

Alumni Insights Program Guidelines & Expectations

When launching a new program that includes our student and alumni community we want to make sure that we are setting expectations up front so participants have a clear understanding of the program. We want this to be an exceptional experience for all participants.

What is the Alumni Insights Program?

The program was established at the suggestion of a recent alumni. It is intended to foster connections between recent alumni and current DDS3 and DDS4 students, in an effort to:

- Provide guidance and encouragement
- Help students navigate the transition from dental student to dental professional, resident, researcher, and/or faculty
- Promote networking opportunities with recent graduates that have shared the same experiences, backgrounds, and/or identities

The program is NOT intended to:

- Be a long-term, formal mentoring relationship
- Serve as a therapy or counseling program, or substitute for such services
- Provide students with access to job placements, externship experiences, and/or job recommendations

Interactions between students and alumni could be as minimal as one meaningful conversation or a quick email or phone call check in, while others could extend beyond initial communication, at the discretion of the alumni-student pairing.

Participant Expectations

Alumni are expected to:

- Listen closely to the needs and expectations of your assigned student.
- Work together to establish realistic goals for the relationship and identify a plan to achieve them, if needed.
- Follow up on all commitments made to the assigned student.
- Ask open-ended questions to help the student explore their own values and goals.
- Offer constructive suggestions and feedback.
- Share stories and advice based on your experience.
- Encourage your assigned student to explore new interests and experiences.

Students are expected to:

- Share your needs and expectations up front, especially in regards to continued communication or sustained assistance.

- Follow through on all commitments made to your assigned alum.
- Be receptive to suggestions and feedback.
- Contact your assigned alum early if you are unable to attend a scheduled meeting.
- Show appreciation for your assigned alum's support and assistance.
- Not ask for or expect a job, internship, or reference from your assigned alum.

Potential Topics of Discussion

Here are some potential topics you may choose to discuss with each other:

- Navigating the transition from student to dental professional
- Exploring, applying for, and starting an advanced education program
- Creating or expanding a professional network
- School/life balance, stress management
- Working in a specific type of practice or setting (eg. private, rural, military)
- Creating or running your own practice
- Working in research or academics
- Impact of shared identities on your experiences (eg. BIPOC, first generation, international)
- Life experiences while in dental school (eg. having children, being married)

Suggested Meeting Locations

Discuss the most convenient way to connect, whether that be virtually or in-person. Remember, many conversations can be conducted by phone, email, Zoom, or Skype. Both the student and alumni should discuss the best time to reach each other. Record dates and times on personal calendars and set reminders for themselves to re-confirm a day or two prior to the meeting dates.

If meeting in person, you are strongly encouraged to meet in public locations such as campus buildings, coffee shops, libraries, etc. When choosing meeting places, try to select a location that will work for both of you. Be flexible. As a pair, agree that you will be able to meet at the specific places you determine. *As we are still in the midst of a public health pandemic, please make sure to follow local safety guidelines when meeting in person. Mask wearing is strongly encouraged.*

Other Considerations

Can I participate in the program even if I don't live in the Twin Cities?

Alumni do not need to be local to the Twin Cities to participate. Alumni from outside of the state or even outside of the United States are encouraged to apply.

What should alumni do if they don't know the answer to a student's question?

You may find the University resources listed at the end of this document to be helpful. You can also reach out to Shannon (gill0391@umn.edu) for support.

Additionally, if questions come up pertaining to school or university policies/procedures, we request that you encourage the student to reach out to Shannon rather than answering them, as policies and procedures may have changed since you were a student.

I am having a problem with the student/alum I have been paired with. What should I do?

If you are unable or uncomfortable having a conversation with the student/alum you were paired with, please reach out to Shannon (gill0391@umn.edu) to discuss the situation.

I am concerned about the wellbeing of the student that I have been paired with and/or think they would benefit from additional school support. What should I do?

If you are concerned about the wellbeing of a student based on your conversation, please reach out to Shannon (gill0391@umn.edu) to discuss the situation. The Alumni Insights program is not intended to serve as a therapy or counseling program, or substitute for such services.

School of Dentistry and University Resources

Mental health resources:

- MentalHealth.umn.edu
- Boynton Mental Health | boynton.umn.edu/clinics/boynton-mental-health
- Student Counseling Services | counseling.umn.edu

Contract reviews - Student Legal Service | sls.umn.edu

Erin Elliott | Alumni Relations | estrong@umn.edu

Shannon Gilligan Wehr | Office of Student & Resident Affairs | gill0391@umn.edu

This document is based on guidelines included in the [University of Minnesota Alumni Association's mentor resources](#), as well as the [School of Public Health Mentor Program 2021-2022 Guide](#)