

Mentorship Handbook

Welcome to Mentorship with the Peter C. Cook Leadership Academy!

Hello students and mentors! This handbook is a handy tool to help guide you through the journey of mentorship with the Peter C. Cook Leadership Academy (CLA). Some of you may be seasoned mentors or mentees, and some of you may be embarking on your first-ever mentor/mentee relationship. Regardless of your experience, we want to provide the support to make this partnership a success for you both. Please reach out to our team at cla@gvsu.edu if we can be of service in any way.

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Mentorship Expectations and Benefits

General Expectations for CLA MENTORS:

DO:

- Commit to meeting 4-6 times (or up to monthly) throughout the academic year with your student mentee.
- Have patience with your mentee as they navigate the mentorship relationship. Offer feedback and advice on their communication and how they are showing up.
- Provide an environment that is encouraging to the student and inspires confidence in sharing their experiences as well as seeking feedback for growth.
- Communicate with CLA staff at cla@gvsu.edu if you need any support, or if any issues arise that bring you concern for the student's wellbeing (such as a drop off in communication or concerning change in behavior).

DON'T:

- Focus on solving your mentee's problems for them. Instead, coach them through the process of discovering solutions by asking questions curious, open-ended questions, and sharing your own experiences.
- Try to inflict your beliefs on your mentee.
- Postpone or cancel meetings unless necessary.
- Promise what you are unable to deliver.
- Forget how important you are to your mentee.

Benefits provided to CLA Mentors:

- **Hauenstein Center Membership:** As a CLA mentor, you receive a year of complimentary membership to the Hauenstein Center for Presidential Studies. A membership allows you access to receptions prior to many of our Hauenstein Center and Common Ground Initiative events. You can find information about our upcoming events [here](#). To learn more about membership to the Hauenstein Center, you can visit our Membership website [here](#).
- **Ongoing support from CLA Staff:** Be encouraged that there is not one "right" way to mentor – every person and partnership are unique. At the same time, we recognize that mentorship is a skill, developed over time and refined through practice. We are a resource to provide support, answer questions, and offer feedback as you navigate this important role. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us as needed.

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Mentorship Expectations (Continued)

General Expectations for CLA MENTEES:

DO:

- Commit to meeting 4-6 times (or up to monthly) throughout the academic year with your student mentee.
- Identify and communicate goals for the overall partnership as well as specific goals for each individual session along the way.
- Ask for feedback on your communication, how you are showing up, and other observations about your beliefs or behaviors.
- Communicate directly with your mentor about what you are appreciating about the partnership, as well as any concerns you may have or ways that the partnership could be improved. Reach out to the CLA staff at cla@gvsu.edu for extra support.

DON'T:

- Expect your mentor to solve your problems for you, nor for your mentor to work harder than you at reaching your goals.
- Feel like you need to be perfect or have it altogether. This is a learning space.
- Try to inflict your beliefs on your mentor.
- Postpone or cancel meetings unless necessary.
- Forget your mentor is a human too!

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2025-2026 Schedule

The CLA Mentorship Program runs through the academic year (September through April). Plan to meet **4-6 times (or up to monthly) throughout the academic year**. Depending on how many times you plan to meet, you could aim for monthly meetings in **September, October, November, January, February/March, and April**. Below are some additional events hosted by the CLA that you are welcome to attend with your student/mentor to fulfill your meeting requirements:

- **Thursday, October 16 | Etiquette Dinner:** Learn pro tips for navigating formal meals (and all those forks and glasses) so you can make the most of enjoying the people and content of these experiences.
 - 5:00 PM Check-In + Networking | 5:30 – 7PM Dinner + Etiquette Training | Led by Cindy Brown from Career Services | Alumni House on Allendale Campus | [RSVP here](#)
- **Friday, November 7 | Wheelhouse Talk:** Learn from Daniel Williams as he shares lessons learned over 20 years of leadership working in education, philanthropy, community engagement, and leading institutions such as the Steelcase Foundation, WMCAT, and Grand Rapids University Prep Academy.
 - 5 -7PM include heavy hors d'oeuvres, short lecture, and moderated Q+A | Seidman College of Business, Loosemore Forum, Downtown campus | [RSVP here](#)
- **December 8-12 | Fall semester exam week** | At the end of the semester, it is valuable to revisit your scheduled meeting times and check in on how the relationship and goals are going to see if adjustments should be made for students as they move into the winter semester.
- **Friday, February 20 | GVSU Student Leadership Summit keynote session:** Join as students learn and dialogue with Anthony Chang, CEO of BAMF Health, as he shares his learnings at the intersection of innovation, leadership, healthcare, and business.
 - 1-3PM | Kirkhoff Center Grand River Room | Allendale campus | RSVP forthcoming
- **March 9-13: GVSU Spring Break**
- **April 27-May 1 | Winter semester exam week**
- **Thursday, April 30 | CLA Celebration of Graduates:** Mark your calendar to join the CLA cohort and their loved ones as they reflect on the year and are launched into their future leadership journey.
 - 5:00PM Celebration of Graduates | 6-7:30 PM Reception | RSVP forthcoming

Additional event opportunities: Visit the Hauenstein Center's website at gvsu.edu/hc/events to learn about additional events hosted by the Center that you are welcome to attend.

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Mentor/Mentee Agreement

This agreement will serve as a tool and reminder to help build the expectations for both the mentor and mentee. Please complete this form by the end of your first session ([virtual form linked here](#)). The CLA Fellow Candidate is responsible for returning this form to CLA staff either in person or by emailing cla@gvsu.edu.

Communication

Agreed-upon methods of communication (email/text/phone call/etc.):

Expectations of response time (be honest, realistic, and respectful!):

Meeting Cadence

Meeting format and location (virtual/in-person/hybrid):

What happens if one of us needs to cancel/rearrange:

Goals:

List three goals that you have for this mentoring relationship (e.g., gain perspective relative to skills necessary for success in academia, explore new career opportunities/alternatives, obtain knowledge of organizational culture, networking, leadership skill development, etc.)

1.

2.

3.

Agreement

As mentors and mentees, we are voluntarily entering into a mentoring relationship from which we expect mutual benefits and investment. We want this to be a rewarding, rich experience with our time together focused on professional/personal/academic development and the growth of our relationship. With this goal in mind, we have agreed the guidelines of our relationship as outlined in this agreement. We are committed to frequent, open, and honest communication in this partnership. We will discuss and attempt to resolve any concerns as they arise. If, however, one of us needs to terminate the relationship for any reason, we agree to communicate directly with one another and also notify the CLA staff.

Mentor signature:

Date:

Mentor printed name:

Mentee signature:

Date:

Mentee printed name:

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Mentorship Discussion Guides Overview

Throughout your time with your student/mentor, you are welcome to guide the meetings and conversations in whatever way feels most beneficial for your time together. However, you may find it helpful to have a guided structure for your year together, particularly your first session. We have developed a set of discussion guides for you to use and encourage you to start here on your mentorship journey.

These discussion guides are designed with three components: **Discuss, Discover, and Develop**. In the **Discuss** portion, you can find prompts to get the conversation started around a particular skill or topic. In the **Discover** portion, there may be a questionnaire to complete (which you are encouraged to complete ahead of your meeting), or a deeper dialogue or reflection to engage with alongside your mentor/mentee. Finally, the **Develop** portion offers some tangible takeaways you can use following your meeting to continue reflecting upon or working on this skill.

We have built the following structure to offer a flow to the conversation, but please know that this is a flexible part of the program. If there are certain conversations that you are interested in having, please feel free to deviate from the session schedule.

You can find links to the discussion guides on the Hauenstein Center website at gvsu.edu/hc/mentorship.

Discussion Guide Overview:

Session 1: Getting Acquainted & Goal Setting

Session 2: Defining and Identifying Leadership

Session 3: Addressing Ethics in Leadership

Session 4: Choose Your Own Adventure

Session 5: Reflecting on Your Journey

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Discussion Guide 1: Getting Acquainted & Goal Setting

The CLA's goal with mentorship is to develop students' leadership abilities through intentional relationships with community leaders. We also know from both research and practical experience that reciprocal learning happens between mentors and students, and we celebrate those discoveries. The goal of this first session is for you to get acquainted with your mentor/mentee and to establish goals, communication channels, and your meeting schedule moving forward.

Discuss

See below for some prompts (but feel free to go wherever the conversation takes you):

- **Strengths + Passions:** What are some of your strengths and passions? Mentors, please include ways you believe you may be able to best help your mentee.
- **Educational + Professional Pathway:** What has been your educational and/or professional background or pathway thus far? What professional or educational goals do you have for the future?
- **Background:** What identities do you hold that are center to who you are and your experience of the world (e.g., gender, ethnicity, faith, physical ability, etc.)?
- **Past Experiences:** What are some life-shaping experiences that have impacted you and/or which may be helpful for your mentor/mentee to know?
- Is there anything else that feels helpful to note or to ask?

Discover

Our goal is to facilitate a space where mentors and students can speak into and shape the relationship to meet their own personal interests and goals. You are both entering this partnership with unique talents, experiences, and skills that will both inform and shape your experience in this program. Take a few moments and formulate at least three personal goals for this mentoring partnership. Write them on your [Mentorship Agreement](#) (see below) and also save them somewhere so you can revisit them. Spend some time discussing these goals.

Develop

Finally, today, review and complete the [Mentorship Agreement](#).

- Complete the sections indicating how often you will meet, meeting formats, best methods of communication, and your goals.
- Both mentor and mentee should sign the agreement, and the mentee should return the agreement to the CLA (either in person or emailed to cla@gvsu.edu).
- Discuss how you will handle rescheduling if unexpected conflicts interfere with getting together.
- Plan and confirm the date and time of your next meeting.

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Discussion Guide 2: Defining and Identifying Leadership

Adapted from Dr. Peter G. Northouse's [Introduction to Leadership Concepts and Practice: 3rd Ed.](#)

Leadership involves a combination of strengths (who you are) and abilities (skills you've learned) applied to influence specific circumstances and people (actual behaviors and interactions). Conceptualizing leadership as behavior implies that leadership can be learned and taught. Your conceptualization of leadership is likely to affect the way you lead, so we're going to spend some time developing that understanding.

Discuss

Think of someone you know and have interacted with personally who exemplifies excellent leadership. Describe this person for your mentor/mentee. What specific strengths, abilities, or behaviors does this person exemplify? How has this person impacted you and/or your understanding of leadership? How do others respond to this person?

Discover

So the next question, then, is this: how do you conceptualize leadership? Individually, please take the "[Conceptualizing Leadership Questionnaire](#)" and follow the instructions for scoring your own understanding of various aspects of leadership. This self-analysis may help you understand your own attitudes, values, and beliefs regarding various facets of leadership. Share your results with your mentor/mentee. In particular, which of the beliefs listed below about leadership do you lean toward? Do these results confirm or contradict your understanding of your personal values and proclivities? Do you see this influence your interactions with other people? What other definitions or elements of leadership feel important to you that have not been named?

- Trait emphasis: inherent qualities that make a person more fit for leadership. Born leader idea.
- Ability emphasis: leadership can be learned.
- Skill emphasis: leadership is a competency that can be gained by anyone.
- Behavior emphasis: focused on observable behaviors.
- Relationship emphasis: centered on the communication between leaders and followers.
- Influence process emphasis: highlights the process where leaders influence followers.

Develop

You've spent some time conceptualizing your understanding of leadership as well as the qualities of leaders that you admire. The next mentoring session will focus on personal leadership styles and strengths and their relationship with ethics. Between now and then, consider the following:

- What would other people say that I value as a leader?
- What leadership strengths and qualities do I demonstrate?
- What words would others use to describe my leadership style?
- In what areas or contexts do I influence other people's attitudes or behaviors?

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Discussion Guide 3: Addressing Ethics in Leadership

Adapted from Dr. Peter G. Northouse's [Introduction to Leadership Concepts and Practice: 5th Ed.](#)

Your previous meetings up to this point may have focused on the strengths and ideas that make you an *effective* leader, but it is just as important to understand the *moral* dimensions of how you view leadership. The purpose of this meeting is to explore your understanding of ethics, and how you've encountered ethical (and unethical) leadership.

Discuss

Ethical leadership maintains a focus on the morals and values that guide the actions and decision-making of leaders. A leader's ethical framework involves six components:

- **Character:** the moral qualities, disposition, and core values of a leader.
- **Actions:** how a leader goes about achieving goals.
- **Goals:** what a leader hopes to achieve through influencing others.
- **Honesty:** the level at which a leader prioritizes transparency and open communication.
- **Power:** the capacity to influence others and impact their beliefs and behaviors.
- **Values:** the ideas, beliefs, and modes of action that guide a leader.

Questions to consider with your mentor/mentee:

- What do each of the above components look like in action?
- What level of importance does ethical leadership hold in your field?
- What are some of the ethical challenges that have been faced by leaders in your field?

Discover

Take the "[Ethical Leadership Styles Questionnaire](#)." How did your results compare to your previous perception of your guiding ethics? Reflecting on your life events, role models, and values, what factors could have played a role in developing your ethical framework?

Develop

Spend the next several weeks observing both your own leadership and the leadership of those around you, intentionally looking for how ethics may play a role in decision-making. As you identify ethical styles that differ from your own, reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of utilizing different ethical styles in decision-making and leadership.

NOTE: The next session is "Choose Your Own Adventure." It is strongly recommended to discuss **now** with your mentor/mentee which topic you would like to focus on in case there is any pre-work that would be helpful to do.

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Discussion Guide 4: Choose Your Own Adventure!

For this session, discuss with your mentor/mentee which of the following modules you would like to focus on. Choose a topic that aligns with your development and conversation goals. (Note that each topic has a separate discussion guide on subsequent pages.)

If you have an alternative activity or discussion guide that you think would be beneficial, you are welcome to use it. You can also use this time to dive into more career-focused conversations.

- **Handling Conflict**
- **Discussing Leadership Theories**
- **Leadership and Trust**
- **Finding Common Ground**

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Discussion Guide 4A: Handling Conflict

Adapted from Dr. Peter G. Northouse's [Introduction to Leadership Concepts and Practice: 3rd Ed.](#)

Conflict is virtually inevitable in professional (and certainly personal) settings, and handling conflict is a rather universal leadership challenge. Conflicts can arise due to stress, communication styles, competing interests, problem solving approaches, and a host of other major and minor issues. In general terms, conflict can be divided into two camps: content (related to policies and procedures) and relational (over values, beliefs, control, goals).

Discuss

Share a conflict (that you're comfortable sharing) that you've recently experienced or witnessed. Was it personal or professional? Was it a content or relational issue? How did it develop and who did it involve? Did it escalate and how? Did it affect others? Was it resolved, and how? How did you feel during the conflict? Are you satisfied with the resolution? Are there lingering effects from the conflict?

Discover

Take the "[Conflict Style Questionnaire](#)", using a personal example for "Person A" and a professional example for "Person B." Score your answers from the scale to see what your dominant styles for handling conflict were in those situations.

- Are they similar?
- Do they confirm or contradict how you believe you act when confronted with conflict? If they contradict your self-understanding, what do you think accounts for the discrepancy?
- What are the benefits of your dominant style of handling conflict, and what are the drawbacks? How does the way you handle conflict benefit or hurt you or others? Why?

Develop

Handling conflict often involves not just communication skills but emotional intelligence and regulation as well. In examining and considering the way you approach and handle conflict, can you identify any steps you can take to more effectively manage conflict that arises? Can you identify any actionable steps or goals that you can put into practice so that you're better able to avoid, manage, and resolve conflict? Write those down and practice them throughout the next few weeks.

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Discussion Guide 4B: Discussing Leadership Theories

Adapted from W. Wagner et al.'s [Exploring Leadership For College Students Who Want to Make a Difference](#)

Conceptions about the nature of leadership and who is engaged in the leadership process have changed over time. Review the list below to better understand the evolving approaches of leadership.

Approach	Major Assumptions
Great Man	Leadership development is based on Darwinist principles. Leaders are born, not made. Leaders have natural abilities of power and influence.
Trait	A leader has superior or endowed qualities. Certain individuals possess a natural ability to lead. Leaders have traits that differentiate them from followers.
Behavioral	There is one best way to lead. Leaders who express high concern for both people and production will be the most effective.
Situational/ Contingency	Leaders act differently, depending on the situation. The situation determines who will emerge as a leader. Different leadership behaviors are required for different situations.
Influence	Leadership is an influence or social exchange process. Leadership is the process of influencing others, regardless of position.

Discuss

What would be your critique of each approach? Is there an approach that is more appealing to you? Why? Is there one that you do not like? What do you think could be some of the historical and cultural reasons for the shift in approaches and theories over time?

Discover

Together, provide specific examples of leaders who leadership can be described based on each approach (Great Man, Trait, and so on). What is it about these leaders that reflect each approach? Now, consider one of your own “personal best” leadership experience – an experience in which you were most effective. What theory or approach best describes how you led in that situation?

Develop

The above approaches are ways that others have defined leadership. Reflect on the people in both your personal and professional worlds life that you would call “leaders.” As you interact with them, consider which of the above approaches align with your views of them.

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Discussion Guide 4C: Leadership and Trust

Adapted from Kouzes and Posner's "The Student Leadership Challenge Facilitation and Activity Guide"

In this session you will have the opportunity to consider how trust impacts leadership and the perceptions of leaders.

Discuss

Trust can be defined as "a belief in the abilities, integrity, and character of another person." What kinds of actions and traits come to mind when you think about trust? Do your ideas of trust differ when you think about individuals versus organizations?

Discover

Consider two leaders in your life (does not have to be current): one you trust and one you don't trust. Individually, mark two sides of a sheet of paper with "Trust" and "Lack of Trust". Under the "Trust" column, list the traits/behaviors that led you to trust that person. Under the "Lack of Trust" column, list traits/behaviors that prevented you from trusting that person. Finally, list the impact each person's behavior had on you, your work, your team, your organization, the world. Once completed, discuss with each other, and make note of common themes.

Some questions to discuss:

- What does this tell us about the importance of trust in effective leadership?
- What is the impact of trust in a relationship? Lack of trust?
- What other skills and competencies are important when building and maintaining trust?

Develop

Trust is often built in micro-moments. Consider the ways that you are building and breaking trust in your interactions with others. Throughout the next few weeks, spend time intentionally reflecting on the following questions:

- Where am I building trust?
- Where am I breaking trust?

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Discussion Guide 4D: Finding Common Ground

Adapted from the Washington State Bar Association “Mentorship Program Toolkit”

Common ground can be defined as the space two or more individuals are able to occupy through a shared experience. This is where we build on our similarities. Each time similarities are discovered, the common ground shared expands its space to include both participants. As this space expands, the relationship organically strengthens, and the connection deepens. This provides fertile ground for continued mutual learning and a more sustainable relationship. It also leads to more respect for one another’s differences. This module will offer an opportunity to practice seeking common ground with your mentor/mentee, as well as honoring your differences.

Discuss: Try to find a commonality with each other (this could be the state or town you grew up in, your family makeup, a hobby or a shared identity such as being a parent). Spend some time discussing that similarity, sharing the joys, challenges, memories and how it has impacted you.

Discover: The other side of common ground is overcoming the fear or judgment of differences. Sometimes individuals are afraid of cross-cultural or cross-generational conversations because they worry about making a social faux pas. Other times individuals lack humility, curiosity, or an open mind when it comes to differences. Consider some of the following words or phrases and allow each other to share what they mean to you, and where (if at all) you learned about them. Challenge yourself to actively listen to your partner, and ask questions to learn more:

- Implicit or unconscious bias
- Conflict resolution
- Systemic oppression
- Civil discourse
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
- Cultural humility/cultural competence

Develop: Reflect upon and discuss the ways that your own experiences and identities are different from those around you, and how those differences could impact how you experience the world. Throughout the next few weeks, as you notice the natural differences between yourself and others, consider ways to be curious, humble, and nonjudgmental about those differences AND also seek out ways to identify commonalities. Some natural differences that could pop up include (but aren’t limited to):

- Professional experience
- Cultural background
- Generation
- Racial stereotypes
- Gender perceptions
- Disability/impairment
- Economic status

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Discussion Guide 5: Reflecting on Your Journey

If you've made it to this point, you've completed the first-year mentoring curriculum, and the academic year is coming to a close. As you prepare to conclude your mentoring partnership this year, we invite you to take some time to reflect on this experience and celebrate your learning journey.

Discuss

Please go back to your first session together and review your goals. Reflect on the degree to which you feel you've accomplished each of these goals:

- What are some of the successes with regards to the goals that were initially set?
- Were there any unexpected goals that were accomplished or started?

Discover

1. Personal discovery:
 - a. What have you discovered about yourself and your leadership understanding/style/practice/etc?
 - b. What discoveries, "aha's," or revelations did you make? Or, what was confirmed through discussion and discovery over these past months together?
 - c. What elements of this mentoring experience will continue to resonate with you as you go forward from here?
2. Paired discovery
 - a. What has this mentoring experience been like for each of you?
 - b. What challenges did you face and how successful were you in meeting those challenges?
 - c. What have you learned from your mentor/mentee? What have the highlights of this experience been for you?

Develop

Together, develop a plan for moving forward. The CLA mentoring program is designed as a one-year match. However, pairs are welcome and encouraged to continue meeting as your schedules allow. Mentoring research continually demonstrates the benefits of extended relationships for both mentors and mentees.

Whatever you ultimately decide, take some time to celebrate the journey you've taken together and enjoy reflecting on your experiences here in the CLA mentorship program.