

## Building My Professional Network through Mentoring

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The University of Redlands' School of Business has a robust mentoring program for current undergraduate and graduate students. Students selected to participate in this seven-month program are carefully matched to a mentor based on your occupational area of interest, mentoring goals, and regional location.

As a current MBA student attending the San Diego campus, I applied for the Mentor Program last fall and was matched with James Patricola, my mentor. James and I were an ideal match because we have so much in common, we are both military veterans and pursued a master's degree from University of Redlands. However, what really made our mentor-mentee relationship work so well is that our personalities mesh extremely well, and we are both very outgoing. When I look at James and everything that he has accomplished, he really has set the bar high. I know with hard work and the proper network in place, I can build up to that level too. The Mentor Program provides students with a mentor who cares about them, assures them they are not alone in dealing with day-to-day challenges, and makes them feel like they matter. James has constantly gone above and beyond to help me accomplish my goals, which were set at the start of this mentoring partnership. This includes becoming an effective mentor myself, learning what it takes to become an adjunct professor, and building my professional network.

Last February, James invited me to his work site for a job shadowing opportunity. The highlight of this visit was meeting Rhonda, his Executive Director, who is the senior civilian at this 400-employee federal organization. She is also known as a "super connector" with special skill sets in many professional areas to include networking and community outreach. Rhonda was particularly interested in my financial planning outreach experience so much so that she invited me and my spouse to her home and her next community outreach event involving several professionals within her network. This will be an invaluable opportunity for me to grow my professional network and take my community outreach efforts to the next level. James continues to foster a positive mentoring partnership by facilitating open and honest communication and providing a wealth of helpful resources. The Mentor Program has enhanced my college experience by providing academic support and professional development opportunities. It has helped me achieve my goals and more importantly, has motivated me to pay it forward as a future mentor in the Bulldog community.