Practice Makes Perfect

The #CUNYCodes Program and the Impact of Practice-Based Mentorship in Experiential Learning
# The Scenario

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Problem statement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CUNY graduates approx. 2,200 computer science and information technology degree students a year.</td>
<td>For internships and full-time roles, tech companies interview and select based on perceived capability to do quickly contribute to the work of the organization or company. <strong>The more applied experience and industry knowledge demonstrated by the candidate, the more attractive the candidate.</strong></td>
<td>CUNY tech students often have limited opportunities to <strong>build highly valued applied experience</strong> by the time they reach graduation.</td>
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Solution

Space to build, hone, and showcase industry relevant, and applied software development skills.

Students create web and mobile applications from the ground up using software project management approaches and tools.
About #CUNYCodes

- Launched in Fall of 2015
- 6 cohorts to date
- Focus Areas:
  - Software Development and Programming Skills
  - Communication
  - Problem Solving
  - Industry Tools & Practice,
  - Integration & Delivery
- 12 weeks, 3hr sessions 2x/week
- Goals: MVP by demo night, paid internship/job afterwards
**Goals**

**Goal 1**
Exposing CUNY students to the professional competencies and behaviors expected by the tech sector companies.

**Goal 2**
Building students confidence to explore academic concepts, tech skills and trends on their own utilizing their network and the broader NYC tech community.

**Goal 3**
Working with students, who often are juggling multiple responsibilities, to connect disparate technical concepts and tools into tangible, real-world projects that they can leverage in the job search.
Setting a Mentorship Atmosphere
In partnership with industry, help students cultivate key professional competencies and behaviors to increase “hireability” in development an engineering roles.

Create cohort that covers range of skill sets, maturity, experience.

Empower and foster accountability throughout the program from team formation to project design to execution and live demo.

Needs
Selection
Participants
Guidance
Atmosphere

Make selection process based on capacity vs capability.

Provide direct access to mentors that support and inform students’ skill and professional development throughout the program lifecycle.
Mentorship in Supporting Experiential Learning

Growth Oriented

- Seeks advisement on how to develop professionally
- Is self-guided in learning
- Increased confidence & acknowledges their individuality
- *Practices self-management
- Looks for shared accountability
- Understands velocity of work
- Articulates issues and experiences
# Mentoring Role/Level

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Why</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>Lead Program Developer Mentor</td>
<td>Instructs on industry tools and practices; coaches and advises students through the experience.</td>
<td>Introduces practical knowledge and sets professional expectations. Promotes self-sufficiency as a developer.</td>
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<td>Year 2</td>
<td>Peer Mentors</td>
<td>Acclimation to Program &amp; Pain Points</td>
<td>Increases students’ comfort in taking on risks/challenges, and to be attentive to learning &amp; working style of self and others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 2+</td>
<td>Industry Practice Mentors + Career Readiness</td>
<td>Applied Insights &amp; Industry Practices</td>
<td>Opportunity to receive insights and support from a practicing professional, and to begin building a network within industry.</td>
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Mentorship in Action
Recruiting and Support for Mentor Roles

- **Peer Mentors**
  - Gather interest from previous 2 cohorts
  - Set schedule & on-site expectations
  - Conduct role orientation 1+ weeks before program starts
  - Continuous feedback on peer mentoring activity

- **Industry Practice Mentors**
  - Invite to session as a speaker or for observation
  - Sign-up form with new cohort project details
  - Flexible schedule with significant engagement points
  - Conduct orientation 2 weeks before program start
  - Participation in pre-program workshops
Impact

A more engaged, connected, confident cohort directing their own learning and work management skills

- 70% Work in Tech
- 60% Mentor Interest/Return
- 40% Sharing Exp
What We Learned

- Define mentorship needs
- Create multiple mentorship levels
- Outline mentor levels and significant engagement points
- Provide clear paths to mentor access and supplemental resources
- Identify growth opportunities for mentor roles
- Pay attention to impact on applied work and rate of feedback.
Q & A