

# Why Navigators

Much of the research around college graduate employment indicates there is a disconnect between what students think it will be like to work in their career field of choice and the realities of doing so. This misunderstanding is often the result of the pressures placed on students to determine their career path before they fully understand their own interests and passions.

The Navigators component of the Sigma Nu Mentor Network is an intentional effort to help collegiate brothers – particularly those between 19 and 21 years old, and those who have identified a desired career field – better understand their desired profession.

# Helping Students

Navigators is designed to assist collegiate brothers from two sources:

1. Mentors who currently work, have worked, or have extensive knowledge in the same, or similar, career field of the collegiate brother(s). These mentors should have extensive knowledge and experience, which they will share with the collegiate brothers as a part of the guided learning process.
2. A small peer group of collegiate brothers, desirous of the same or similar career field. Engaging brothers with similar career interests is an opportunity to build supportive relationships not just for the mentoring term, but also as a part of each other's future professional work.

From the experience and shared knowledge of the mentor(s), collegiate brothers will have a detailed understanding of the ongoing education required, or helpful, for their career field, as well as the process of obtaining said education. Further, mentors in, or connected to, the same fields as the collegiate brothers can provide:

- A real-world sense of the work that occurs.
- Perspective related to the life cycle that exist within that profession.
- A realistic view of the stresses and joys of the work.

Members of the peer group can be invaluable to one another, not just through this experience, but as future professionals. In this experience, collegiate brothers can learn from one another through individual interactions as well as the group interactions. This experience is an example of the benefit that comes from multiple points of view because not all group members will have the same approach or previous experiences; thereby, helping group member to develop a more well-rounded and informed perspective.

## Program Goals

- Facilitate and support the student-mentor relationship as a component of the college education.
- Contribute to student development through a strategic opportunity for professional development.
- Provide a realistic expectation of what it is like to work in a career field of choice and the process of entry to the field.
- Create a sense of community and connection between collegiate brothers and alumni with similar career interests.
- Satisfy the desire of alumni to directly engage with, and provide value to, current collegiate brothers.

## Program Components

- Develop professional knowledge and skills.
- Develop personal/career goals.
- Connecting and Relationship Building.



The Navigators peer group experience will be virtual.

**The group is to establish its own meeting schedule that includes, at minimum, one meeting per month during the mentoring term (November through April).**

The group's mentor(s) will manage the meeting platform and ensure participants have the

necessary information needed to join each meeting. Group members will have an opportunity to communicate, as they wish, in the time between meetings as well.



## What Mentors Do

During the months of November–April, mentors will host, at minimum, one virtual meeting of their group each month. These meeting will likely last one hour and cover a progressive list of topics.

- Educational requirements of the field; Beneficial certifications and ongoing education.
- What prior experience is helpful in this field?
- Finding a job in this field.
- What to expect in the first year in this field?
- Joys and stresses of working in this field.
- Next steps to entry.

Mentors are not limited to just these topics. While these topics establish a starting point for each month's group meeting, mentors may expand their group's conversations if time permits. The intention is for the students to gain a realistic, in-depth view of the career field they are interested in, what it may be like for them working in that field, and how to enter that field. A discussion guide for these established topics has been created – [Topical Discussion Guide](#).

There are two more things mentors will be asked to do at the end of the mentoring term (November–April).

1. Take some time to provide each student in the group with some final words of advice and direction, based on what you have learned about them and their career goals. These words and advice will, effectively, mark the end of the formal mentoring term of Navigators.
2. Mentors will also be asked to complete a program evaluation. The information collected from the mentors and participating students will be used to revise and improve Navigators for future years.

### Expectations of Mentors

- Be prepared to share from your personal experience and knowledge.
- Commit to meeting with your student group at least one hour per month, November–April.
- Represent Sigma Nu in a professional manner throughout the program.
- Maintain the confidentiality of all personal, and professional, contact information give to you about your mentor, or other program participants.
- Be knowledgeable about educational requirements, if any, for the career field and/or other ongoing education opportunities that are/may be beneficial.
- Keep group members accountable to the agreed upon meeting schedule.

### Navigators Timeline

**August 15<sup>th</sup>:** Registration Opens

**September 30<sup>th</sup>:** Registration Closes

**Mid-Late October:** Navigators Kick-off (virtual)

**November–April:** Mentoring Term (monthly group meetings)

**April/May:** Experience Evaluation

# Topical Discussion Guide

The following is a list of the topics cohort groups will be discussing with their mentor(s). Each section – indicated by the gold header – is designed to serve as the launch point for its designated monthly cohort meeting. The questions and talking points in each section are suggestions assist the mentor(s) through the conversation.

## Continuing Education Requirements and/or Benefits

### Meeting #1: November

Lifelong learning is an important lesson to be learned and, at some level, it occurs whether it's intentional or not. There are several career fields and, more specifically, jobs that have ongoing education requirements. It is important for our collegiate brothers to understand these requirements or, if such requirements do not exist in a field, what benefits may come with continuing education.

- Standard, entry-level education requirement to get into this field – Bachelors, Masters, PhD, professional certificate, etc.
- Continuing education requirements for this field
  - Certification or license renewals, industry/field conference to accumulate education “hours,” online education sessions, etc.
  - Guidance/Tips to fulfilling any continuing education requirements if such requirements exist for this field.
- What are the professional benefits, in this field, to pursuing additional post-graduate education voluntarily?
  - Post-graduate education may include degrees, certifications, or specific coursework.
- From your experience, is there a beneficial timeframe to pursue a post-graduate degree in this field? (e.g., immediately, 1-3 years in, 5-7 years in, etc.)
- Some of the challenges to be prepared for if pursuing post-graduate education and/or required continuing education:
  - Time management.
  - Balancing work, education, and personal life.
  - Financial impact.

## Prior Work Experience

### Meeting #2: December

Different fields apply different weights to the prior experience of new graduates. It is unlikely that students fully understand how important, or unimportant, their prior experience may be. It is important that our collegiate brothers recognize the benefit of their collegiate experience, as well as their prior work experience, and how these experiences can work for them as they look to enter a career field. It is also important for them to begin identifying what other skills and knowledge can be gained to aid their efforts to enter their career field of choice.

- Skills helpful/beneficial in this field.
  - Conflict management, graphic design knowledge, strategic planning/goal setting, event planning, etc.
- Work/development experience helpful to students wishing to enter this field.
  - Internships, hourly experience in a related role, any work experience that can be related to the field, etc.
- Importance, if any, of internships for entry into this field.
- Guidance on what students can/should be doing now to build credible skills and experience for entry into the field.
- “Selling” the experience you have – how to talk about the knowledge/skills/experience gained.

## The Job Search

### Meeting #3: January

Many students are aware that finding and landing a job is not a simple proposition. What they do not know, though, is what is involved in a successful job search, nor do they appreciate how long it can take. From the perspective of a specific career field, it is important that students grasp the reality of how to conduct a job search, when to begin that search, and how they can make themselves stand out from other applicants.

- Provide an overview of what a job search is.
  - Process by which an individual seeks out employment opportunities and uses the resources available to them to improve the likelihood of receiving a job offer.
- How long the job search can take in this field.
  - Know the job market you are entering.
  - Daily commitment – think of it like a job; work every day.
  - Be prepared to be okay with “silence” – not hearing back right away – and how to follow up.
  - Don’t have to take the first offer you get...can keep looking.
- Resources available to help identify the employment opportunities in a career field.
- Tailoring the approach to each employer.
  - Who an applicant should talk to at the company/firm may vary depending on who the applicant knows or can gain access to; Adjusting one’s resume to highlight items important to that potential employer, etc.
- Using your relationships.
  - Who do you know that knows someone at a potential employer and they can either provide some inside information or can make a strategic introduction?
  - “Applying” without applying is ideal if it’s possible – How to learn about openings before they’re posted/public; “Applying” by expressing desire to work for an employer.
- Preparing for the interview.
  - Standard interview questions in this field.
  - Figuring out what kind of “out of the box” questions you may be asked.
  - Practice (e.g., mock interviews, informational interviews, etc.).

## What to Expect in the First Year

### Meeting #4: February

The first year in a new job, especially for a new graduate, can set the tone for the remainder of the time they are with that employer. With their limited experience, students often don’t know what they can/should be doing to set themselves up for success.

- Type of work a new, entry-level employee should expect.
  - Temper expectations, appropriately (e.g., not likely to change the industry in the first year of employment, etc.).
- Colleagues will be gauging your work and performance every day.
  - How this can be an opportunity or threat, and how to capitalize on either scenario.
- Strategic relationships in the office and how to build them.
- General tips for success.
  - Listen and learn.
  - Ask questions to understand, not to challenge.
  - Recognize and take advantage of opportunities.

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## Joys and Stresses

### Meeting #5: March

Every job has its pros and cons. Student will have their own vision of how great things will be. This vision is important because it builds and maintains excitement and interest. Unfortunately, this excitement can also block out the less exciting, real-life, daily grind. It is important for students to understand this reality, but also that it is within this reality that they, or their employer, make an impact.

- What do students think they want from work in this field?
  - Emotionally, psychologically, etc.
- What do you enjoy most about this work, and why?
- What do you enjoy least about this work, and why?
- Offer an example of how you have made an impact on:
  - Your employer.
  - A client/customer.
  - Your community (local/regional/etc.).
- Because of employment in this field, what types of opportunities have presented themselves to you, or may become available?
- Because of employment in this field, what restrictions/limitations have presented themselves?

## Next Steps

### Meeting #6: April

There is a reasonable likelihood that most of the participating collegiate brothers will not be graduating at the end of the current mentoring term. It will be important, then, that these brothers are provided some guidance/direction to identify the next steps they need to take after the mentoring term concludes.

- What does each student need to do next in their journey to enter this field?
  - Classes to be taken.
  - Related work experience to be gained.
- Strategic relationships to be built.
  - Anyone to whom the student(s) need to be introduced?
- Getting started with potential employers or post-graduate program research.