

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 meetings will likely last one hour and cover a progressive list of topics.

- Overview of the field/industry from the mentor's perspective.
- What students can/should be doing now to further develop the skills needed for their professional field of choice.
- Importance of relationships.
- Building a resume with experience.
- Professional planning and goal setting.

Mentors are not limited to just these topics. While these topics establish a starting point for each month's meeting, mentors may expand their group's conversations depending on the needs of their mentee. 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 the role/field/industry to provide guidance and direction to collegiate brothers, or connect them with others who can.
- Keep group members accountable to the agreed upon meeting schedule.

Navigators Timeline

August 15th: Registration Opens

September 30th: Registration Closes

Late October/Early

November: 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.

Overview: Your Story, The Field, Basic Needs

Meeting #1: November

In a perfect scenario, collegiate participants would have already researched their field/industry and they would come into Navigators asking specific questions with specific intentions (there will be some collegiate brothers at that level). In reality, though, mentors should expect collegiate participants to still be in the process of understanding their field/industry, so the need to provide an overview is a great place to start – even if your mentee(s) has done his research and is ready to dig deeper, the overview is still important because it's coming from your first-hand experience and point of view.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

- How to know this is the right field for you:
 - What are your ultimate career goals and how this role/field can get you started.
 - Your interests and passions.
 - What are your needs from a position in this field?
- What can a person do in this role/field/industry:
 - Impact you can have.
 - Jobs you can grow into.
- What's needed to get you started:
 - Needed skills (technical and soft skills)
 - Educational requirements. Continuing education. Benefits of an advanced degree.
 - What research have you done about the field? What do you already know about it?
- Habits and traits of successful practitioners in this field:
 - What are you doing now, while you are in school, to be prepared to work in this field?

Things for mentees to think about and work on:

- Research the field/employer/position in line with the topics addressed in conversation with your mentor.

Developing Needed Skills: What Student Should Be Doing Over the Next Year

Meeting #2: December

Every professional position requires “skills.” As an alumnus and a professional, you know that, and most collegiate brothers know it as well. What many collegiate brothers don't know, though, are what skills they are likely to need in their desired career field. Unfortunately, there is a reasonable chance that because they don't know what skills they will need then they also don't know what skills they are missing or their competency in the skills they have.

DISCUSSION TOPICS FOR SOPHOMORES AND JUNIORS:

- Needed skills in this field:
 - Technical/Hard Skills – specific technical skills required for a job; learned abilities acquired and enhanced through education and experience.
 - Soft Skills – also known as people skills; a set of psychosocial skills applicable to most professions.

- Skills Assessment:
 - What technical skills does the mentee currently have?
 - What technical skills is the mentee current learning?
 - What technical skill(s) is he best at? Any missing technical skills that he must develop a level of competency?
 - What soft skills does the mentee currently have?
 - What soft skill(s) is he best at? Any missing soft skills that he must develop a level of competency?
 - What is he currently doing to refine/develop more soft skills?
- Skill development
 - What soft skills are in-demand in this field?
 - What resources are available to the mentee for further development of soft skills?
 - Technical skill development – projects in classes, opportunities outside of class, opportunities to lead any of these projects?
- Resume review – Skills Section
 - What skills do you have that you should be listing on your resume currently?
 - How would you describe/explain those skills if asked about them in an interview?

Things for Sophomores and Juniors to think about and work on:

- How can a mentee practice and refine their soft skills?
 - Ex: Get involved in student organizations and take on leadership roles.
- What is the timeline for the development of a mentee's technical skills?
 - Ex: Review the course catalog and figure out what classes they should be taking and when.
- Building Relationships: Who does the mentee know who works in their desired career field? Who does the mentee know who might know someone who works in their desired career field?

DISCUSSION TOPICS FOR SENIORS:

For mentees who are nearing graduation, skill development is important, but they won't have time to really develop new skills. This meeting is a real opportunity, though, to talk to them about how they can explain their skills and how they might incorporate their skills into their responses to interview questions.

- Needed skills in this field:
 - Technical/Hard Skills – specific technical skills required for a job; learned abilities acquired and enhanced through education and experience.
 - Soft Skills – also known as people skills; a set of psychosocial skills applicable to most professions.
 - Skills Assessment:
 - What technical skills does the mentee currently have?
 - What technical skills is the mentee current learning?
 - What technical skill(s) is he best at?
 - What soft skills does the mentee currently have?
 - What soft skill(s) is he best at?
 - What is he currently doing to refine/develop more soft skills?
- Talking about your skills:
 - What examples can the mentee describe as evidence of their technical skills?
 - What examples can the mentee describe as evidence of their soft skills?
 - Common Interview Questions to review:
 - What activities were you involved in at college? What did you learn from them? [*Activities can help students develop their skills: 66% say participation strengthens leadership skills and 40% say it boosts communication skills. Interviewers are listening for clear passion that*

signals the candidate's investment in learning and developing; evidence of skills that are relevant to the job; clarity about the specific role they played.]

- Describe a situation during your college years when you displayed leadership skills. [*This question can help an interviewer spot talent with the potential to take charge and direct their peers. Interviewers are listening for a detailed example, whether it took place during class, internship, or extracurricular activities; evidence that the candidate can delegate tasks effectively and rally others; enthusiasm about being in a leadership role, rather than obligation.]*
- Did you complete any internships while at school? What did you get out of the experience? [*Interviewers are looking for signs that the candidate learned new skills or applied the skills developed during school in a real-world setting; examples that illustrate how the candidate added value to the company where they interned; details of other relevant work or volunteering experience if internships were unavailable.]*
- What are your greatest strengths? Weaknesses? [*Interviewers want to know more about what you view as your abilities and what you bring to the table. Provide examples of situations where you were able to use your strengths. When asked about weaknesses, use it as an opportunity to highlight your self-awareness and show that you are constantly working on improving yourself. In your response, try focusing on a weakness that is not essential for the job you are applying for.]*

Things for Seniors to think about and work on:

- Develop/Update the skills section of your resume.
- Think of one example of how you have used each of the skills listed on your resume.
- Building Relationships: Identify at least one connection they have to each of their top three potential employers.

Building Relationships

Meeting #3: January

Many students are aware that finding and landing a job is not an easy proposition. In the context of a specific career field, it is important that students grasp the importance of relationships and experience. Who do they know that can be helpful in their career development? What are they involved in that has transferable experience to their desired career field? What opportunities may be available to them to further build their network and/or gain additional experience?

DISCUSSION TOPICS FOR SOPHOMORES AND JUNIORS:

- Importance of relationships in this field.
 - Referrals and recommendations.
 - Insight to a potential employer – “peak behind the curtain.”
 - Realistic view of company culture.
- Assessing mentees existing relationships/network:
 - Who does the mentee know who works in his desired career field?
 - Who does the mentee know who might know someone who works in his desired career field?
- Opportunities for the mentee to expand his network and relationships:
 - Associations and groups – suggestions of groups that students may consider joining to network and learn more about the field.
 - Events/Functions occurring in the area that they could attend?
 - Who haven't they thought of as potential contacts?
- LinkedIn
 - Approximately 310 million monthly active users and 215 million daily active users.
 - 61 million people use LinkedIn to search for jobs each week.

- More than 14 million open jobs on LinkedIn.
- 97% of HR and staffing professional used LinkedIn as a part of their recruiting efforts.
- Candidates with a comprehensive LinkedIn profile have a 71% higher chance of getting a job interview.
- Technology, financial services, and higher education are the top industries on LinkedIn
- Sales, operations, and engineering are the top job functions on LinkedIn
- LinkedIn Profile should include:
 - Headshot – put a face to your name by including a picture of you; LinkedIn stats indicate a profile with a photo can get up to 21 times more views than one without a photo.
 - Eye-catching Headline – right below your name on your profile, so it’s the first thing read after your name; think of it as a small billboard advertisement for you and what you do.
 - Make the About section interesting – longer form of the Headline; paint a word picture of who are as a professional.
 - Use the right Keywords – use relevant job and industry-specific keywords; review job descriptions of positions that interest you to identify keywords to use in your profile.
 - Highlight your experience – use action words to show what you did AND what you accomplished in each role; demonstrate the impact you’ve had, the change you’ve enacted, the initiatives you’ve led, and the results you’ve delivered.
 - Don’t neglect your skills – recruiters are going to review skills to make sure they match to the open positions they’re trying to fill; review and update this section regularly
 - Use visual media – use a background photo that speaks to your profession or personality; you can also link your profile to other media like articles, YouTube, infographics, etc.
 - Make connections – start with people you know personally, have worked with, or have met in a professional capacity; when you want to connect with someone you haven’t met, or don’t have a direct connection to, send a note with your request explaining why you want to connect.
 - Ask for recommendations and endorsements – think of these like references, but visible to your entire network; when asking for a recommendation/endorsement, think of people that you’ve developed a great working relationship with, in the past.
 - Keep your page active – LinkedIn is a networking site, not just an online resume, so get the most out of it by staying active; engage with other people’s posts that you find interesting, join groups, post informative and relevant content

Things for Sophomores and Juniors to think about and work on:

- Create/Update your LinkedIn profile.
- Send an email to each of your professional contacts who you know directly. (Give them an update about yourself and ask them for an update.)
- What experience (direct or transferable) does your mentee have relevant to his desired career field?

DISCUSSION TOPICS FOR SENIORS:

For a mentee who will be graduating in the spring, now is a great opportunity for them to really engage their existing network as a part of researching specific positions or employers. The more information they have about a position and/or company, the better they can tailor their resume and the easier it will be for them to understand the impression they need to make if invited for an interview. It is also important for those nearing graduation to understand how the relationships they build can be useful even after they have obtained employment

- What conversations has the mentee had with the people in his network? (Has he talked to anyone who works in the career field he wants to get into? What did he learn from those conversations?)
- Informational interviews are great tools to gather important information about a potential employer, to make a connection, and to make the company aware of who you are.

- Questions to ask in an information interview:
 - What do you enjoy most about your job and industry?
 - What are the typical responsibilities and day-to-day tasks in your role?
 - Are there any specific skills or qualifications that are crucial for success in this field?
 - What are the current trends or challenges in the industry that you believe are important for someone entering (or transitioning to) the field to know?
 - How has the industry or your job evolved over the years, and what changes do you anticipate in the future?
 - Are there professional organizations or networking groups you recommend for someone looking to connect with others in this field?
 - What is the company culture like here?
- Importance of continuing to build relationships after you've got the job.
 - How you (the mentor) continue to use your relationships and connections in your role.
- References

Things for Seniors to think about and work on:

- Create/Update your LinkedIn profile.
- Identify 3-5 people in your network who will speak to your professional attributes positively and ask them if they will be a reference for you.
- Resume Update: Identify what is relevant and transferable from each of your past work experiences to the position/role you are preparing to apply to or have applied – may include a skill you learned, or a situation that serves as an example of an achievement, or it may be direct experience.

Get Some Experience

Meeting #4: February

With their limited experience, students often don't know what they can/should be doing to set themselves up for success. Too often they don't realize that the things they are already doing may be transferable, so helping them to realize the relevance of their existing experience and helping them to identify how and where else they can gain further experience is notably important.

DISCUSSION TOPICS FOR SOPHOMORES AND JUNIORS

- What experience does the mentee already have that relates to the desired career field?
 - What is his work history?
 - What from his work history is relevant?
 - What from his Sigma Nu experience is transferable or relevant?
 - Officer experience?
 - Committee experience?
 - Projects or achievements he was directly involved with?
- What experience does the mentee not have that would be beneficial?
 - Has he had any internships? Is he planning to apply for an internship?
 - Any student clubs, organizations, teams that he is a part of that are relatable?
 - What volunteer experience does he have? Is that experience transferable?
- What opportunities for gaining additional experience are available?

Things for Sophomores and Juniors to think about and work on:

- Identify three internship or summer job opportunities and the application process for each.
- Resume Update: Mentee updates his resume with experiences relevant to his desired career field.

DISCUSSION TOPICS FOR SENIORS

For those mentees who will be graduating soon, now is probably the time when they should be applying for actual jobs, if they have not already begun doing so, which makes the resume, cover letter, and application process an important topic to address. If they have already begun applying for positions, then steering them towards interview preparation is a good direction to go. If they have already graduated, and have obtained employment, then this would be a good opportunity to discuss how they can be successful during their first year on the job.

- Crafting a strong resume for this career field/Review mentee's resume
 - General resume points
 - Tailor your resume to the specific job description of the position you are applying to.
 - Most relevant information to the top – if that's work experience, then put that first, etc.
 - Use keywords - Many large employers use automated processes to do initial resume reviews and these processes seek out keywords, so be sure to include those keywords from the job description in your resume.
- Interviewing
 - Based on the mentor's experience, what are the types of questions an applicant is likely to get?
 - How the mentee can prepare for interviews:
 - Develop answers to common interview questions. For example:
 - Tell me a little about yourself.
 - How did you learn about this position?
 - What do you feel you would bring to this role and organization that other candidates wouldn't?
 - Do you prefer working independently or on a team and why?
 - When you're balancing multiple projects, how do you keep yourself organized?
 - Practice with mock interviews (Career Services offices on the mentee's campus are likely available to assist)
- What does a new hire need to know to be successful in their first year?

Things for Seniors to think about and work on:

- Identify top three potential employers or positions to apply and develop a resume tailored to each of those positions.
- Schedule a mock interview – campus career services office, mentor, a friend, etc.

Plan '26

Meeting #5: March

The ultimate result of Navigators is for the collegiate brothers to come away from this experience with a stronger sense of what to expect in their desired career field and how to get there. Plan '26 is a goal-setting framework that can be used to help the collegiate brothers plan the next year of their career development. From the guidance and experience of the alumni mentors, collegiate brothers will, hopefully, be able to plan the work they need to do over the next year, so that they can work their plan to be in a stronger, more prepared, position by May 2026. Plan '26 benefits collegiate brothers regardless of how close they are to graduation. For example, a collegiate brother who is nearing graduation can, and probably should, include aspects of being successful in the first year on the job in their plan.

DISCUSSION TOPIC

- Have a conversation with your mentee that addresses the components of their #1 Big Goal:
 - What is your #1 professional goal you want to achieve by May 2026?
 - What are 2-3 checkpoints you must reach, no matter what, to reach that goal?
 - When do you want to reach each of those checkpoints?
 - What are 2-3 things you need to do every day to move toward reaching each checkpoint and achieving your goal?
 - What do you need to avoid because they will hold you back from achieving your goal?

Homework

- Put together their Plan '26: (Cover the following points with mentee(s))
 - Keep the plan focused on career development.
 - Good idea to keep the number of Big Goals limited to three – don't want to get stretched too thin.
 - Checkpoints are things that must happen to reach a Big Goal – all paths lead through these points.
 - Must be committed to doing something daily. Daily actions, even small ones, have compound results in movement towards reaching goals.
 - Be honest with yourself about the things to avoid because they will hold you back. Be committed to avoiding those things – you're making an investment in yourself, so don't sabotage it.
 - Request they provide you with their plan **one week prior** to your April meeting.

Review Plan '26

Meeting #6: April

It's important that the collegiate brother(s) own their plan. They will need guidance, but they need to own it, which is why development of the plan should be "assigned" for them to complete prior to your April meeting. At the April meeting, ask questions about their plan. Identify areas where their plan may be lacking. Confirm for them the positive and effective steps they've identified. Use this opportunity to help them identify the final touches to their plan so that when they execute it there is confidence that they will be better positioned than they would have been otherwise.

Share any closing advice, words of encouragement, or offers for continued discussion you feel are appropriate.