

Seek Professional Mentors

Everyone needs a **professional mentor**! Regardless of at what stage in your career you happen to be, you will always want someone you can trust to reach out to for advice on work- or career-related concerns. You will likely find that mentors are not always permanent fixtures in your life. In some cases, the connection will be strong and could be lasting. In other cases, though, you may find that some mentors are important for a period of time or for very specific experiences in your career. For all of these circumstances, your time at CSUB and in BPA is when you will want to begin actively seeking out individuals who will make contributions to this early stage of your career development. Below are some ideas for how to cultivate these critical connections.

- Take advantage of the **office hours** offered by your professors, as a way to allow them to get to know you. Do you have any questions about the material covered in lecture or in the readings? Or would you like to discuss some ideas you might have for an upcoming paper? If so, you can use these items as a way to start a conversation with one or two of your professors, and they will be able to see that you are interested in doing well in your courses, which is important for them to know. As you continue to attend office hours, your professors will get to know about you, about your interests, and will likely end up offering you advice as you encounter various academic experiences.
- When you do well in a course, **enroll in a second course** offered by the same professor. If you have not already taken advantage of attending this professor's office hours, be sure you do so during the second course you take from them. This is a clear opportunity for you to do well in the second experience and allow the professor to be well-situated to serve as a reference for you in the future. **Be sure to save all of the course work** you complete during these two courses and give a copy of those to the professor, if you ever ask them to write you a letter of recommendation for a scholarship or other experience. A professor needs a copy of the assignments you completed for them in previous coursework in order to write an effective reference letter. You want to provide them evidence of how your skills have developed over time and to be able to refer to those examples in any letter they write on your behalf.
- **Introduce yourself** to local professionals who work in the industry you would like to eventually pursue. Through networking events and volunteer opportunities (described below), you will be positioned to meet numerous people who are in community leadership roles. Connecting with them will give you the chance to reach out to them for support in the future, perhaps for an **informational interview** or for a **job shadowing experience**, and allow them to get to know about you and about your career aspirations. Once that happens, a mentoring relationship could develop.
- If you are not currently comfortable with the idea of approaching a professor during office hours or a community leader at a campus event, consider enrolling in a course like Theatre 1009, The Art of Presentation, or Communications 1008, Strategies of Public Communication, that are focused on enhancing your communication and presentation skills.