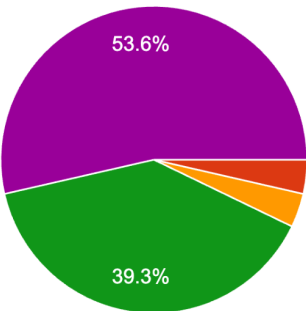
28 responses



- Very unsatisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied

How satisfied were you with the mentorship program overall?

28 responses



- Very unsatisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied

In future years, what roundtable topics do you think students would find helpful?

(Summarized across responses)

- **Graduate School & Career Planning:** Strong interest in sessions about grad school timing (direct entry vs. work first), career exploration, and planning life after graduation.
- **Career Paths & Mentorship Stories:** Students valued hearing mentors' diverse backgrounds, sector differences (public, private, nonprofit), and personal career journeys.
- **Professional Skills & Job Readiness:** Requests for workshops on resumes, cover letters, LinkedIn, interviews, internships, networking, and negotiating salaries.
Workplace Insights: Interest in unwritten rules of professional culture, workplace bonding, communication etiquette, and when/how to change jobs.
- **Industry Realities:** Curiosity about pay, job competition, and funding challenges within environmental careers; students found candid discussions especially helpful.
- **Transfer Student Support:** Desire for resources and guidance tailored to transfer students navigating a shorter timeline at UCD.

What did you find *most* beneficial about the mentorship program? (Summarized across responses)

- **Mentor Relationships:** Students highly valued building personal, supportive, and lasting connections with their mentors, who provided encouragement, advice, and accountability.
Networking & Community: Both one-on-one mentorship and exposure to other students and professionals (through roundtables and dual-mentee matches) broadened networks and peer connections.
- **Roundtables:** Consistently praised for candid insights into career paths, day-to-day work, and job-search advice—especially recordings that eased scheduling conflicts.
- **Office Hours with Dr. Arnold:** Seen as a highlight, offering guidance, reassurance, and an accessible faculty connection.
- **Structured Deliverables:** Winter and Spring quarter assignments helped students stay on track, set goals, and maintain regular engagement with mentors.
- **Career Confidence & Growth:** The program encouraged students to think beyond daily coursework, expand career horizons, and build confidence through mentorship, feedback, and shared experiences.

What did you find *least* beneficial about the mentorship program? (Summarized across responses)

- **End-of-Quarter Deliverables:** Many students felt the assignments added stress during finals, felt like “box-checking,” or were less relevant if they already had clear goals.
- **Roundtable Reflections:** Writing reflection summaries after roundtables was often seen as unnecessary or less engaging compared to direct discussion.
- **Limited Mentor Communication on Deliverables:** Some students felt unsupported or disconnected from their mentor when completing final assignments.
- **Roundtable Engagement:** A few students found some sessions less engaging and suggested more interactive formats or opportunities for Q&A.

- **Scheduling Conflicts:** Students noted challenges with attending lunches or meetings due to class schedules and busy academic terms.
- **Overemphasis on Major-Specific Focus:** At least one student felt mentorship was too narrowly centered on EPAP, rather than broader academic or career exploration.

What suggestions do you have for improving the mentorship program in the future?

(Summarized across responses)

- **Stronger Communication & Structure:** Require mentor/mentee meeting times to be set each quarter, add more structured guidance, and use check-in forms to ensure pairings and progress are working well.
- **Improved Matching & Flexibility:** Allow students more input in selecting mentors, share a directory of mentors and their expertise, and provide opportunities to connect with additional mentors beyond their assigned match.
- **Workshops & Professional Development:** Incorporate hands-on sessions for resumes, applications, and career prep alongside roundtables.
- **Networking & Community Building:** Offer more in-person or Zoom-based networking events, longer/more flexible snack breaks, and small-group collaborations with multiple mentors/mentees.
- **Program Scope & Deliverables:** Reduce or adapt deliverables (e.g., 5-year plans), make them more relevant, and consider limiting the program to juniors and seniors for stronger alignment with career prep.
- **Advertising & Engagement Tools:** Increase outreach (emails, major-specific announcements) and boost Discord activity with job postings and career opportunities.

How likely would you be to recommend the mentorship program to other students?

28 responses

