

A mentee in the Energy industry

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Introduction

In 2017, I left China and came to Canada to pursue my master's degree at the University of Alberta. After one year of study, I decided to work in Canada for several years after graduation. However, by that time, I had no idea how to find a job, let alone how to find a job in Alberta in general or how to find a job in Alberta. I never sent out a resume or never went to a career fair by then. All I had was this big, daunting idea that I was going to find a job in Edmonton or Calgary. Then one day I was chatting with Dr. Dave Eaton from the University of Calgary, telling him that I wanted to get a job here in Calgary but didn't know how to look for a job, and the market was not promising. He immediately suggested that I join the mentorship program offered by the Canadian Society of Exploration Geophysicists (CSEG). So I did. To this day, I still think this is one of the best choices I made in my whole life.

In this abstract, I am going to share my experience as a mentee in the CSEG Mentorship Program from 2018 to 2021 by answering the following questions:

1. What does joining the mentorship program mean to me?
2. What does having a mentor mean to me?
3. What does being a mentee mean to me?

What does joining the mentorship program mean to me?

Joining the mentorship program did not lead me to a job offer. However, it brought me so many other things that were more valuable than a job offer. First of all, this program introduced me to the geophysicist community. This united community gave me a sense of belonging. There were many great talks and social events that were both educational and enjoyable. Second, this program connected me with other talented professionals. They have given me wonderful advice about my education, career and life. I am always grateful for that. Third, this mentorship program guided me through my job-searching journey. The program offered various resources, including resume and cover letter review and feedback, as well as mock interviews. These resources were extremely helpful because the feedback was provided by geophysicists who had interviewed and hired many geophysics students themselves. Thanks to the mentorship program, job hunting has become less intimidating to me. Joining the program gave me a starting point in this journey and showed me the way.

What does having a mentor mean to me?

To be honest, before having a mentor, I had never realized how impactful having a mentor was to my career or how lucky I was to be able to have a mentor. So far, I have been paired with three mentors. For me, they are my role models and I want to be like them in the future. I don't have a lot of role models in my life, particularly female role models. My mother gave up her career to take care of me because my father was away from home 10 out of 12 months in a year. Even though

my mom chose to stay at home for the family, she raised me to be bold and ambitious. My given name is a title for female officers in ancient China. My mom gave me this name because she wanted me to pursue a fulfilling career as a woman. Nevertheless, when I first started thinking about my possible career paths, I was lost because I didn't know what I should do, how I should start or which direction I should go to have a meaningful career. I didn't even know what a meaningful career meant to me. Luckily, I have my mentors. They always give me genuine support and encouragement. Though all my mentors have geophysics backgrounds, their career paths are very different from each other. Via personal meetings with them every month, they shared their stories with me and showed me the possible directions I could pursue with a geophysics degree. It has been a tough job market for many geoscientists since 2014, yet my mentors' experiences have shown me the various options I could choose with a geophysics background. What's more, they have also taught me resilience and how to thrive under hard times because they thrived under hard times.

What does being a mentee mean to me?

Being an efficient mentee was another roadblock I found when participating in the mentorship program at the beginning. When I first joined the mentorship program, I was living in Edmonton and my mentor was in Calgary. So regular meet-ups were not an option. Now, this speaks to every mentor and mentee even more as we are all adapting to this new era of virtual meetings. Here I summarized five tips that made the mentoring relationship work for me.

1. Be proactive

Sometimes we as mentees might find it difficult to reach out to our mentors because we are afraid that the mentors are too busy and our emails will annoy them. I would suggest overcoming this fear and try to always initiate the email conversation. Don't get frustrated when our mentors do not reply to the email immediately. Give them some time and try to find the boundary here. Also, you can invite your mentor to join professional social events or technical talks with you, so your mentor can introduce you to other people. In addition, send them emails regularly to keep them updated and make sure they know you by the end of the program. You should be in charge of maintaining and even cultivating this relationship.

2. Be open

Always try to be open with your mentors. Share your stories and troubles. Tell them what your opinions are about the industry, the market and the future. If you are struggling in getting to know more people or having no luck in job searching, be open and tell them what you think. If you are considering changing your career because you need to pay your bills but you are still passionate about geoscience and want to do what you love as a career, be open and share what is bothering you. Your mentor will not be able to help you if you only tell them what you think they want to hear. Also, if you have any questions or if you want a referral from your mentor, ask them politely. This is why making sure your mentor knows you are important because they will be more likely to give you referrals if they know you well.

3. Be professional

Even though you are a student as a mentee, being professional is still very important as a mentee. First, keep your personal life out of the conversation. Second, do not bother your mentor too much. That is what I mean when I mention learning the

boundary of being proactive and being annoying. Every mentor has his or her boundary about this so you need to understand where your mentor's boundary is. Third, always prepare questions and topics to discuss before meeting with your mentor. This is to make sure that both you and your mentor will not experience awkwardness when no one knows what to say and waste time.

4. Be accountable

From time to time, your mentor might give you some contact information about other professionals that you might find beneficial to connect with. In such cases, be accountable and make sure you reach out to the people your mentor introduced you to.

5. Be grateful

Last but not least, please remember to show your gratitude to your mentor. This is an obvious point but make sure you express your gratitude properly and in time.

Final words

For me, being a mentee is a wonderful experience. It is not about how many people you connect with or how many potential job offers you can get through this program, but the conversations you have with your mentors and the lessons you learned from them. These are much more important to you than a job offer. I know you will find this hard to believe if you are desperate for a job like I was for two years. However, if you look into the longer time horizon, a job might only be with you for 5 years, yet what you have learned from your mentors will be with you for the rest of your life. I hope you will appreciate this too.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Nathan Fester, the Chairperson of the CSEG Foundation Mentorship, for organizing this amazing mentorship program and other volunteers in the program. I would also like to thank my mentors for their dedication to this program.