

ADVICE FROM PAST DS4A MENTORS

WHAT DID PAST MENTORS SAY?

ROLE OF A DS4A MENTOR FROM THE EYES OF PAST MENTORS

- A DS4A Mentor is a guide, a sounding board, a teacher, a helper, a confidence builder and a friend.
- As a mentor, you're a manager/PM for the team, helping the team figure out the right research questions to ask, steering them in the right direction, and providing them with career advice.
- Provide high-level guidance and an outside opinion as well as encouragement, layer in personal experiences from working in industry.
- Motivate your team when facing a tough challenge, advise them directionally when they feel stuck and give them perspective on how complex/fruitful a path is.
- Mentors provide perspective for the fellow not just on data science analysis, but the essential guidance on the norms and the soft skills for career development.

ALTHOUGH FELLOWS ARE ADVISED TO DRIVE THE RELATIONSHIP, PAST MENTORS SAY THAT

- Fellows may be shy/reactive - so make sure to be proactive in driving the relationship. My biggest regret is not reaching out to my team more during the program.
- Try to connect with your team more often than suggested.
- Communicate and establish a routine early in the program - also align with the team on how much you can commit and what their expectations are.

FOR MENTORSHIP SESSION 1

- Take the time in the first session to really understand each Fellow's skills so that you can better guide them through realistic analysis planning and project scoping.





ON CAPSTONE PROJECT HELP

- Be transparent about what you know vs. don't know. Also, be willing to reach out to others if you need help with a topic - don't try to figure it all out by yourself.
- Focus on what's feasible within the time provided, steer the group towards answering impactful questions vs. exploring descriptively, and help them find parts of the project their group selected that are relevant to what they want to learn.
- It's important to support fellows early on by bringing a real world perspective to their project scoping (what data is available, are the clearly defining the problem, is the scope too broad/narrow, etc).
- Get the team to keep the focus on their project and set milestones/tasks towards the end goal.
- Make sure they don't spend too much time in finding a dataset. The project turnover is very short. Instead, advise them on starting with an existing clean dataset. Make sure you ask them to show the data. Try to understand what they want to do, and suggest some tools for them to achieve their goals. The simpler the better.
- Listen, ask questions as if you were a stakeholder in the business and get them to relate their projects to a bigger picture, provide small nudges, provide advice occasionally and sparingly.



ON INDIVIDUAL FELLOWS AND 1:1 SESSIONS

- Make use of 'mentors' channel to connect with other mentors. This should help in case your team is not proactive enough to get in touch with you.
- Be flexible and realize that much of the success of the team is dependent on the commitment of the fellows to the program. Offer and provide support to the extent that the team is willing and engaged.
- Be prepared to spend the time to get to know your mentees. Many of them have never had a mentor before and they do not know how to network!
- Remember they're all beginners so be careful giving conditional advice. Things that seem obvious to you, won't seem obvious to them.



CO-MENTORSHIP

- I had a co-mentor - it could be helpful to conduct sessions as 2:1 so fellows can benefit from differing perspectives.

GENERAL ADVICE

- Be bold and you will get everything back that you put into it.
- Treat the team just like you would your team at work personally and professionally.
- Don't sweat it - just be yourself and tell what you have learned. You will get back so much more.
- Keep things practical and simple!
- Be yourself, don't worry about the technical, and focus on the leadership aspects.

