



Introduction

Interested in starting a SWENext Mentoring Program?

This guide is based on lessons learned from running a pilot SWENext Mentoring Program in the cities of Houston and Pittsburgh from January to April 2020. It also includes input from the SWE section at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo based on the SWENext Mentoring Program they run.

Note that this **guide** is for a **high school mentoring program**. If you are going to run a program with middle school students or younger, it would be best to have parents attend the meetings.

Five Questions to Get You Started

- What type of mentoring program do you want to run?
- How do you find mentors?
- How do you attract high school students to your mentoring program?
- What type of events will you host?
- What else should you consider when running a mentoring program?

Types of Programs

Group Mentoring or One-on-One Mentoring?

Some SWENexters prefer group sessions so they can hear a broader input. Some prefer one-on-one for more in-depth mentoring.

From a liability perspective, we **recommend group mentoring first**. Provide the contact info of the mentors so SWENexters can independently reach out to mentors if they choose. Mentees and their parents were comfortable with initial group mentoring or group meetings. Most responded positively when surveyed regarding mentees connecting one-on-one with mentors after group events.

Finding Mentors

- **Reach out to SWE members** in both the professional section and the collegiate sections in the area.
- **Clarify what you are asking of them.** Do you want the SWE members to attend an event or two and meet with students at the event? And/or do you want them to pair with a student for a longer-term relationship? How long will the program last – 2 months, 4 months, through the school year?
- **Create a Google form to sign up the mentors.** Ask about engineering discipline, what university they attended, when they graduated, where they work, hobbies, etc. These are all dimensions you might want to use when selecting mentors for a group event or when matching mentors with mentees.

Attracting Mentees

This is a great way to introduce High Schoolers to SWENext!

1. Find out how many high school SWENexters are in your area.

Send an email to swenext@swe.org to learn how many there are, when they joined SWENext, and what their zip code is. Since they are minors we cannot send you their names. You can also search for local SWENext clubs on this website.

<https://swe.org/k-12-outreach/swenext/swenext-clubs/>

2. Set up a registration form for mentees to sign up for the program.

You might want to ask grade, hobbies, whether they would prefer group mentoring or one-on-one mentoring, what type of engineering they are interested in (or “not sure yet”), and what they would like to get out of a mentoring program. Make sure you explain what your mentoring program is about at the top of the registration form.

3. Fill out the “Promote Your Event:” form on the SWE website.

Include the registration link. SWE Headquarters will advertise your mentoring program in their twice-a-month “STEM Events Near You” newsletter that goes to all SWENexters.

Note: Current deadlines are “Submit by the 5th of the month to be advertised on the 15th of the month; submit by the 20th of the month to be advertised on the 30th of the month.”

<https://swe.org/k-12-outreach/youth-advocacy/events-submissions-form/>

4. Reach out to contacts from previous high school outreach events.

If you have contacts at local high schools, you can also ask them to send your invitation to their female students interested in engineering or technology. Good contacts are STEM teachers, counselors and even students who have previously attended events your section has hosted. (*This is also a good way to recruit new SWENexters.*)

Types of Events

There are several formats that work well for Group Mentoring.

Group Mentoring Integrated in a Broader Event

The University of Pittsburgh SWE Section incorporated **group mentoring** into their Women in STEM Conference. SWENexters shadowed a collegiate or professional SWE member during the conference. This allowed for in-depth interaction throughout the event.

SWENexters filled out an interest survey before the event and were matched with a SWE member mentor that studied/worked in the field of engineering that the mentees were interested in.

Group Mentoring as a Standalone Event

The Houston SWE Professional Section set up a 2-hour long **group mentoring** event on a Saturday afternoon during lunchtime. The program included a group icebreaker, speed mentoring (where the SWENexters rotated through each mentor for 5 to 10 minutes each), a break for lunch, and finally an open panel discussion on a number of topics. Free lunch and snacks were provided.

The break for lunch was very useful in fostering informal networking between the SWENexters themselves and the mentors.

Virtual Group Mentoring

Both Houston and Pittsburgh held virtual events; one was via Zoom and the other via GoToMeeting. Both platforms worked well because all participant faces could be seen on video at any time.

Have a pre-planned agenda with PowerPoint slides to keep attention focused. Ensure you leave at least 15-20 mins for Q&A so mentees can raise more discussion topics, and there is more interactive conversation.

The Facilitator's role is to keep the event moving and keep time. They also ensure that all mentees are included in the participation of the dialogue during the Q&A/panel discussions.

Another key role is the Chat Coordinator. This person can answer some questions directly in the chat box or call attention to the questions in the chat box for panelists or the facilitator to answer.

Other Considerations

-  **Lock in the Date, Time, and Venue for the Event.** It will be easier to sign-up mentors and mentees if you can tell them exactly when and where you are meeting.
-  **Invitations:** The invitation to the mentees should include what specific topics will be discussed during the mentoring event. This will attract mentees who are interested in those specific topics.
-  **Photo Release Forms:** If you want to publish pictures of the mentors and mentees after the event, you need to have the parents of the high school students fill out a photo release form. Add the photo release form as part of the initial event online registration. Most SWENexters are dropped off by their parents at the event so getting a parent's signature on the day of the event can be challenging.
-  **RSVP Date:** Include an RSVP date for the mentees so that you have enough time to find mentors from the fields that the mentees are interested in.
-  **Sending Reminders:** After getting mentees registered, it is important to send reminders leading up to the event. If the event is in person, send them directions on how to get there, where parents can park or drop off the mentees, and if parking is free. Tell them what the dress code is. Send a final email one day before the event to remind SWENexters to attend.
-  **Room Layout:** If you have a choice of room layout for an in-person event, it is better to have a cluster of tables set up to create smaller groups and a more intimate setting for networking.
-  **Preparing Your Mentors:** Make sure you've explained to your mentors what is expected of them throughout the event. For panel discussions, make sure they understand that not every mentor needs to answer every question. It is best to avoid information overload to the mentees in a group mentoring session and share only the most critical points.
-  **Post Event Survey:** Make sure you ask the mentees to fill out a simple survey on what they liked, what they wanted more of, and what we could do differently. It is important to get feedback at the end of the event or very soon thereafter, while impressions of the event are fresh. Then, share the results with the mentors so they can learn from the feedback, too.



Brought to you by:

SWE Student Programs Committee

New Benefits Work Group



With special thanks for their input:

California Polytechnic State U. SWE, San Luis Obispo