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Industry Expectations Versus Academic Standards in the Real World: Why Technology-Focused Mentorship Programs Matter

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Declaration of Authorship

I hereby declare that

- I have written this thesis independently, have not used any sources and aids other than those indicated, and have not made use of any other forms of unauthorized assistance.

- I have not previously submitted this thesis, neither for evaluation to an assessor in Austria or abroad nor in any form as an examination paper.

- this thesis corresponds to the one evaluated by the supervisor.

Date: 24/02/2023   Signature: Logan Petet

Abstract

Technology and software have rapidly progressed due to unforeseen circumstances within the last three years due to COVID-19 and have changed the UX industry world as we know it. With all these changes going on, it is leaving students in the dark about the way the industry works. In an effort to combat the lack of knowledge, students being able to take advantage of learning possibilities such as mentorship programs to get in the groove with industry-standard technology and software could help bridge that gap.

I want to not only understand what technology and software lead the industry and understand their success but also the ways mentorship is being completed using these technological devices. I will dive into recent research done as the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted the industry world with remote options becoming more readily available in the UX field I and many others currently reside.

I also took part in running a mentorship program which helped in deciding the most efficient time frame to implement into a busy student/mentor life, worked through unexpected bumps encountered, kept track of how the mentors and student mentees communicated, the type of work being completed - whether that was homework, design challenges or even general life help. I also had a mentor during my time in Austria to experience cultural, technological, and general differences.

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1. Introduction

How do you feel when you start a new job? Do you wish you had someone you could ask for help to feel more confident? According to the statistics, 97% of individuals feel highly impactful and more valuable when they have a mentor (PushFar, 2022). When seeing such a high percentage of success, the assumption is everyone would have a mentor. Well, that is the opposite in this case. According to Forbes (2022), only 37% of people have a mentor. Mentoring has always been a thing, but recently there has been a rise in the creation of mentorship programs. A successful mentorship program has proven to provide an extraordinary amount of benefits such as salary increases, job promotions, and personal development. Mentors are 5x more likely to be promoted compared to their co-workers, and mentees are 6x more likely to be promoted compared to those without one (PushFar, 2022).

Traditionally, a mentor would be described as "a person who provides you with the tools, guidance, support, and feedback you need to thrive in your career. They're often someone who's gone down the same road you're on currently and is there to advise you on what they've done and what's worked for them" (Kalish, 2020). This support helps during the ups and downs of a career path and gives the additional push to do your best work. There is no correct way to meet with your mentor, however, the COVID-19 pandemic, brought a halt to people meeting their mentors in

person, and provided giant obstacles in people's career paths. COVID impacted the world in indescribable ways, one of the greatly impacted ways of life changed was the introduction to remote work. One industry specifically affected by this was UX Designer roles in the United States. Since COVID hit in 2020, there has been roughly a 60% rise in remote UX Designer positions (SCHROETER, 2022). With such a quick spike, the industry standards and expectations changed overnight. This event caused the industry workers to adapt, but the university students had to watch from the outside and rely on the media to keep them connected to industry standards. In a technological role, there is constant change and constant learning that has to be done. Companies picked up new software and hardware to use to accommodate remote work. This is where importance of mentorship programs can step in and help bridge that gap. This paper will highlight mentorship programs and feature both qualitative and quantitative research. I will reflect on my personal experience as I immersed myself in leading a mentorship program in the United States for 3 months. This will highlight the entire process from start to finish in which I will be separating into two sections, pre-launch, and post-launch. It will be supported by the additional participants in the mentorship program as well. I also took upon the challenge of finding a mentor in Austria during my time abroad, which I will explain the process I took and the cultural differences I found between the industry, technology, and general life. Interviews from experts will also be a key part to expand on personal experiences. Additionally, survey responses correspond to relevant questions involving the mentorship program as well as looking into pre-

existing mentorship programs to evaluate their data. With all the research and insight gathered, I will then create a framework for starting a mentorship program within the Sankt Pölten UAS as I attended there during my time abroad, but could also be generalized based on personal needs.

The questions I will be seeking an answer to during my research are: How mentorship programs benefit the participants, How accessible are mentorship programs, Can you start your own program, and What does it take to be a great mentor/mentee.

2. Historiography

As mentioned before, mentoring has always been around. The origin is dated back to Homer's classic poem, *The Odyssey*, during 800 B.C. (Aparicio, 2022). It is essentially an indefinite cycle if done the right way. Mentorship is a very in-depth studied topic as it has tons of different methods and results that come from it. It provides such unique case studies as every human is different and experiences such different levels of growth. However, in the end, it almost always produces a positive outcome.

Looking at other research articles covering mentorship, there is a lot of deep diving into the general ideation of mentorship programs. Such

as a study done by BMC Medical Education that studied the experiences and perceptions of the student doctorate mentees paired with faculty mentors to define what makes a successful mentorship program. They tested through group discussions and informant interviews to find major themes within their research (Kiguli, 2017).

As mentorship is very dependent on context and unique scenarios, I will shift my focus solely to the UX Designer / Product Designer industry. With the concept of mentorship starting as a peer-to-peer meeting, and COVID moving things online, researching the change of pace and emerging technology required for these roles will provide a new perspective on mentorship. The results will be varied over a wide range of experience levels within mentorship programs and the knowledge level of the UX / Product Design academia.

3. USA Mentorship Framework

3.1 COVID-19 Paradigm

March 11th, 2020 was the day the WHO (World Health Organization) declared COVID-19 as a pandemic and changed the world as we know it (AJMC, 2021). Everything and everyone were experiencing changes that no one knew were possible. The subject of focus however will be the technology industry and how it was forced to adapt.

Technology companies prided themselves on "disrupting" the industry with their products, however, with the rise of COVID, their job now is to stabilize everything (Aon, 2020). During COVID, roughly 70% of full-time workers were working from home (Apollo, 2022). Therefore with companies moving to a remote style of work during the peak of the pandemic, cloud services became a necessity. Cloud services are considered "infrastructure, platforms, or software that are hosted by third-party providers and made available to users through the internet" (RedHat, 2022). This allowed companies to have a secure location for employees to manage, store and process data with ease. Some examples might include Microsoft Office, G Suite, Slack, and Digital Ocean. After the start of COVID, 48% of survey respondents stated that their company had adapted cloud-enabled tools and technologies to support their workers and empower the virtual workforce (CodeMonk, 2022).

The rise of remote work brought out a ton of benefits for both parties. The industry realizes that they have to adapt to the times and with employees being able to work at home, it cuts down costs on office space, equipment, and upkeep. This saves a ton of overhead costs that can build up quickly. The Global Workplace Analytics estimates that employers could save $11,000 per employee and expect less turnover (Kate Lister, 2021). Companies such as IBM reported saving $50 million in costs by adopting remote work (Rojas, 2020). In regards to the employee side of things, a survey by OwlLabs (2022) provided a ton of statistics about remote work. It highlights how people were saving on average $500 a month, saving 40 minutes on average a day in commute times, and 20-25% of companies were paying some costs of at-home office equipment and technology. The fiscal benefit side of remote seems to be worth it, but the mental health side of the studies was also eye-opening. The same study reveals that workers who worked from home were 22% happier than those who worked full-time in an office setting. They reported having less stress, more focus, and a better work-life balance. With the trend that remote work is here to stay, companies are starting to look into the hybrid work model as a solution in the future.

All these changes have brought a considerable amount of people in the industry left with confusion about how to approach it all. One of the more popular ways of solving the unknown in the tech industry is through mentorship. In such a fast-paced industry, having the ability to talk about new ideas and trends has proven to be of great benefit. A study was done

where 84% of Fortune 500 companies and 100% of Fortune 50 companies have mentoring programs (Cronin, 2020). Just like the workforce industry, mentorship programs have been moving online as well. This allows for a lot fewer barriers to be in place as geographical and time constraints tend to be the biggest issues, however, they no longer are as affected. Platforms such as Ten Thousand Coffees, MentorcliQ, Chronus, and MentorCity have risen to the top as suitable remote mentorship programs globally in the last few years. This research further proves how much the world has changed and the importance of technological education.

As UX / Product Designers, software plays a big part in our career. There are a ton at our disposal and we have to make sure to adapt to the trends and learn what companies are using. Columbia Education (2022) lists the top software tools for UX Designers ranking Figma, Adobe Photoshop, and Adobe Illustrator as the best design tools. Currently, Figma is used by 77% of UX Designers as it offers a web-based platform with seamless prototyping (Serra, 2022). As for the Adobe Suite, it is recognized worldwide as 12 million users are subscribed to their Creative Cloud service, offering all of their apps to be used (ProDesignTools, 2022). There is a lot of other software such as Miro, Invision, Sketch, and Slack which offer different experiences for designers that are also just as important for understanding and can be discussed during meetings.

3.2 Start of the Mentorship Program

To further evaluate my research question of why technology-focused mentorship programs matter, I was fortunate enough to be approached with the opportunity of running a mentorship program. A non-profit mentorship organization called Product Hive wanted to collaborate with my home university to help bring along the next wave of UX / Product Designers. Product Hive's mission statement is "to cultivate a community of UX/PM professionals who empower each other, support each other, and achieve greater success through partnering with other product professionals in the industry (Product Hive, 2023). After meeting with Product Hive's leader, we decided on an eight-week program during the fall 2022 semester where student mentees and industry mentors would meet weekly to help work on projects, and portfolios, and build their network.

3.3 Advanced Digital Media Sandbox

As this mentorship program was going to be run in the state of Utah, mentor and mentee meetings could be held in the ADMS Lab. This was highly encouraged as it is located on Utah Valley's campus and has all the technology you can think of (see Figure 1). The thought process for offering the chance to hold meetings here was to encourage in-person meetings, as well as give physical tools to help with feedback.

Figure 1

UVU Advanced Digital Media Sandbox wall

Note: Wilsher, J. (2021, March 31). *UVU Interaction Design. A Leader in UX and Interaction Design… | by Josh Wilsher | Medium*. Retrieved February 24, 2023, from https://jwilsher.medium.com/uvu-interaction-design-35f6faca250e.

3.4 Means of Communication

The rise of remote work brought the rise of software such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. When COVID hit and the quarantine began, Zoom usage skyrocketed by 378% compared to the same time in March a previous year ago. Microsoft Teams also reported having up to 44 million

daily users in March (Bary, 2020). In general, those two softwares became the two leaders in offering remote video meetings. A lot of companies and universities have partnerships that resulted in the software used. Therefore, as UVU has a partnership with Microsoft, Microsoft Teams became the default way of communication in this mentorship program.

3.4 Setting Up Mentornity

Mentornity is the software used by Product Hive to help organize the program. It offers many features for both parties as there is a mentoring portal and a mentee portal. As I was the leader for the student side, I had access to the admin portal. This meant I was in charge of the onboarding process. This part was crucial as it would be the user's first impression and would require them to understand the process so they could choose their mentor and schedule a meeting. Once we had the information of the students and mentors who signed up, I would be in charge of sending out the invitation link.

3.5 Finding Mentors

This task was not a responsibility of mine, as they have a form for people to apply to be a mentor. For this mentorship program, we wanted to have a 1:1 ratio of mentor to mentee and planned for having 8 members. However, I researched what it takes to be a mentor in this industry. According to Product Hive's standards, "the most effective mentorships happen when a mentee is paired with a mentor who is just a few steps

ahead of them in their career" (Product Hive, 2023). Additionally, I looked outside of this organization and found skills such as being a great listener, being able to reflect on previous successes and mistakes, and being able to engage in questions as crucial assets for being a great mentor (Vemparala, 2023).

At the end of the time allotted for mentors to sign up, Product Hive provided five mentors for the program. There were some rough bumps along the way, ironically due to COVID, as they sent out the announcement close to the start date resulting in short notice/time to join. The mentors who joined included two who were previous UVU students at one point, and job roles consisting of UX Designer, UX Research, and Product Design.

Figure 2

List of mentors who signed up

			First Name	Last Name		Mentorship status	Current Role	
☐	Show Profile		Jacob	Davidson	• Registered	• Active	UX Researcher	
☐	Show Profile		Kamalei	Logan	◦ Invited	• Active	Sr UX Product Designer	
☐	Show Profile		Kes	Amussen	• Registered	• Active	Enterprise UX Designer	
☐	Show Profile		Lauren	Swainston	• Registered	• Active	Senior Product Designer @ Provi	
☐	Show Profile		Ryan	Shumway	• Registered	• Active	Senior UX Designer	

Note: Own Figure.

3.6 Finding Mentees

3.6.1 Requirements

This task is where the work began for me. I was responsible for finding students with certain requirements and skill sets to maintain the integrity of the program. I became influenced after my research on what makes a good mentee. According to the Together Platform, a good mentee has time management, respect for authority, clear communication, and is open to learning (Reeves, 2018). Therefore, the requirements were as follows:

- Must be a student at Utah Valley University in the Web Design and Development degree path
- Must be passed or near completion of UVU Portfolio Acceptance
- Must be able to meet at least once a week for a minimum of one hour for the next eight weeks

These requirements are to ensure that the student mentees would be at a sufficient point in their studies to make sure they could show up with proper material to discuss.

3.6.2 Marketing

In order to get students on board with the program, I began by spreading the news via word of mouth to build anticipation and get a general feel of the excitement of the program. I talked to fellow students personally and also went into a few classes and had a brief pitch. I also designed a poster that would be displayed on the walls of our university and sent in our Microsoft Teams channel as seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Product Hive x UVU mentorship program

Note: Own Figure.

3.6.3 Registration Survey

As time got closer to the beginning of the mentorship program, a registration survey was sent out using Google Forms. As everyone in the Web Design and Development path is altogether in one channel, I sent the link in the general chat to allow people to sign up. It was a super quick and easy survey that just reiterated the requirements and gave me the information to make signing up a smooth process. The survey can be seen in Figure 4. Within the first 2 weeks, I had 5 responses to join the program.

Figure 4

The survey participants filled out to join the program

Product Hive x DGM Mentorship Program

Product Hive x UVU Digital Media Department Mentorship
Mentorship Duration: September 12 - November 4th, 2022

Product Hive Information

* Required

1. First and Last Name *

   _____

2. Email *

   _____

3. Year in School *

   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Freshman
   ◯ Sophomore
   ◯ Junior
   ◯ Senior
   ◯ Other: _____

4. Have you passed Portfolio Review or currently working on it? *

   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Yes
   ◯ No
   ◯ Other: _____

Note: Own Figure.

### 3.6.4 Results

Once the allowed time for the survey was finished, I received all the information needed and sent out the invitation link. With the start date rapidly closing in, the list of mentees became official as seen in Figure 4.

Figure 5

List of student mentees who signed up

|			First Name	Last Name				Which expertise are you primarily seeking mentorship on?	
☐	Show Profile		Abby	Murri		○ Invited			
☐	Show Profile		Josh	Leigh		● Registered		UX Design / Product Design	
☐	Show Profile		Kenadee	Telford		● Registered		UX Design / Product Design	
☐	Show Profile		Logan	Petet		● Registered		UX Design / Product Design	
☐	Show Profile		Meleah	Sanders		○ Invited			
☐	Show Profile		Nikolas	Sprunt		● Registered		UX Design / Product Design	
☐	Show Profile		Sam	Louder		● Registered		UX Design / Product Design	

Note: Own Figure.

These were the backgrounds of those who joined and responded to the survey, as seen in Figure 5 and Figure 6.

Figure 6

A pie chart of mentees who answered their academic status

Year in School
5 responses

● Freshman
● Sophomore
● Junior
● Senior

80%

20%
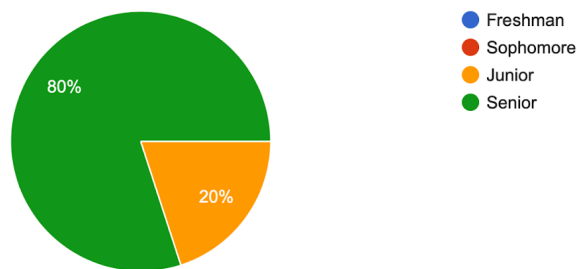
Note: Own Figure.

Figure 7

15

A pie chart of mentees who answered for Portfolio Review Completion

Have you passed Portfolio Review or currently working on it?
5 responses

● Yes
● No

100%
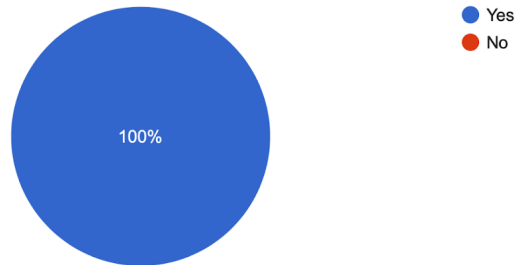
Note: Own Figure.

Additionally, I wanted a general oversight of the participants' experience with mentors and mentorship programs as they are different. This insight will prove to be useful in the amount of direction needed in the beginning and give a base level for how they feel after being in a mentorship program. The results are shown in Figure 7 and Figure 8.

Figure 8

A pie chart of mentees who answered about having a mentor

Have you had a mentor before?
5 responses

● Yes
● No

60%

40%
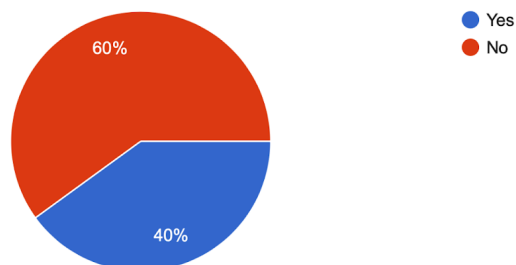
Note: Own Figure

Figure 9

A pie chart of mentees who answered for being in a mentorship program

Have you participated in a mentorship program before?
5 responses

- Yes
- No

80%

20%
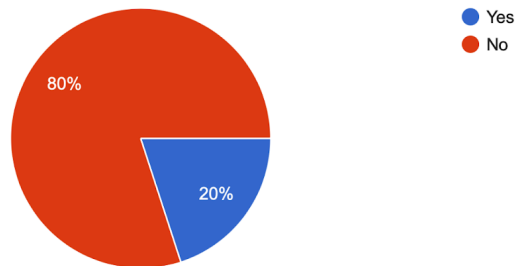
Note: Own Figure

Overall, the pre-launch side went rather smoothly and no real issues occurred. We didn't meet the number of mentors and mentees originally planned, but we still had enough people to make it work. As I would be attempting to run this program with an 8-hour difference in Austria, I knew it would be difficult but all the early preparation paid off in this process and I learned a ton about what worked well and what needs more attention to ensure a successful launch.

4. USA Mentorship Results

4.1 Meeting Arrangements

The launch of the program went smoothly. It consisted of mentees being able to read about the mentors and what they have to offer and choosing who they want to be paired with. They were given three days to choose a mentor and if it was sorted by then, I was able to set them up with a mentor myself within Mentornity.

Figure 10

Example of the pairing page within Mentornity software

	First Name	Last Name	Pair limit	Pairs
	Jacob	Davidson	1	Josh Leigh ··· +
	Kamalei	Logan	1	Nikolas Sprunt ··· +
	Kes	Amussen	1	+
	Lauren	Swainston	1	Logan Petet ··· +
	Ryan	Shumway	1	Sam Louder ··· +

Note: Own Figure.

Once the pairings ended up getting complete, the mentors began adding in available time slots for meetings to happen. The topic of mentorship meetings does have a unique debate going on currently, should it be paid or voluntary? It is quite an interesting dynamic. The paid viewpoint consists of mentors working in block schedules such as academic semesters or quarterly blocks and since they are being paid for their time, mentors should take initiative and schedule meetings and show

up prepared to serve the mentee. These paid meetings take priority over all else because of compensation. This is deemed a professional service (Rockquemore, 2016). However, when looking at the voluntary side of it, the mentor is viewed as giving back. With these meeting times, they are taking time out of their day and gifting it to the mentee. As Rockquemore (2016) continues, "I make polite requests of my voluntary mentors. If they meet those requests, then I am grateful. But if they don't meet those requests, it is not appropriate to aggressively remind them, to try to hold them to deadlines or to make demands that they do what they promised." This Product Hive mentorship program follows the voluntary aspect, so as the leader I can really only give motivation and hope for the best and that the mentors and mentees find a suitable time weekly.

As the eight-week mentorship program finished, I put together the reported data. Mentornity was able to provide me with graphics including the data. If all 5 mentors met once a week with all 5 mentees, there would've been a total of 40 meetings. The results show in Figure 10 that 19 meetings happened over the duration with every mentor and mentee taking part at some point. This was a great statistic for me as I wanted everyone to be included and show the accessibility in participating in a mentorship program. For a voluntary program in its first stage, it could've produced better numbers but having almost half of all the possible meetings isn't a bad start. This information is insightful for the next iteration of this program and gives a baseline of numbers to improve on.

Figure 11

Meeting data reported from the mentorship program

Summary

19 Total meeting count

4 Canceled meetings

5 Total mentors had meeting

5 Total mentees had meeting
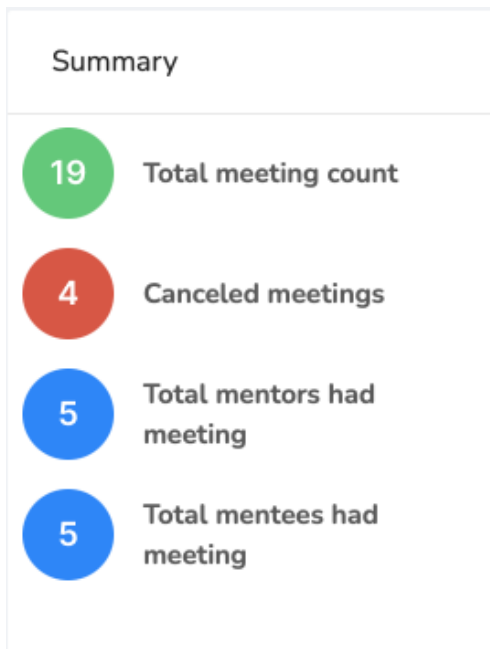
Note: Own Figure.

Figure 12

A chart showing the days meetings were held

Daily meeting count graph
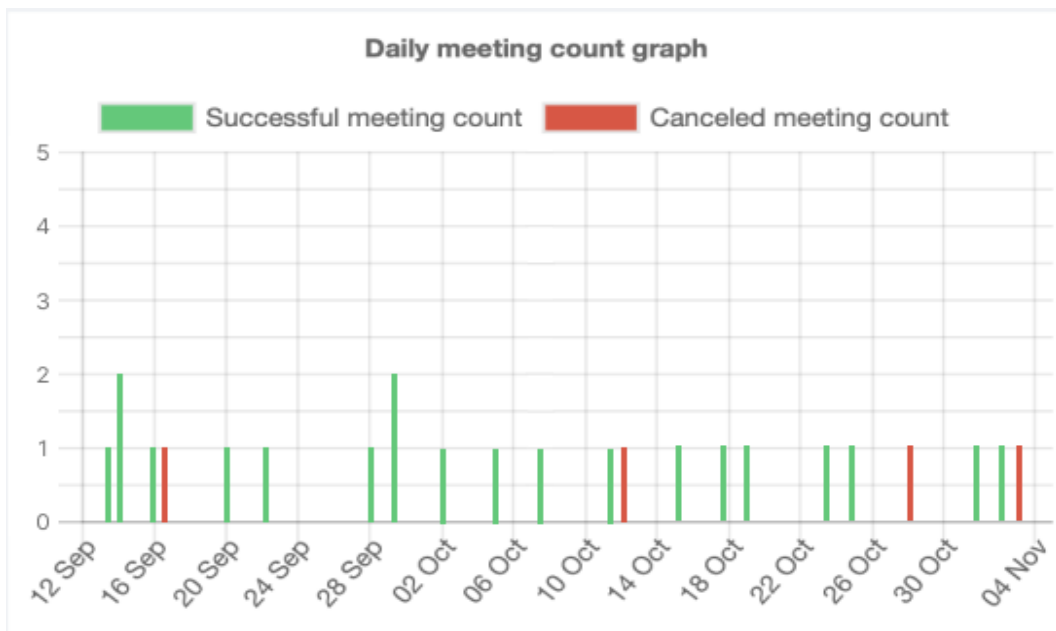
Note: Own Figure.

Figure 11 shows the timeline of the meetings that took place. Based on the data I received from Mentornity, every meeting that was held was done online. I also kept track of those who had meetings but had to cancel due to personal reasons, or technical through emails Mentornity would send me and then mark it red on the chart.

The results of how many meetings happened seemed to align with the previous research on voluntary mentorship programs. It takes two people to come together to find a time, especially in a busy lifestyle to make mentorships work. In my personal experience with these meetings, I find it very difficult to participate because the times that were given to me were usually around 6:00 to 7:00 pm in the US, which is 2:00 am for me in Austria. So when I did have my meetings it was usually on a weekend during the morning in the states.

4.2 Topics Discussed

Overall, I spent a lot of my time personally talking about my portfolio and the job search experience as I am now graduated and looking full-time position. It was surprisingly insightful to talk about this process with someone who is a few steps ahead of me in their career. I learned a lot about what to expect in the next few months as my job search begins and tips and tricks for the interviewing process. I also spent some time going over my portfolio and updating certain projects I have done to fit into what recruiters are wanting to see, which I found to make my time feel really valuable.

As for the other participants, I sent out a survey at the end of the eight weeks with a list of potential topics just to get a rough idea of what was discussed. As this mentorship program was UX based, I was hoping the results would prove that the time was used reasonably and it was a worthwhile experience for the mentees. The results are shown in Figure 12. As a UX Designer, having your portfolio updated and looking attractive is a key part of finding a job, so seeing the results where every mentee at some point worked on their portfolio was great to see.

Figure 13

A chart showing the topics discussed over the mentorship program

What topics were discussed?
5 responses

Topic	Value
Portfolio	5 (100%)
Homework	3 (60%)
Personal Project	1 (20%)
General Life	2 (40%)
Job Search	4 (80%)
Other	1 (20%)
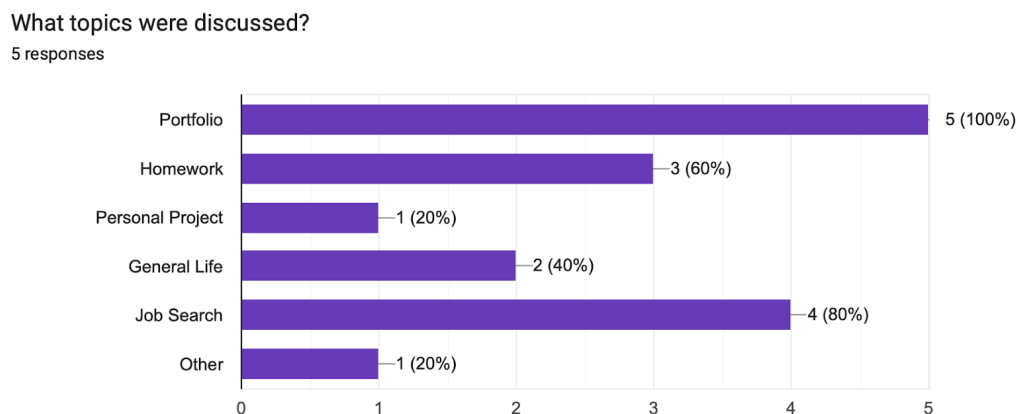
Note: Own Figure.

I did some outside research as well on topics usually discussed in a UX mentorship program. I found an article done by a Senior Apple Product Designer who has been a mentor since 2018. He goes over his thought process on how mentorship should be handled, but he focuses on three

main topics. Getting that first design position, imposter syndrome, and dealing with rejection (Mattei, 2021). Another article done by Groeneveld (2022) focuses on the handling of the job. Topics such as "how to deal with a difficult stakeholder" or "how do I present myself at my job" are the main points to help build confidence in the mentee. Overall, I feel like the mentors in my program did a good job of following the industry standards to prepare the mentee.

4.3 Mentornity Usage

Mentornity was the place for setting up meetings, but I, as well as others, used email to set up meeting times and communicate more efficiently. I additionally was given my mentor's phone number so I could text if I had any simple questions or needed to change meeting times.

Mentornity has features that allow mass announcement to be sent out, provide mentors with a space to document about their meetings, provide mentees with access to their meetings as they are recorded. One feature that was beneficial was the note taking tab, in which I can create prompts that appear. One prompt I asked was to keep track of what software you used during your meeting. Therefore, I sent out a survey listing the most common software used by UX Designers and asked which were used during their mentorship program. The results are shown in Figure 13.

Mentornity also has a section for feedback, which made communicating with your mentors about what you thought worked well and what you'd like to continue quick and easy. The mentors could also leave

notes of things to prepare for next meeting which seemed to be really beneficial for the pace of meetings.

Additionally, in order to show up to the remote meetings, every mentee and mentor used a personal device. Personal devices include a computer, tablet, or phone to connect to meetings. As mentioned prior, UVU is a Microsoft program, so Microsoft Teams is where all the meetings were held. This was important for organization and confidence in knowing your meeting would happen.

Figure 14

A chart showing used software in the mentorship program

What software was used during your mentorship?
5 responses

Software	Responses
Figma	4 (80%)
Sketch	0 (0%)
Adobe XD	1 (20%)
Adobe Photoshop	5 (100%)
Adobe InDesign	3 (60%)
Microsoft Office	0 (0%)
Portfolio Sites	5 (100%)
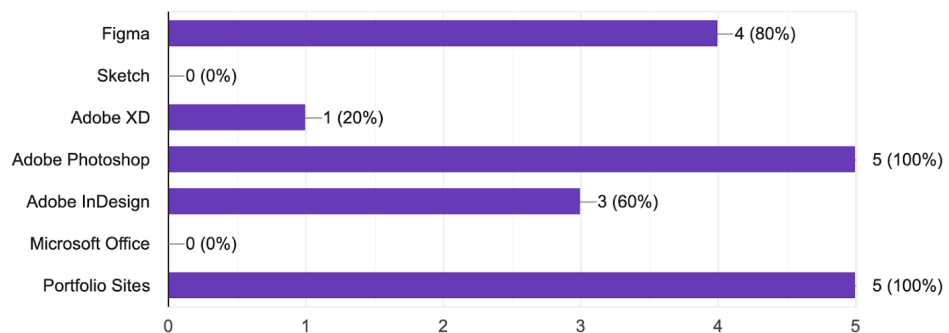
Note: Own Figure.

4.4 Industry Insights

Overall, this experience was insightful and provided a good starting point for the mentees. The research done on the topic of mentorships, in general, produces great results, and actively taking part in one proved those points. I had quite an interesting viewpoint on this whole process

since I not only was in charge of it but participated. It was a talking point for me during my mentorship meetings as I was applauded for taking on such a big task. At some points in my mentorship meetings, it almost turned into an interview dynamic as I spent time asking my mentor how she got into this field and mentoring as a whole. My mentor was also a student at my home university before my attending and ended up becoming a Senior Product Designer at a company called Provi. Ironically, she had a very similar story as me and during her time as a student, she ended up doing a job shadow which turned into her finding a lifelong mentor in the industry. She knew how much she appreciated the help and felt in debt for how much having a mentor moved her along in her career. Which in turn is why she volunteers her time as a mentor.

In addition to these meetings, another form of mentorship told to me by my mentor can be found through online sites such as LinkedIn and Youtube. In such a time we are in now, almost everything and anything can be found online. Just by scrolling through LinkedIn, you can join organization pages such as IxD Club and have a ton of others just like you learn about UX Design. By looking through others' profiles and trying to see how well a personality match would be, sending them a message could turn into a mentor-like relationship, or continue to build your network. There are too many youtube videos or online courses to name, but a simple search of UX Design could lead you down a path of endless useful information. With such an abundant amount of help at everyone's hands, it

just proves having a mentor to discuss all these insights is an important piece to a successful career.

5. Austrian Mentorship Framework

As I previously spent a lot of time and effort focusing on mentorship programs in the United States, I also wanted to put time and effort into what Austria has to offer and experience the cultural differences here. I was going to spend the months from September to February in the city of St. Pölten, Austria, and planned on researching potential programs or insights to see their viewpoint on mentorship. Additionally, I wanted to try and find a mentor here in the tech field to get a deeper appreciation of the Austrian culture and the technologies they use. As I was participating in the European Project Semester, I knew the likelihood of me finding a mentor was rather high being surrounded by technology daily.

Before I got started searching, I wanted to research mentorship opportunities in the Vienna region specifically. At first glance, I could tell the number of mentorship opportunities as a whole was drastically down compared to the USA. When I dug deeper and looked for UX / Product Design mentorship programs, I was left with zero options. I was presented with boot camp courses for UX Design that you had to pay for, offering classes from three to seven months to earn a certificate, not voluntary

discussions. This result was eye-opening for me, as you regularly hear about mentorship programs in the USA. I then spoke with one of my SCRUM professors about mentorship programs, and even he mentioned that he has not heard of such a thing, especially unpaid variations of help. This wasn't necessarily the information I wanted to hear as I planned to potentially help start a program at FHSTP, but it also could help me as it would be a new and interesting topic for the school to look at.

Although I couldn't find UX mentorships, I did find some general mentorship programs in Vienna which seemed valuable in research. One of the first mentorship programs I noticed was a group called the "Professional Women's Network" which was established in 2009 (PNW Vienna, 2022). PNW (2022) offers a 9-month program where mentors and mentees meet at least once a month and discuss business ideas or grow their professional skills. They also offer networking events and workshops for those to participate in. Another mentorship program I found was done through a university as well. Technische Universität Wien offers mentoring for all first-year students in any field, advanced students who are struggling in their students or want organization, and recently added a section for Ukrainian students (TU Wien, 2022). TU Wien's setup was different from the others I've seen. You were limited to participating in it for one academic year and they set up seven meetings for you, all you have to do is show up at the times selected. At the moment they have 150 mentees and 12 mentors registered. Additionally, I asked a few more professors if they knew about any mentorship programs, tech-related or

not, in the Vienna region. One professor told me about a group called Toastmasters. Toastmasters (2022) is a global organization that offers support in becoming a better public speaker, communicator, and leader. They also go about it a little differently and have group meetings rather than one on one meetings. The Vienna branch consists of 40+ members, from 15+ different nationalities, for about 30 separate meetings a year. From the research I have done, this group by far meets the most often as they offer in-person, hybrid, and remote meeting options.

Another section of mentorship that is popular in Austria is called "meet-ups". Instead of the 1 to 1 aspect, it is more of a general conference idea where people gather and give their insights to many. An organization in Vienna called UX Vienna takes part in this activity. Every second Tuesday of the month they all meet in a location and talk about UX.These talks consist of 20 to 30 minutes and can range on topics (UXVienna, 2023). This dynamic was interesting held on a monthly basis and seemed to be beneficial for many. However, now that I had learned about the mentorship side of things in Austria, it was time for me to try and find one for my duration here.

As my semester started, there were a couple of weeks of downtime where I just met my professors and had the time to settle in. I ended up meeting my virtual reality professor, Stefan Nebel, to get the rundown of my project but there was a mutual click and we began to converse about life as a whole. Just from that first impression, I knew I would learn a lot

and get along with him. I spent the next two or so classes just continuing to get to know him and learning about the virtual reality space. At one point, a conversation popped up about the research project I am working on and I ended up asking him if he would consider being my mentor for the semester and try to meet a few times a month outside of class to just discuss the Austrian lifestyle inside and out of the industry. He ended up saying yes and it turned into a great mentor/mentee relationship.

The way the class was structured made it so I would meet with him two or three times a month to discuss the project and he would give any help needed regarding virtual reality. These times were super insightful and the fact that it was usually a 2 to 1 ratio made the time valuable. He answered a ton of questions and helped bring me up to speed on tips and tricks in game development. Quite frankly, if it wasn't for his help during our meetings, I wouldn't have delivered the quality product I did. However, when our class meeting time was over, we would chat for a bit after class and just discuss cultural differences and have a good time. Then, we would discuss a meeting time within the next week when we both had free time. Between September 9th and February 1st, we met nine times. As one of my goals for going abroad was to make myself as attractive to hiring candidates as possible, we spent a lot of time talking about my career goals and the path I envision myself on. These conversations became lengthy as the cultural viewpoints in almost every area were widely different. When we weren't talking about the job industry

and how Austria goes about working, it was usually about food and

questions about America which I found hilarious.

Overall, as this test run of mentorship was rather short, it still

provided a ton of great moments and I learned a lot about Austria. It

provided a lot of guidance on how to approach the tech industry if I was to

stay abroad and a few experiences that I wouldn't have had if I didn't sit

down and gotten to know him better. It also gave me hope that a small

mentorship group at the FH could be a possibility as the word slowly

spread and other incoming students wished they could have had the same

experience.

6. Cultural Similarities and Differences

When I came abroad, my first initial thought regarding mentorship

was that it was going to be a very similar process, just in German. Well,

after the research I have done, I was very wrong. There are some core

similarities but from the conversations, experience, and research there is a

much different viewpoint on mentorship here. To better understand I will

break the data up into two categories of similar and different for a clearer

picture.

In terms of similarities, the first thing I noticed between both countries is when the opportunity for taking someone under your wing who is asking for your help is almost an immediate yes. As I view it, when the mentor has already been in the shoes of the mentee and understands the process and pressure of it all, they want to give back in a way and get the fulfillment that comes from helping someone out. This doesn't mean everyone will say yes to being a mentor and spend all their free time helping out, but people genuinely seem open to giving it a chance. Things such as personality differences and scheduling conflicts can cause friction and cause it to burn out which is just how life goes. Also, to no surprise, the leading software used is the same. I honestly came here expecting some to be different, but Microsoft Teams and Zoom were the standards for meeting online. Adobe Suite, Figma, and Mural were also the software of choice in Austria matching what I work with in America. One thing I appreciated at FHSTP was the ability to use the media lab and other areas like the audio room and photo lab. It was different from the ADMS lab at my home university but I still found it to be of great use and allowed me to create my own assets at times for my EPS project. I even met my Austrian mentor in those rooms to help with things he had more experience in. But having a place for students to go to give them the best opportunity for success seems like a universal concept and goes a long way. The statistics speak for themselves when 89% of people who had a mentor, will become a mentor one day (Cronin, 2020).

The differences weren't plentiful, but they were a shock to me as I come from the US. The biggest shock came from a few conversations I had where I mentioned it being done on your own time and without pay. Paid mentorships through companies are common thing in the states, but I would say that voluntary is the majority. In Austria, it seemed that paid mentorships whether through your company or an organization were the majority, and volunteer programs were done on a small scale. I do think that the labor laws between the countries play a difference in that. Also, the diversity in mentorship was a big difference. There are programs in almost every single industry you can think of in the US, but in Austria, it seems to be a more general practice and cater to business and leadership practices the most.

Overall, I think both countries find mentorship to be a valuable part of life. They just view it in different lights, which is to be expected. There is no denying the results statistics produce on the benefit of mentorship, and if both countries continue to implement it and find ways for it to work that matches their system, the education growth of their citizens will always be great.

7. Mentorship Framework at FHSTP

To back up my statement of why technology mentorship programs matter, I thought it would be important to take my knowledge and experience of these systems and attempt to create a foundation for FHSTP. This could also be generalized and used in any other way deemed fitting. In an ideal situation, it would be handed off to a professor or student who wants to go above and beyond and tackle this program as I will be back in the states.

The following would be an ideal process of the steps that need to be taken in the creation of a mentorship program that UX designers at FHSTP can use:

1. Goals and Expectations: Start by setting clear goals and expectations for the mentorship program. What does the mentor hope to achieve, and what does the mentee hope to gain from the experience? Write these down and review them regularly to ensure that both parties are on the same page. How many mentors and mentees should be allowed? Determine these numbers to better prepare for the launch and give the best opportunities you can.

2. Determine Foundation: Decide on using a paid or free platform for organizational tasks. Paid platforms can provide mentor pairing, meeting scheduling, feedback forms, and data reports. Paid platforms consist of Mentorinity, Hivebrite, PushFar, and more. Free platforms can do the job but provide more work and less structure.

Free platforms can be done through MentorcliQ or Together but can also be as simple as an excel spreadsheet.

3. Decide What Software to Use: When conducting a technology mentorship program, outline the potential software that will be used at the start. This consists of determining what will be the remote option for meetings. It is recommended to hold all meetings on the same platform for ease and accountability. Also, have a mutual understanding between mentors and mentees on what software will be covered so they can be downloaded and researched if necessary.

4. Regular Meetings: Schedule regular meetings between the mentor and mentee to ensure that progress is being made toward the set goals and expectations. These meetings could be in-person or virtual and could be scheduled on a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly basis, depending on what works best for both parties.

5. Feedback and Critique: A critical aspect of any mentorship is giving and receiving feedback. Encourage the mentee to seek out constructive criticism from the mentor, and make sure the mentor is providing regular, actionable feedback to help the mentee grow and improve their skills. Their portfolio is a great topic to focus on and use as a conversation piece.

6. Skill Development: Work with the mentee to identify areas in which they want to improve and help them develop a plan to achieve those goals. Provide resources and guidance to help them grow,

and make sure they are taking advantage of opportunities to
practice and apply their newfound skills.

7. Career Planning: UX design is a constantly evolving field, and
mentees need to have a clear idea of where they want to go in their
careers. Help the mentee map out their career path and guide how
to achieve their professional goals.

8. Networking Opportunities: Connect the mentee with others in the
UX design community, including other designers, clients, and
industry experts. This can help them build relationships, learn from
others, and grow their professional network.

9. Celebrate Success: Finally, make sure to celebrate the mentee's
successes and milestones. Recognize their hard work and
achievements, and encourage them to continue pushing
themselves to reach their goals.

By following this framework, UX designers at FHSTP can build productive
and effective mentorship relationships that help them grow and develop
their skills, both personally and professionally. This can provide benefits
such as a higher graduation rate, higher average salary among graduates,
and even provide alumni support down the road as possible mentors as
proven by the statistics.

8. Further Research

From my study, there is a lot more research to be done. Mentorship is a constantly evolving concept and when it is so broad it leads to many different routes of research. In a general sense, more research should be done on the awareness of mentorships and the process of getting into one. Mentorship proves to benefit when done, but most of the time people don't start getting mentors until after receiving a job when it should be started much sooner to shorten that timeframe. Therefore, there should be more research into how to get young professionals more interactive with mentorship programs during their studies. In regards to the specific side of things, each industry is going to have its own take on how mentorship programs work. This can lead to many new discoveries about improving the effectiveness and implementation of many jobs. The tech industry has a long way to go in mentorship programs still. A deeper dive into the remote / work-from-home culture and dealing with hardships such as job layoffs is a topic that will continue to evolve over the next three or four years until the economy returns. More time should also be spent on the actual process of mentorship meetings and what are the most effective ways of conducting the meetings without using up a ton of time. I would also like to prepare the effectiveness rate between remote and in-person mentorship.

An additional topic is a difference between voluntary mentorship programs and company-held mentorship programs. What is the difference in the success rates if any? Does the specialized internal mentor help or

does it cause a faster rate of burnout if you are being mentored within a company?

9. Final Conclusion

Concluding my research, all of my questions were able to be answered. Mentorship programs proved why they are beneficial to participants due to the statistics of promotion and salary. They were not as accessible as I expected them to be, but it looks like the awareness of joining them are rising. With COVID restrictions going away, I anticipate that more in-person meetings will become a thing. I learned first-hand that, yes, you can start your own mentorship program and have it be successful. Lastly, it does take a lot of effort and skills to be a good mentor/mentee. At first glance, a mentorship program seems like it is an easy way to bring success to your life as well as to others. However, there is a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes. Putting yourself in the position to be a part of a mentorship program isn't easy. Being able to build that connection and respect with someone else is always going to be a challenge. However, I believe that mentoring is worth the time and effort and plays a giant role in the improvement of humans and raising the quality of working life. I am grateful for the experiences I encountered and information I learned during my research. Having the opportunity to go abroad has really opened my eyes and allowed me to appreciate many

cultural differences. As Bob Proctor says, "A mentor is someone who sees more talent and ability within you, than you see in yourself, and helps bring it out of you" (Wise, 2020). Allowing yourself to be vulnerable and taught something by someone else is always an experience you can benefit from.

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List of Figures

Appendix

Registration Survey

Product Hive x DGM Mentorship Program

Product Hive x UVU Digital Media Department Mentorship
Mentorship Duration: September 12 - November 4th, 2022

Product Hive Information

* Required

1. First and Last Name *

   _____

2. Email *

   _____

3. Year in School *

   Mark only one oval.

   ( ) Freshman

   ( ) Sophomore

   ( ) Junior

   ( ) Senior

   ( ) Other: _____

4. Have you passed Portfolio Review or currently working on it? *

   Mark only one oval.

   ( ) Yes

   ( ) No

   ( ) Other: _____

5. This program will entail about 1 - 3 hours of your week. You will meet with your mentor over zoom or in person and go over potential classwork ideas, industry work, etc. It will be encouraged to try and get them to come into the ADMS or the classroom to work in person. Wi you be able to commit to that time amount?

   Mark only one oval.

   ( ) Yes

   ( ) No

Google Forms

Topics Discussed Survey

Product Hive Topic Feedback

1. What topics were discussed?

   Check all that apply.

   ☐ Portfolio
   ☐ Homework
   ☐ Personal Project
   ☐ General Life
   ☐ Job Search

   ☐ Other: _____

Software Used Survey

Product Hive Feedback

1. What software was used during your mentorship?

   Check all that apply.

   ☐ Figma
   ☐ Sketch
   ☐ Adobe XD
   ☐ Adobe Photoshop
   ☐ Adobe InDesign
   ☐ Microsoft Office
   ☐ Portfolio Sites

   ☐ Other: _____