



**2020-2021**

## **Mentor a Planning Students (MAPS) Program**

*A partnership of the Florida Chapter of the American Planning Association,  
Sun Coast and Heart of Florida Sections  
& the USF School of Public Affairs,  
Masters of Urban & Regional Planning Program*



*Welcome to the*  
**MENTOR A PLANNING STUDENT (MAPS) Program**

The USF Masters of Urban & Regional Planning (MURP) program, in partnership with the Sun Coast and Heart of Florida sections of the Florida Chapter of the APA, offers the annual Mentor a Planning Student (MAPS) program. The program is open to students in the USF MURP program. MAPS helps facilitate voluntary relationships between mentors and students for one academic year (October – April). This guidebook is designed to help you get started.

**Goals:**

- To expose USF MURP students to the actual work environments, responsibilities, and interactions of professional planning positions in Florida
- To bring USF MURP students into a mentor relationship with a practicing public or private sector planner in the region
- To help USF MURP students begin to develop their professional career networks
- To further facilitate the relationship between university programs, APA Florida, sections, and planning professionals

**Participation:**

Mentees must be students in the USF MURP program. Mentors must be based in the Sun Coast or Heart of Florida section areas and should be AICP certified or practicing planners for at least three years. Membership in APA Florida is not a requirement for mentors, students, or emerging planners, although it is encouraged.

**Minimum Requirements for Mentors & Mentees:**

- Timeframe for completing mentoring requirements is October – April
- At least three meetings, may be virtual or in-person:
  - Coffee works great for first meeting
  - Consider an in-office shadowing experience
  - Consider an out-of-office shadowing experience, such as a day in the field working on a project with a client or stakeholder
- Resume and cover letter review by mentor
- Participation in fall kick-off event to be organized by USF MURP in partnership with the sections
- Completion of an evaluation report on the mentoring experience (both mentors & mentees)
- Upon request by mentee, the mentor will write a letter of recommendation but only if the mentor agrees to do so
- No formal activities after first year, but participants encouraged to continue in an informal relationship if doing so seems fruitful to the mentor & mentee

**Program Contacts:**

- MAPS Coordinator – Van Linkous, Associate Professor, USF – [elinkous@usf.edu](mailto:elinkous@usf.edu) or (813) 310-0341

**Program Timeline:**

October	Sign up; notification of matches; kick-off meeting
November	Target for first meeting completed
January	Target for second meeting completed
February	Target for third meeting completed
March	Target for resume and cover letter review
April	Completion of all requirements (3 meetings & resume review)
May	Complete program evaluation (survey link to be provided)

**Roles, Responsibilities, and Expectations****USF MURP Responsibilities:**

- Provide program goals and responsibilities
- Administer matching of mentors & mentees, with assistance from sections
- Host fall kick-off event
- Promote the program
- Conduct an annual evaluation

**Section Responsibilities:**

- Administer call for mentors/mentees and assist USF MURP with matching
- Promote program and recruit mentors
- In the event that a mentor fails to meet the minimum requirements or deadlines, or has to stop mentoring for any reason, Sun Coast and Heart of Florida will match the mentee up with another appropriate mentor

**Mentor:**

- Initiate and maintain active contact with the mentee from October - April.
- Provide clarity about preferred approaches to communication.
- Organize at least three meetings and required resume/cover letter review.
- Respect time commitments of mentee.
- Share personal knowledge and experience.
- Reach out to USF MURP if any problems occur.

**Mentee:**

- Maintain active contact with the mentor, plan agenda for meetings, and stay focused.
- Do not ask nor expect a job or internship from your mentor.
- Keep mentor informed and ask for clarification when needed.
- Take advantage of the opportunities your mentor provides.
- Cancel and reschedule appointments in advance if needed. Respect mentor's time.
- Reach out to USF MURP if any problems occur.

**Helpful Hints for Mentees:**

- Identify preferred ways to communicate (email, phone, etc.). Use the first meeting form to facilitate good communication and understand your mentor’s work.
- Mentors believe in this program and more importantly, believe in you.
- The outcome of this experience will depend on how much effort you actually put into the program; creating and maintaining a successful professional relationship is vital and yet takes time.
- You set the parameters as to how you want to utilize your time as a mentee.
- Be sure to always thank your mentor for their guidance.
- Research the organization your mentor works for so you can be well-informed.
- Learn as much as possible and ask various questions pertaining to: the culture of the company, skills, how to balance work and home life, etcetera.
- NEVER discuss salary or ask for employment during or after the mentorship.
- If possible, offer non-traditional activities to bond with your mentor to supplant email and phone meetings. IE: networking events, coffee/lunch meetings.
- Please be mindful that your mentor is a busy professional. Just like you, they are busy and may not respond to emails or phone calls right away.
- Dress professionally when meeting with your interview.
- Contact USF MURP if your mentor is not responsive.

**Optional Log:**

Date	Type of Activity	Key Takeaways	Next Steps

## **Fall Program Kick-off: First Mentor/Mentee Meeting**

At the fall kick-off meeting, mentors and mentees will have a chance to meet and understand the program goals and requirements. Time will be provided to meet one-on-one. This is a good opportunity to work out a plan for how to communicate (email, phone, etc), how often mentors/mentees will interact, and to find out about one another (optionally use the attached interview questions). You may want to set an agenda for the rest of the experience.

### **Mentors:**

Consider the learning opportunities you can offer to the mentee. Be prepared to discuss options for potential day at the office and field shadowing experiences if relevant. Be clear about preferred communication styles. Work out a plan for how often you will communicate and interact with your mentee. *Be aware that your role as a more advanced professional in the field can be intimidating. Be proactive in showing your interest in mentoring!*

### **Mentees:**

Before meeting your mentor, please be sure to know who they are and learn a little about their organization. Think of major goals or outcomes you want to get as a result of your mentoring experience and write them down to discuss with your mentor. If you are unclear about your goals, you can discuss a shared vision for the year with your mentor. Send your resume to your mentor before you meet with them.

### **Optional Questions for Interviewing Mentor**

1. What is your preferred way to communicate? (Phone, email, time of day, etc).
2. Who do you work for/who are you accountable to?
3. What are your major accomplishments?
4. What are your major challenges?
5. What are the area's major challenges?
6. How has your position changed from when you first started?
7. Does the mentor manage any staff members and what is the budget?
8. What is the source of funding and how is it allocated?
9. What is the mentor's background, education, previous and current job experience?
10. Why did you choose your field of interest as a career?
11. To what do you attribute your success?
12. What is your self-described management or leadership style?
13. What is your favorite part of the job? Least favorite?
14. What technical skills do you have such as budgeting, law, GIS, urban design, or writing?
15. Do you have certification, registration, or license in a professional field?
16. What professional organizations or certifications are helpful in your career?
17. Does your organization hire people with a degree in my related field?
18. What do you see as a growing demand or trend in your field?
19. What educational or career advice do you have for me

## Resume and Cover Letter Critique

*Mentees should provide mentors with a sample cover letter for a hypothetical or real job, plus a resume.*

### Talking Points for Mentors

1. Does cover letter show and not tell why the applicant is qualified for the job?
2. Is the cover letter well organized?
3. Is the resume easy to read and appealing to the eye? If not, what are some suggestions?
4. Would this resume end up in the "IN" pile during a job search? If yes, for what position? If not, why?
5. What is the candidate missing either on the resume or in their skill set/background that could be beneficial to entering into this work?
6. What are the main questions/concerns/warning signs that the candidate should address on their resume (gaps in the resume, unrelated work experiences, too many job changes, general confusion, etc.)?
7. Is there too much unnecessary data on the resume that is distracting from their qualifications for this field?
8. Is the resume too long or too short, succinct or long-winded?
9. Are there any critical sections that are missing or lacking important information: contact information, experience, education, or other sections that the mentor might prefer to see when reviewing candidates like job objective, professional profile, honors and awards, professional interests and memberships, or keyword summary?
10. Does the resume have a specific theme related to the position or field? What are some suggestions in building a compatible theme?
11. Is the resume format acceptable to the mentor?
12. Does the resume have any misspellings or typos?
13. Are there any accomplishments that you think the student may have that are not properly captured on the resume? If so, please generate a conversation to uncover those areas and why they are important.
14. Is the resume exciting? Are there action verbs that jump from the page? Are their keywords that catch your attention?
15. Do you feel that this student could benefit from additional assistance from USF's Career Services office?