



MT | Mentor Telemachus

A mentorship program of the **Southwest Section** of the
Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association

2024-2025



The purpose of the Mentor Telemachus program is to provide opportunities for students and members of the Southwest Section to close the distance between school and the profession through face-to-face and e-mentoring relationships. The goal is for Section members to enrich the quality of the student experience by interacting, exchanging ideas, and sharing their understanding of the field with future planners.

Mentor Telemachus draws its inspiration from Homer's Greek epic, the *Odyssey*. Mentor was a friend and surrogate father to Telemachus, son of Odysseus and Penelope. When Odysseus set off to the Trojan War, Mentor watched over Telemachus and guided the young man's search for his heritage.

Mentor's ancient guidance is not all that different from how we currently think about professional mentorship. Both direct us toward understanding our professional inheritance and full potential within it through interactions with mentors who provide guidance to those who have yet to fully engage themselves in the profession.

The Mentor Telemachus program helps facilitate voluntary relationships between mentors and students for one academic year (October – April). This guidebook is designed to provide you with the parameters and expectations for the mentoring relationship.

Goals

The Southwest Section seeks to develop mentorships that

- Expose students to actual work environments, responsibilities, and interactions of professional planning positions;
- Create opportunities for professional development, networking, and exchange of ideas;
- Facilitate a relationship between college and university programs, Section, and planning professionals; and
- Are mutually satisfying and beneficial for all participants

Participation

Mentor Telemachus is open to mentees (students) across the southwest region who are studying planning or related fields (i.e. architecture, geography, public administration, etc.) at any of the region's institutions of higher education listed herein. Mentees are welcome to participate multiple times in the program throughout their college experience. Mentors (practicing professional planners) must be based in the southwest

region and should be AICP certified and/or practicing planners for at least five years. Membership in PA APA is not a requirement for mentors or mentees, although it is encouraged. Participating institutions of higher education should designate a primary point of contact within each participating academic department for the Mentor Telemachus program.

Southwest Region Colleges and Universities

California University of Pennsylvania	La Roche College	University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg
Carlow University	Mount Aloysius College	University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown
Carnegie Mellon University	Penn State Altoona	Washington & Jefferson College
Chatham University	Point Park University	Waynesburg University
Duquesne University	Robert Morris University	
Indiana University of Pennsylvania	Saint Francis University	
Juniata College	Saint Vincent College	
	Seton Hill University	
	Slippery Rock University	
	University of Pittsburgh	

Southwest Region Counties

Allegheny	Butler	Huntingdon
Armstrong	Cambria	Indiana
Beaver	Fayette	Somerset
Bedford	Fulton	Washington
Blair	Greene	Westmoreland

Although the program is geared towards students enrolled at the region's institutions of higher education, Mentor Telemachus is also open to recent graduates (within the last two years) and emerging planners (one to two years' experience).

Minimum Requirements for Mentors and Mentees

Timeframe for completing mentoring requirements is October – April.

- At least two (2) shadowing experiences
 - A day at the office (this can be broken into smaller time blocks as long as the mentee is exposed to the longer-term duties of the mentor)
 - A day in the field working on a project with a client/constituency
- Resume review by mentor

- Participation in fall kick-off event to be organized by the Southwest Section in partnership with participating institutions
- Participation in spring event to be organized by the Southwest Section in partnership with participating institutions
- Completion of an evaluation report on the mentorship experience by mentors and mentees
- Completion of a letter of recommendation, only if requested by the mentee and agreed to by the mentor

No formal activities are required after the first year of participation. However, participants are encouraged to continue an informal relationship if doing so seems favorable to both mentor and mentee.

Program Contacts

- MT Coordinator – planswpa@gmail.com
- Daniel Carpenter – daniecarpe@pa.gov or 717-819-5715

Program Timeline

August/September	Section and institutions recruit mentors and mentees, respectively
Mid September	Deadline to sign up
Early October	Mentors and mentees matched and program materials distributed
October	Kick-off event
Spring	Mid-program event
Mid April	Completion of all mentoring minimum requirements
End April	Completion of program evaluation report by mentors and mentees

Roles, Responsibilities, and Expectations

Southwest Section Responsibilities

- Administer call for mentors and mentees
- Administer matching of mentors and mentees
- Promote program to potential mentors and focus on recruitment of high-quality mentors
- Host fall kick-off event for mentors and mentees to facilitate introductions and provide program goals and responsibilities
- Host spring (mid-program) event for mentors and mentees. This session is designed to allow program participants to check in with one another, hear how the program is working for others, and re-invigorate participation at a mid-point in the program
- Periodic review of program
- In the event that a mentor fails to meet the minimum requirements or deadlines, or has to stop mentoring for any reason, Section will match the mentee up with another appropriate mentor
- Work with participating institutions to resolve any issues related to the program

Participating Institution Responsibilities

- Assist with fall kick-off event for mentors and mentees
- Assist with spring (mid-program) event for mentors and mentees
- Promote program to student mentees
- Assist in matching process
- Work with Section to resolve any issues related to program

Mentee

- Initiate and maintain active contact with the mentor, plan the agenda for meetings, and stay focused
- Do not ask for nor expect a job or internship from your mentor
- Maintain the relationship from October – April
- Attend fall and spring events or schedule alternative meeting times
- Maintain contact with mentor monthly by phone, video, email, or meetings
- Keep information in the mentoring log accurate and up-to-date
- Keep mentor informed and ask for clarification when needed
- Share personal knowledge and experience with mentor

- Take advantage of the opportunities your mentor provides
- Cancel and reschedule appointments in advance, if needed
- Complete evaluation report in April

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
- Take an interest in your mentor because they are knowledgeable and respected in their careers
- 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
- While you are building your relationship, be sure to always thank your mentor for their guidance
- Research the company or organization he or she works for so you can be well-informed about your mentor
- Learn as much as possible and ask various questions pertaining to the culture of the company, skills, how to balance work and home life, etc.
- Never discuss salary or ask for employment during or after the mentorship
- If possible, offer non-traditional activities to bond with your mentor to replace email and phone meetings (i.e. 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. Please contact the MT coordinator if your mentor is not responsive in a reasonable time frame
- Dress professionally when meeting with your mentor



MT | Mentor Telemachus

Mentor and Mentee Participation Application

Please complete this 2-page form if you are interested in participating in Mentor Telemachus as a mentor or mentee. Mentees must be students in an applicable program at a participating regional college or university. Mentors must be based in the southwest region. Membership in PA APA is not a requirement for mentors or students, although it is encouraged.

Completed forms must be received electronically by the MT coordinator at planswpa@gmail.com by **September 15**.

Please plan to attend the fall kick-off event (date/location TBD).

Role

Are you interested in being a mentor to a planning student, or a mentee? Circle one.

Mentor

Mentee

Contact Information

Name _____

Email _____

Place of work _____

Mailing address _____

Phone _____

County _____

Academic Background

University/degree program _____

Year (FR/SO/JR/SR/GR) _____

Year graduated (or anticipated) _____

Specialization(s)/field(s)/concentration(s) _____

Additional Information

Which of the following planning areas do you work in or have an interest or expertise in? Please identify your top three choices (1, 2, 3), with 1 being your first choice.

- Community Development _____
- Development Review _____
- Economic Development _____
- Environmental/Sustainability/Resiliency Planning _____
- Geographic Analysis/GIS _____
- Land Use/Comprehensive Planning _____
- Policy Development _____
- Public Engagement _____
- Regional Planning _____
- Transportation Planning _____
- Urban Design _____
- Zoning/Code Enforcement _____

Are there any other special experiences, knowledge, or skills you would like to consider in mentor/mentee matching? If so, please briefly discuss. Providing as much information about your interests and goals for the program helps us identify the best possible match. Mentees should indicate if they have a preferred employer, type of planning organization, and/or location.

Do you have access to transportation? Circle one. Yes No

Please attach a copy of your resume to this completed form.

By signing below, I confirm that I have read the description of the Mentor Telemachus program, the minimum requirements for mentoring activity and deadlines, and that I will be able to successfully meet those requirements and deadlines.

Signature

Date

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.

Mentees

Before meeting your mentor, please be sure to know who they are and learn a little about their organization. You can search the internet for the website of your mentor's 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. What do you want your goals to look like? Do you want to learn more about professional knowledge, experience, and networking? Alternatively, you may be unclear as to what your goals are and can further discuss options with your mentor. Send your resume to your mentor before you meet with them so they can learn more about you so your first meeting will be more effective.

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. Be clear about preferred communication methods. Work out a plan for how often you will communicate and interact with your mentee.

Optional Mentor Interview Questions

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. How has your position changed from when you first started?
6. Do you manage any staff members and what is the budget?
7. What is the source of funding and how is it allocated?
8. What is your background, education, previous and current job experience?
9. Why did you choose your field of interest as a career?

10. To what do you attribute your success?
11. What is your self-described management or leadership style?
12. What is your favorite part of the job? Least favorite?
13. What technical skills do you have such as budgeting, law, engineering, GIS, urban design, or writing?
14. Do you have certification, registration, or license in a professional field?
15. What professional organizations or certifications are helpful in your career?
16. Does your organization hire people with a degree in my related field?
17. What do you see as a growing demand or trend in your field?
18. What educational or career advice do you have for me?

Resume Critique

Mentee

Please provide your resume and this sheet to your mentor for them to address.

Note to Mentor

We are requesting your help as a professional in the student's field of interest. Our goal is to help the student prepare a structural — yet complete and focused — picture of their employment possibilities.

Resume Critique Questions

1. Is the resume easy to read and appealing to the eye? If not, what are some suggestions?
2. What is the mentee missing either on the resume or in their skill set/background that could be beneficial to entering into the profession?
3. What are the main questions/concerns/warning signs that the mentee should address on their resume (gaps in the resume, unrelated work experiences, too many job changes, general confusion, etc.)?
4. Is there too much unnecessary information on the resume that is distracting from their qualifications for this field?
5. Is the resume too long or too short, succinct or long-winded?
6. 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?
7. Does the resume have a specific theme related to a position or field? What are some suggestions in building a compatible theme?
8. Is the resume format acceptable to the mentor?
9. Does the resume have any misspellings or typos?
10. 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.
11. Is the resume exciting? Are there action words that jump from the page? Are their keywords that catch your attention?



MT | Mentor Telemachus Mentee Report

Please email the completed 2-page report to planswpa@gmail.com by **May 1**.

Name of mentee _____

Name of mentor _____

1. Did you complete the following activities as part of your mentoring experience?

Mentoring activity	Yes	No
Meeting(s) with the mentor at their workplace		
Meeting(s) with the mentor outside of their workplace		
Breakfast(s)/lunch(es) to discuss planning work and experiences		
Resume review		
Other (please briefly describe)		

2. Briefly describe the major activities you undertook with your mentor.

3. Evaluation of the mentor. Did they provide meaningful insight into the activities of a professional planner; where they accessible; etc.?

4. How might the Mentor Telemachus program be improved?

5. Would you recommend participating in the MT program to a fellow student, recent grad, or emerging planner? Why or why not.

6. Additional comments.



MT | Mentor Telemachus Mentor Report

Please email the completed 2-page report to planswpa@gmail.com by **May 1**.

Name of mentor _____

Name of mentee _____

1. Did you complete the following activities as part of your mentoring experience?

Mentoring activity	Yes	No
Meeting(s) with the mentee at your workplace		
Meeting(s) with the mentee outside of your workplace		
Breakfast(s)/lunch(es) to discuss planning work and experiences		
Resume review		
Other (please briefly describe)		

2. Briefly describe the major activities you undertook with your mentee.

3. Evaluation of the mentee. Was the mentee professional in their behaviors; did they attend scheduled meetings; etc.?

4. How might the Mentor Telemachus program be improved?

5. Would you recommend participating in the MT program to a colleague? Why or why not.

6. Additional comments.
