About FastStart

FastStart was developed to help students adjust to Penn State and flourish in their new environment. The Faculty/Staff Alumni Student Triad offers two mentors to each participating student: a faculty/staff mentor and an alumni mentor. The faculty or staff mentor acts as a local resource and welcomes the student to the University and local community. The alumni mentors make it possible for first year students to begin career networking opportunities and gain greater insight to their intended field.

FastStart offers opportunities throughout the year for students to meet each other and for mentors to engage in activities with their students. The calendar of events is located in the back of this packet.

How it works

Each student is matched with a faculty or staff mentor and an alumni mentor. The student then receives a match email which provides the contact information of each of their mentors. At the same time, the alumni and faculty/staff mentors receive a match email containing their student’s contact information.

1. Attend the orientation and welcome event

The orientation is held to get students acclimated to the FastStart program. The welcome event, held immediately following the orientation, is not only an opportunity to meet your faculty/staff mentor, but to meet other students, faculty, staff, and alumni association staff coordinating FastStart. If you are not able to attend the orientation and welcome event, please schedule another time to meet with the Assistant Director of Student Involvement. Mentor matches will be made after these events.

2. Introduce yourself

Send an introductory email or make an introductory phone call. While the match email includes general information, you may want to tell your mentor/mentee a bit more about yourself. If you are unable to contact your match and must leave a message, suggest a good time to contact you. The more information you provide, the easier it will be to get connected.

3. Plan a meeting and establish goals

Getting together for a meeting is the best way to get to know your mentor(s) and protégé. Plan this meeting the first time you contact them and use this meeting to set goals and expectations—an important step in starting off a new mentoring relationship. Both mentors and protégés should think about what they hope to gain from their participation in FastStart. It is useful for mentors to think about what hope they would like to offer to their protégé (mentor goals) and for students to think about what kind of help they need from their mentors (student goals). Doing this paves the way of the mentoring relationship and can help guide future meetings. The worksheet at the end of this packet will help you begin thinking about your goals and expectations for the year.
4. Stay connected
FastStart sponsors activities and events throughout the year. A schedule of activities and events is provided to each participant in the match packet. You may take advantage of these events and/or schedule your own. We encourage mentors and students to attend these activities together, when possible. We recognize that many alumni mentors live far away and cannot return to campus—we hope that in these cases mentors and students will talk about campus and FastStart events through email or by phone. FastStart also provides monthly discussion topics and sample questions in the newsletter that you can use to begin conversations about campus life, academics and careers.

5. Follow through
Now that your match has been made, it is up to you to manage this relationship. Those who get the most out of the program are those who maintain regular contact throughout the year. The smallest attempts at communicating go a very long way. If things are not working out or you need further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact:

Lindsey Zapletal
Assistant Director of Student Involvement
Penn State Alumni Association
106 Hintz Family Alumni Center
University Park, PA 16802
814-863-6386
Lmz13@psu.edu
Visit us online at: alumni.psu.edu/faststart
Expectations

FastStart connects students to faculty and staff mentors and to alumni mentors, and offers opportunities for participants to get to know each other. The Assistant Director of Student Involvement and the FastStart Leadership Board are available to provide support to mentors and students and to make new matches if existing matches are not working out. Here is what we expect of you:

**Students**

1. Introduce yourself to your faculty/staff mentor and alumni mentor within a week of receiving your match email. The introduction can be accomplished through an email, a phone call, a note or card. Tell your mentor about yourself: where you are from, a bit about your family, why you came to Penn State, your interests, etc. By introducing yourself in this manner, you demonstrate that you have a sincere interest in getting to know your mentor and in participating in FastStart.

2. After your initial introduction, set up a time and place to meet with your faculty/staff mentor.

3. You must meet and/or communicate with your faculty/staff mentor at least three times per semester. The FastStart events can be an additional way to interact with your mentor. It is very beneficial to get together outside of the FastStart events to accomplish the goals you set in the beginning of the year.

4. Return phone calls and/or emails from your mentor(s). It is very discouraging for mentors, who are volunteers, to not receive a response from their protégé’s. They may get discouraged and not take future steps at communication. You get out of the relationship what you put into the relationship. That is why it is so important to set up a meeting and set goals and expectations of the mentoring relationship.

5. Utilize the FastStart Leadership Board, which is comprised of 15 upperclassmen. They will be assigned 10-15 student protégés. They will be emailing you to check in on the mentoring relationship and they are also available as additional resource. These students were members of FastStart their freshman year.

**Faculty and Staff**

1. We ask students to reach out to their faculty/staff mentor, but if you haven’t heard from your student a week after matches are made, please reach out to them. Your role is to help make the University seem more manageable by providing advice, referring the student to available resources, and just being a friend.

2. You must meet and/or communicate with your protégé at least three times a semester. The FastStart events can be an additional way to interact with your mentee. It is very beneficial to get together outside of the FastStart events to accomplish the goals you and your protégé set in the beginning of the year.

3. We are asking that you complete each form after every meeting with your student, which will be turned in at the end of the semester. This will help us in assesses our program in the future. All meeting forms are attached in this packet to be turned in.

4. Students are especially appreciative when they are included in activities with their mentors. Students have commented favorably on attending social events, lectures, athletic events, community meetings, job shadowing, and lunches with their faculty and staff mentors.

**Alumni**

Alumni mentors are the bridges between the young person’s student life and his or her professional future.

1. We ask students to reach out to their alumni mentor, but if you haven’t heard from your student a week after matches are made, please reach out to them. Your role is to help the student conceptualize their career through the classroom. You can do this by providing advice on careers, graduate school, leads for internships and summer jobs, and networking opportunities.

2. Alumni mentors typically communicate with students through email, occasional phone calls to ask how things are going, a couple of letters of encouragement, a personal visit if you happen to be in Happy Valley ... maybe even a bite at a local restaurant.
Your Role as a FastStart Mentor

We have asked the student to introduce him/herself to you. The student is looking for your knowledge, wisdom, and feedback. Be honest and realistic. The following are suggestions to guide you.

- Get together and set up goals and expectations for when and how you will communicate. This is important groundwork for building your relationship. Let them know if you prefer email, phone calls or text messages. If you prefer texts and calls, let them know the times that you don’t want to be or won’t be checking your phone.
- Your relationship should be a personal time commitment and should not involve loaning funds, cars, or other personal items to your protégé.
- Try to include the student in as many activities that you enjoy as possible.
- Facilitate a shadowing experience.
- Listen; let the student “talk out” situations.
- Invite the student to your office or to observe one of your class sections.

Topics for discussion

- Discuss the student’s interests and goals.
- Do whatever possible to brief the student on services available for problems that may occur on campus and in the community.
- Talk about the field that the student is interested in.
- Talk about your career path and profession; how you got started; role of networking, etc.
- Discuss the student’s semester and courses.
- Discuss the importance of how majors and academic decisions relate to your work.
- Discuss career trends and opportunities within your field.

Sample Activities

- Have lunch at the Allen Street Grill.
- Hike Mount Nittany.
- Get an ice cream cone at the Berkey Creamery.
- Grab a cup of coffee.
- Attend an on-campus sporting, recreational, multicultural or educational event.

If you or the student cannot resolve problems that develop in your relationship, contact the Program Coordinator at 814-863-6386.
Tips for Students

1. Maintain regular contact
Keep the momentum going by maintaining regular contact with your mentors; otherwise, the relationship will dwindle. When you meet to talk about goals, also set a regular meeting place and time. For example, you may want to meet for lunch or send your mentor an e-mail every third Friday. You should also try to attend FastStart events together and try to connect with your alumni mentors. Come up with a good day and time to touch base with your alumni mentor and stick to it. Talk about this when setting up expectations during your first meeting.

2. Respect your mentor's time
Most mentors are very busy people with a lot of demands of their time. Make the most of your meetings together. Do not take additional time or call at a late hour without your mentor's permission. You also want to let your mentor know the best times to call and/or text you. If your first class is at 10:00 a.m. and you won't wake up until 9:00 a.m., then you probably don't want texts beginning at 7:00 a.m.

3. Internalize what you learn and apply it
You can learn a great deal from your mentor. He or she may offer suggestions or advice. Try out the suggestions. Take the advice to heart. Let the mentor know what the outcome was. Mentors like to see the results of their efforts.

4. Follow through
Follow through with what you say you're going to do. This means returning phone calls, showing up for meetings, replying to email messages, and so forth. Nothing is more discouraging to a mentor than a protégé who does not follow through. If you cannot keep a commitment, let your mentor know as soon as possible.

5. Show appreciation
Let your mentor know how much you appreciate him or her. A thank you will go a long way toward nurturing your relationship. You can show your appreciation in person, over the phone, or in writing. A handwritten note is especially impressive because you took the time to write it and your mentor can keep and remember it. Be specific in your positive feedback. Let your mentor know what you liked about what he or she did and how it helped you.

6. Give back
Think of ways you could provide assistance to your mentor. Maybe you have an hour or two to help your mentor out with a big project. By giving back you build a mutually beneficial relationship.
Tips for Mentors

1. **Make your mentoring relationship a priority**
   Research shows that effective mentoring can be done in as little as two hours a month. Making time to mentor someone is worthwhile. We have asked students to schedule an initial meeting with you and we’ve encouraged them to set up a regular place and time to meet.

2. **Meet over breakfast or lunch**
   You have to eat anyway, so why not meet over a meal or coffee. You can make better use of your time by combining these activities. You can enjoy a meal and discuss important issues with your student.

3. **Meeting topics**
   Use the meeting topics at the top of each meeting worksheet as a guide to start the conversation with your student. A lot of the time the conversation will move beyond the topic or your mentee will have their own topic. We wanted to provide you with topics just in case.

4. **Attend FastStart events with your student**
   We have come up with some great events for the 2013–14 academic year, many of which are meant for mentees and mentors to attend together. The events are great ways for students to connect with you, other students and other mentors, not to mention they might learn something!

5. **Help your student network**
   Introduce your student to others in the organization that can help him or her. Perhaps there are friends, colleagues, or others in the community your student would benefit from meeting. Your only time investment will be making a few introductions. These introductions can happen in person or through email.

6. **Help your student prepare for a summer job or internship**
   Offer to review your student’s resume or cover letter. You might also make suggestions on good work experiences to help prepare them for work after college.

Adapted from “Tips on Mentoring” http://www.mentoringgroup.com
Mentors and Students FastStart goals and action plan worksheet

The best mentoring relationships are built from a shared understanding of what each participant hopes to gain from working with one another. One of the first ways of establishing a successful mentoring relationship is talking with your mentor(s)/student protégé about why you decided to sign up for FastStart and what you hope your participation will provide. It is also very important to discuss communication guidelines and expectations and to set up consistent meeting times. The following worksheet may be of help to you as you are beginning your conversations about your goals and hopes for the year. We would like for you all to complete this worksheet together at your first meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student: I signed up for FastStart because…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentor: I signed up for FastStart because…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Best method to communicate with mentor (call, text, email, etc):
- Email address:
- Cell phone number:
- Times of Day:

Mentor goals/expectations of the mentoring relationship:
1)
2)
3)
4)
5)

Best method to communicate with protégé (call, text, email, etc):
- Email address:
- Cell phone number:
- Times of Day:

Protégé goals/expectations of the mentoring relationship:
1)
2)
3)
4)
5)

This agreement has been discussed and the undersigned do agree to the expectations stated herein.

Mentor Signature   Date   Protégé Signature   Date
MENTORS

Please complete this form after your second meeting with your mentee. These forms will be turned in at the end of the fall semester.

Mentor Name: ___________________________________________

Mentee Name: ___________________________________________

Date: ___________________________________________________

Location of meeting, phone or email: ________________________

Meeting Two Topic: Adjusting to a new place and Time Management (best around September/October)

Take this meeting as an opportunity to discuss adjusting to a new environment, both campus and community. Take this time to share your Penn State experiences and point out things you like to do on and off campus. Remember when you were new to the area. Most students may not have a car, so this might also be a good time to introduce them to CATA and help them navigate the system. Below are some suggested questions to ask your students:

- Have you had a chance to visit town?
- Have you thought about getting involved in a student organization? If so, which ones?
- Did you attend the student involvement fair?
- Do you have questions about where things are located?

This is also a great opportunity to talk about time management. With so many classes, extra-curricular activities, time spent with friends, and homework, it’s hard to fit everything in and say no to some things. You can help your student learn to prioritize and come up with strategies that will help them accomplish what they’d like. Below are some questions you can ask your student:

- How have you been managing your time?
- Do you use a daily planner? Have you written the due dates for all of your assignments in it?
- Where do you study? Is that working well for you?

See where these questions lead the conversation. Students most likely have not had such a large work or study load before coming to college, and they need some guidance to figuring it out. You may also suggest some campus resources to help them. The World Campus has great online resources: http://student.worldcampus.psu.edu/academic-support-resources/time-management.

If other resources or help is needed, refer your student to the Penn State Learning Center.
STUDENTS

Meeting Two Topic: Adjusting to a new place and Time Management (best around September/October)

Take this meeting as an opportunity to discuss adjusting to a new environment, both campus and community. Students, ask your mentors questions you have about campus and the surrounding community, like the examples below:

- Are there good places to eat on campus that aren't as crowded as the HUB and dining halls?
- How do I know what activities are offered on campus?
- What are some fun things to do at night?
- Where can I shop without a car?

This is also a great opportunity to talk about time management. With so many classes, extra-curricular activities, time spent with friends, and homework, it’s hard to fit everything in and say no to some things. Below are some questions you can ask your mentor:

- How do I prioritize school, work, and social activities?
- Do you have any suggestions on ways that I can organize my time?
- How do I minimize distractions during my study time?
- How do I say “no” without upsetting my friends?
MENTORS

Please complete this form after your third meeting with your mentee. These forms will be turned in at the end of the fall semester.

Mentor Name: __________________________

Mentee Name: __________________________

Date: __________________________

Location of meeting, phone or email: __________________________

Meeting Three Topic: Final Exams (best around November/December)

With final exams approaching (Dec. 16–20), most students are gearing up to face heightened levels of anxiety and pressure. Preparing for their first semester of college finals is a difficult process. For many students, the exams’ formats raise challenges. Many of the FastStart students may be facing multiple exams, projects, and papers to prepare during a very short time period. Furthermore, with the “free” time that sometimes surrounds these exams, many students struggle with developing a study schedule that will adequately prepare them for their end of week exams and papers.

The final discussion topic of the semester is final exams because most students can benefit from learning strategies for dealing with finals. To help you talk with your student about test preparation, test anxiety, final exam time management, and other issues related to this difficult process we have included the link to Penn State Learning (which offers groups and individual tutoring in writing, math, sciences, language, etc.) and to their test anxiety information:

http://pennstatelearning.psu.edu/
http://pennstatelearning.psu.edu/test-anxiety

We encourage you to look through these materials with your student. You may also suggest that your student review these materials on his or her own. If you are concerned that the stress of exams is becoming too much for your protégé, you may want to suggest that they visit the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).
With final exams approaching (Dec. 16–20), most of you are gearing up and you may be feeling heightened levels of anxiety and pressure. Preparing for your first semester of college finals is a difficult process. For many students, the exams’ formats raise challenges. You may also be facing multiple exams, projects, and papers to prepare during a very short time period. Furthermore, with the “free” time that sometimes surrounds these exams, you may find that it is difficult to develop a study schedule to help prepare for your end of week exams and papers.

The final discussion topic of the semester is final exams because most students can benefit from learning strategies from mentors on how to deal with finals. To help you talk with your mentor about test preparation, test anxiety, final exam time management, and other issues related to this difficult process we have included the link to Penn State Learning (which offers groups and individual tutoring in writing, math, sciences, language, etc.) and to their test anxiety information:

http://pennstatelearning.psu.edu/
http://pennstatelearning.psu.edu/test-anxiety

We encourage you to look through these materials with your mentor. If you the stress or your final exams becomes too much, please visit the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). They sometimes have workshops to help students with this stressful time.
MENTORS

Please complete this form after your fourth meeting with your mentee. These forms will be turned in at the end of the spring semester.

Mentor Name: ________________________________________________________

Mentee Name: ________________________________________________________

Date: __________________________________________________________________

Location of meeting, phone or email: ______________________________________

Meeting Four Topic: Spring Semester Plans (best around January/February)

New students in particular face the surprise of feeling that the spring semester seems to both speed past and yet never end. Making plans for the spring semester is a good way to ensure that you and your FastStart student will have a successful second semester.

When you and your protégé first began the year with FastStart, we asked you to talk about both of your goals for your year with the program. At that time, you may have found that your student was unsure of what he or she wanted from the mentoring relationship. You may now find that those areas where he or she needed help at the beginning of the year have now been addressed. As the second semester begins, it is helpful to revisit the goals that you discussed with your student at the beginning of the year.

As you make plans for the spring semester, talk to your student about his or her academic and personal goals for the semester. Through this conversation, you both can identify ways that the mentoring relationship can help make these goals a reality. As a mentor, you can share your experience and knowledge to help your student make the most of their spring semester.

Below are some suggested questions to begin that conversation:

- How did your last semester turn out?
- Did you meet with your academic adviser to schedule your classes? Was the helpful?
- What classes are you scheduled to take this semester?
- Are the classes that you are taking preparation for an intended major?
- Are you thinking about any non-major classes in the areas that are interesting to you?
- What do you hope to accomplish this semester?
- How are your clubs and organizations?
- Have any of your goals changed?
At the beginning of the spring semester, many of you may already have the end of the year in sight. Though a full semester and a long winter looms before summer begins, it will arrive before you know it! Making plans for the spring semester is a good way to insure that you and your FastStart mentors will have a successful second semester. Your FastStart mentors can be a tremendous help in helping you identify and meet your goals.

When you first began the year with FastStart, we asked you to talk with your mentors about your goals for your year with the program. At that time you may have found that you were unsure of what you wanted from the mentoring relationship. You may now find that those areas where you needed help at the start of the year have now been addressed. As the second semester begins, it is helpful to revisit the goals that you discussed with your mentors at the beginning of the year. As you make plans for the spring semester, talk to your mentors about your academic and personal goals for the semester. Through this conversation, you both can identify ways that the mentoring relationship can help make these goals a reality. Your mentors may share their experience and knowledge to help you make the most of your spring semester.

Below are some suggested talking points to begin that conversation:

- What kinds of things should I be thinking about this semester?
- Are there any changes that I should expect with the second semester?
- Did you ever change your major? If so, how did that work out?
- Have any of your goals changed?
- Talk to your mentor about your clubs and organizations.
- Tell them what you would like to accomplish this year.
- Let them know if you think about changing your major.
MENTORS

Please complete this form after your fourth meeting with your mentee. These forms will be turned in at the end of the spring semester.

Mentor Name:

Mentee Name:

Date:

Location of meeting, phone or email:

Meeting Five Topic: Summer Job/Internship Preparation (best in February)

The spring is a busy time with career fairs typically in the beginning of February. It is a time when students are—or should be—beginning to think about their summer plans. Summers can be spent working to earn money, volunteering to gain experience, or managing some combination of the two. Many of the best opportunities take time to acquire, and students will benefit from beginning to look before the summer is here.

The process of looking for a summer job can be both stressful and complicated. While this may not be the first time they have written a resume and cover letter for employment, there is added pressure to find an internship or summer job that is applicable to their intended career. In addition, many students are easily discouraged by the time that is required by this process. Some will feel that they should hear back right away from a potential employer, and many will feel pressured to take the first position offered to them.

As a mentor, you can be of help to your student as they are trying to figure out what option is best for them. In addition to helping them make difficult choices, you can also encourage them to begin looking now. You may even offer to review their resume, asking for a copy early so that there is time to make the necessary changes or you can encourage them to visit Career Services to have their resume reviewed by a career counselor.

Career Services offers many resources that may be helpful to you as you begin your conversations with your student about their summer job preparations: http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/.

Questions for Mentors to Ask Students:

Have you thought about what you would like to do this summer?
What do you hope to gain from your summer experience?
Are you planning to attend Career Days?
Would you like help reviewing your resume and cover letter?
What are the restrictions on your time this summer?
Do you know how summer jobs or internships can help with choosing a major or staying in the major you have chosen?
Are you feeling any pressure about what to do this summer?
Have you applied anywhere yet?

Please encourage your student to attend the career fairs and let them know how valuable the networking is with the recruiters. It will help them to understand what recruiters are looking for in potential employees.
The spring is a busy time with career fairs typically in the beginning of February. It is a time when you should be beginning to think about your summer plans. Summers can be spent working to earn money, volunteering to gain experience, or managing some combination of the two. Many of the best opportunities take time to acquire, and it is helpful to begin looking before the summer is here.

The process of looking for a summer job can be both stressful and complicated. While this may not be the first time you have written a resume and cover letter for employment, there is the added pressure of finding an internship or summer job that is applicable to your intended career. In addition, you may have questions about the benefits of different choices and the timing of the application process. We really encourage you all to attend the career fair in the spring, even if you aren’t looking for a job or internship. There is valuable experience in talking with companies, learning about what they look for in employees, and networking with them.

Your mentor can be helpful as you are trying to figure out what option is best for you during your summer. In addition to helping you make difficult choices, your mentor can also help you plan the application process. They may even offer to review your resume.

Career Services offers many resources that may be helpful to you as you begin your conversations with your mentors about your summer job preparations: http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/

Questions for Students to Ask Mentors:

- What kinds of summer jobs/short term jobs have you held?
- What if I am still undecided on my major – what are some good options?
- How long should I wait after submitting an application before following up?
- Should I attend the career fair?
- Will you help me with my resume?
- Will you help me with my cover letter?
MENTORS

Please complete this form after your fourth meeting with your mentee. These forms will be turned in at the end of the spring semester.

Mentor Name: 

Mentee Name: 

Date: 

Location of meeting, phone or email: 

Meeting Six Topic: Building Your Network (best around March/April)

Most students don’t realize the important role that networking can play in their academic and professional growth. Networking is a way of connecting with people you know and the people they know to find answers to questions, usually about careers. Although networking is an information gathering, not job placement, strategy, over 34% of new hires come through employee referrals. As a FastStart mentor, you are the source of many networking opportunities for your student and you can also be a role model for how networking works.

The topic of networking is an important skill. It is also an important component of a mentoring relationship. At this time of the year, you may find that your student has become less involved. Offering your help in the area of networking can be a great way to reconnect. Students can use networking to help identify choices for summer jobs, and make decisions about majors. As a mentor you can answer their questions or serve as a mid-point in their networking efforts.

The following resources provide information about networking, including some sample networking questions that may be helpful to you and your protégé.

http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/students/job_search.shtml
http://alumni.psu.edu/career/lion-link

Questions for Mentors to Ask Students:

Do you have any questions about networking?
Have you thought about trying to network to learn more about the field you are interested in?
What do you see as the major obstacle to your networking?
Would you like my help developing questions to ask while networking?
One example of when I found networking really helpful was ________.
What kinds of questions about your field of interest might you like answers to?
As a FastStart protégé you have already realized the important role that networking can play in your academic and professional growth. Networking is a way of connecting with people you know and the people they know to find answers to questions, usually about careers. Although networking is an information gathering, not job placement, strategy, over 34% of new hires come through employee referrals. Your FastStart mentors can be the source of many networking opportunities for you, and they can also show you how networking works.

Many of our alumni mentors work in your field of interest and can be helpful to you by serving as a source of answers to questions about pursuing a major, internship, and ultimately a career in this field. In these cases your mentor may be the beginning and end of your networking. However, in some cases your FastStart mentor works in a different field than your interests, or they live far away from your hometown. In both of these cases, your mentor serves as one step in your networking process. By connecting you with people they know who work in your area of interest, or with professional colleagues who live near your hometown, your mentor is offering you the opportunity to build a network of professional people to answer your questions and help lead you to future growth opportunities. Learning how your alumni mentor can be helpful even if their line of work is very different from your area of interest is very important.

Networking is an important skill. It is also an important component of a mentoring relationship. Your mentors can answer your questions or serve as a resource in your networking efforts. You can use networking to help identify choices for summer jobs, and make decisions about majors.

The following resources provide information about networking, including some sample networking questions that may be helpful to you.

http://www.sa.psu.edu/career/PDF/CG_jobsearch.pdf
http://www.alumni.psu.edu/lion-link

Questions for Students to Ask Mentors:

- What is the benefit of networking?
- Do you know anyone who works in your field but lives closer to my hometown that I could meet during break?
- Do you know anyone who is a ____________ who I could contact to ask questions?
- Can you help me come up with good networking questions?
- Can I practice asking networking questions with you?
- Have you, or anyone you know, ever benefited from networking?