



WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY  
**MIKE ILITCH**  
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS  
Mentorship Program

# Ilitch School Mentorship Program Mentor Handbook

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# Welcome to the Ilitch School Mentorship Program

## Welcome, and thank you for becoming a mentor!

We're excited to welcome you to the Wayne State University (WSU), Mike Ilitch School of Business's Ilitch School Mentorship Program (ISMP). We look forward to collaborating with you throughout your journey as a mentor!

The ISMP assists undergraduate students in exploring potential career paths while building confidence and preparing them for a life after graduation. This program partners with the Mike Ilitch School of Business undergraduate students with business professionals to guide them through career planning, resume development, job shadowing (if applicable), networking, and establishing professional relationships.

Mentorship unlocks potential, inspires confidence, and guides young professionals as they discover their true capabilities.

## Program Format

Online one-on-one mentoring through [Xinspire](#). The program runs from **September through April**.

Open to all undergraduate business students at all levels. Freshmen through seniors. Focused on real-world skills, personalized guidance, and long-term professional relationships.

## What is Mentoring?

*"A mentor is an individual with expertise who can help develop the career of a mentee." - The American Psychological Association*

Mentoring is the process of an experienced individual helping another person develop goals and skills through time-limited, confidential one-on-one conversations and learning activities. As a mentor, you will share your experiences and wisdom, develop a new relationship, and deepen your own skills.

## The Role of the Mentor

### Professional Development

- Guide on career choices and navigating organizational structures
- Help mentees develop leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills
- Introduce mentees to professional networks and new opportunities

## Personal Growth

- Help mentees understand their strengths, weaknesses, and values
- Use encouragement and constructive feedback to build their confidence

## Education Support

- Offer advice on academic decisions, study techniques, and career paths
- Assist with projects by providing expertise, feedback, and resources

## Career Advancement

- Help mentees explore career pathways, job searches, and interview preparation
- Assist in setting realistic goals with actionable plans to achieve them

## Who are the Mentees?

Mentees in the ISMP are current Wayne State University, Mike Ilitch School of Business undergraduate students from diverse backgrounds. They have been advised that they are responsible for:

- Scheduling all meetings, confirming each one, setting the agenda, and following up afterward
- Reaching out via email, phone call, or in-person arrangement
- Proactively checking in regularly throughout the academic semester

Mentees are informed that the program is what they put into it and are expected to lead the relationship. As a mentor, you are the guide and resource.

## Program Details and Time Commitment

As a mentor in the ISMP:

- Complete program milestones located in [Xinspire](#) account.
- Meet with your assigned mentee **at least once a month for the full academic year (September through April)**
- Assist mentees with objectives and goals for their desired career paths
- Meet via phone, video conference, or potentially at your workplace
- Maintain additional contact via phone, text, email, or teleconference
- Provide career and academic support, encouragement, advice, and constructive criticism
- Demonstrate qualities that successful business leaders possess

## Time Commitment

As a volunteer, we understand you lead a busy life. If you cannot make a scheduled meeting, please communicate with your mentee as soon as possible.

Mentees have been instructed to give you at least 48 hours' notice for rescheduling and to do everything in their power to avoid cancellations.

**Availability required: September through April** (fall and spring semesters).

## Meeting with Your Mentee

### Establish the relationship

- Get to know each other in the initial meeting, including backgrounds, interests, and professional goals
- Share expectations: meeting frequency, communication styles, and focus areas
- Set short and long-term goals using SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound)

### Define roles and responsibilities

- Clarify what you can offer: network, feedback, industry guidance, etc.
- Remind the mentee that it's their responsibility to be proactive and apply your advice

### Create a communication plan

- Set preferred contact methods and schedule upcoming meeting dates in advance
- Agree on how the mentee would like feedback delivered
- Encourage open, honest communication throughout the program year

### Review and reflect

- Periodically review the progress of your mentoring relationship
- Reassess goals and adjust the focus of your sessions as needed

## First Meeting Checklist

**Use this as your guide for a strong first conversation with your mentee.**

### Before the Meeting

- Review your mentee's profile on [Xinspire](#). Familiarize yourself with their major, year, and stated goals.
- Confirm the meeting time and platform. Send a reminder 24 hours in advance.
- Prepare 2-3 questions to get the conversation started. See the Conversation Starters page for ideas on IMPS's Resource webpage.

## During the Meeting

- Introduce yourself and share your career story briefly. Keep is conversational and save the deep dive details for future sessions.
- Ask about their background, major, and career interests. Listen more than you talk in the first meeting.
- Discuss and agree on communication preferences. Email, phone, text? How often? Response time expectations?
- Set 2-3 goals together for the program year. Use the **SMART Goals framework on the next page**.
- Schedule your next meeting before you hang up. Don't leave without a date on the calendar.
- Clarify what you can realistically offer. Networking? Resume review? Industry insight? Mock interviews?

## After the Meeting

- Send a brief follow-up message within 24 hours. Recap what you discussed and confirm next steps.
- Note your mentee's goals. You'll want to revisit these throughout the year.

## Setting SMART Goals

**Help your mentee turn big dreams into an actionable plan.**

One of the most valuable things you can do as a mentor is to help your mentee move from vague aspirations to concrete, achievable goals. Use the **SMART framework** to guide that conversation.

- **Specific:** Clearly define what you want to accomplish. Who, what, when, why?
- **Measurable:** How will you know when you've achieved it? What does success look like?
- **Achievable:** Is this realistic given your mentee's current situation and timeline?
- **Relevant:** Does this goal align with their broader career and academic ambitions?
- **Time-Bound:** Set a clear deadline or milestone date to work toward.

## Examples of SMART Goals

- I will apply to finance internships on Handshake by November 1 and follow up with at least 2 networking contacts from the Ilitch School Career Fair.
- I will complete one mock interview with my mentor by October 15 and implement their feedback before the Ilitch School Career Fair.
- I will attend 2 Ilitch School Career Services events this semester and connect with at least 3 new professionals on LinkedIn each month.

## Conversation Starters

**Never walk into a meeting wondering what to say.**

These questions are written from your perspective as a mentor. Feel free to use them as-is or adapt them to fit your mentee's specific situation and goals.

## Getting to Know Your Mentee

- Tell me about yourself. What drew you to business?
- What does a typical week look like for you right now?
- What's a class project or experience are you really proud of?
- What do you do outside of school? Clubs, jobs hobbies?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years? Even if it's fuzzy right now.

## Exploring Career Goals

- What kind of work environment do you think you'd thrive in?
- Is there a specific industry or company you're drawn to, and why?
- What does your ideal job look like? Role, company size, location?
- Have you had any internships or jobs that taught you something about what you do or don't want?
- What skills do you feel confident in, and what do you want to develop?

## Digging into Challenges

- What's the biggest challenge you're facing in your career search right now?
- Is there anything about the professional world that feels overwhelming or confusing?
- What's one thing you wish you knew more about in your field?
- How are you feeling about transitioning from school to full-time work?

## Sharing Your Own Experience

- Here's something I wish someone had told me when I was in your position...
- The thing that surprised me most about my first job was...
- A mistake I made early in my career that taught me a lot was...
- The skill I use most in my job every day that they don't really teach in school is...

## Wrapping Up a Session

- What's one thing you're going to do differently before we meet next?
- Is there anything you'd like me to bring to our next conversation?
- How can I be most helpful right now?
- What's something that's been on your mind that we haven't talked about?

# Boundaries and Best Practices

## **Being a great mentor means knowing what's in and out of scope.**

Mentorship is a meaningful relationship and like any professional relationship, it works best when boundaries are clear from the start. This page is not about limiting your impact; it's about protecting both you and your mentee.

If something feels off such as, inappropriate requests, uncomfortable situations, or anything that gives you pause, please reach out to the ISMP Program Administrators right away at [ilitchmentorship@wayne.edu](mailto:ilitchmentorship@wayne.edu). We're here to support you.

## **Don't make promises you can't keep**

Offering to "get them a job" or guarantee an introduction can create pressure and disappointment. Instead, offer to try, and be honest about what you can realistically do.

## **Don't act as a therapist or counselor**

If your mentee is dealing with serious personal, mental health, or financial crises, acknowledge their situation with care and direct them to WSU's professional support services. That's not your role and trying to fill it can do more harm than good.

## **Don't share confidential workplace information**

Be thoughtful about what internal company information you share. Your mentee relationship should never put you in a compromising position professionally.

## **Don't connect mentees to job opportunities without thinking it through**

A referral is a reflection of you. Make sure you know your mentee well enough to vouch for them before making a formal introduction to a colleague or employer.

## **Don't let meetings go dark without reaching out**

If your mentee stops responding, give it one week, then proactively check in. If you still can't reach them after two weeks, contact the ISMP Program Administrators: [ilitchmentorship@wayne.edu](mailto:ilitchmentorship@wayne.edu).

## **Don't feel like you need to have all the answers**

"I don't know, but let me find out" or "let me connect you with someone who would know" is a perfectly valid and often more valuable mentor response.

## Don't take on the scheduling and agenda

Mentees have been told that scheduling meetings and setting agendas is their responsibility. If they're not doing this, remind them gently and then let the ISMP Program Administrators know if it continues:

[ilitchmentorship@wayne.edu](mailto:ilitchmentorship@wayne.edu).

## Giving Effective Feedback

**Feedback is one of the most powerful gifts you can give a mentee.**

Some mentees may have rarely received honest, constructive professional feedback. Done well, it's one of the most transformative parts of the mentorship experience.

### The SBI Framework

- **Situation:** Describe the specific context. For example, "During our mock interview last week..."
- **Behavior:** Describe what you observed. Not just your interpretation. For example, "...I noticed you started several answers with 'um' and looked away from the camera..."
- **Impact:** Explain the effect it had. For example, "...which can make it harder for interviewers to gauge your confidence. Here's how to work on it."

### Helpful Tips for Delivering Feedback

- **Ask first.** Try saying, "Can I share an observation?" before diving in.
- **Be specific, not general.** "Your resume bullet on page one is vague" is more useful than "your resume needs work."
- **Balance it.** Acknowledge what's working before addressing what isn't.
- **Make it forward-looking.** Frame feedback around what they can do differently, not just what went wrong.
- **Check in after.** Follow up at your next meeting: "How did it go when you tried that?". This shows you care about the outcome.
- **Respect their style.** Some mentees want blunt honesty; others need a gentler approach. Ask them early how they prefer to receive feedback.

## Frequently Asked Questions

- **What if my mentee stops responding?** Give it one week, then follow up with a friendly check-in message. If you still haven't heard back after two weeks, contact [ilitchmentorship@wayne.edu](mailto:ilitchmentorship@wayne.edu).
- **What if I don't know the answer to something they ask?** "I'm not sure, but let me find out" or "I know someone who could help. Let me connect you" is a great mentor response. You don't need to be an expert in everything. Your network and your honesty are just as valuable as your knowledge.

- **Can I connect my mentee to someone at my company?** Absolutely, if it feels right and you know your mentee well enough to vouch for them. Just make sure it's an informal introduction rather than a formal referral unless you're fully confident in their readiness.
- **What if our fields don't match?** That's completely okay, and more common than you'd think. Core professional skills like communication, networking, interviewing, and career planning are universal. Focus on those, and your mentee will still gain enormously from the relationship.
- **What if my mentee isn't scheduling meetings?** Mentees are responsible for scheduling, and that's been made clear from the start. If they're not doing it, send a friendly reminder. If it continues, let the ISMP Program Administrators know so we can follow up on our end.
- **How formal should our meetings be?** That's entirely up to you and your mentee. Some pairs prefer structured agendas; others keep it conversational. What matters most is consistency and that both of you feel the time is valuable.
- **What if things just aren't clicking with my mentee?** It happens. Give it a couple of sessions and if you're still struggling, reach out to the ISMP Program Administrators and we can offer guidance.

## Key Dates 2026-2027

**Mark your calendar! Here's what the program year looks like.**

All dates are subject to change. The ISMP Program Administrators will send reminders ahead of each milestone. If you have questions about any event, contact [ilitchmentorship@wayne.edu](mailto:ilitchmentorship@wayne.edu).

## Registration and Matching

- May 4: Mentor registration opens
- July 1: Mentee registration opens
- September 11: Student registration deadline
- September 30: Mentor-Mentee matching takes place

## Events and Milestones

- September 21-24: Orientations
- October 6: Kickoff Breakfast for both mentees and mentors at the Mike Ilitch School of Business
- April 7: Dining Etiquette event for both mentees and mentors at the Mike Ilitch School of Business
- April 30: Conclusion of the Fall and Spring 2026-2027 Mentorship Program

## Your Mentor Toolkit

**Resources to help you be the best mentor possible.**

You're not in this alone. The Ilitch School Career Services office and the ISMP Program Administrators have built a set of tools and resources specifically to support you and your mentee throughout the year.

## Ilitch School Career Services

The office that houses the ISMP, Ilitch School Career Services, hosts career readiness workshops and events throughout the academic year. These are open to your mentee and cover topics like resume writing, interview preparation, networking, and professional branding. Encourage your mentee to check events out on [Handshake](#) and feel free to ask what's coming up, so you point them in the right direction.

- Career readiness workshops throughout the year
- Career fairs and employer networking events
- One-on-one career counseling appointments for students

## Ilitch School Mentorship Program Resource Webpage

The ISMP team has curated a Resource [webpage](#) on Xinspire specifically for mentors and mentees. It's a one-stop shop you can reference when working with your mentee or share sections directly with them based on where they are in their career journey.

## ISMP Program Team Contact Information

Email: [ilitchmentorship@wayne.edu](mailto:ilitchmentorship@wayne.edu)

Ilitch School Career Services | Wayne State University, Mike Ilitch School of Business

Reach out anytime for questions, concerns, or just to let us know how things are going.

***Uplifting. Empowering. Transforming.***