



First Generation  
Scholars Network

## *First Gen Symposium*

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# **Building Strong Support Networks: Engaging Career Professionals to Empower First-Gen Students**

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# Pair Story



# Who We Are



iMentor pairs high school students with mentors for long-term, one-on-one relationships to support their journey toward successful careers and economic mobility. Through impactful mentorship, we guide first-generation students in exploring college and career options, providing tailored and proactive support to equip them in achieving their highest post-secondary aspirations.



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First Gen Symposium



# Importance of Support Networks

## The Why:

A 4-year degree is worth \$1.3 million more in lifetime earnings than a high school diploma.

## The Gap:

- Nationally, 45% of low-income students enroll in college, whereas 78% of high-income students do.
- 11% of low-income, first-generation college students earn a degree within 6 yrs compared to 54% of high-income.

# Importance of Support Networks

**76% of the students iMentor serves are first-generation college students.**

## **iMentor's impact:**

- Students maintain connections with their mentors from 11th grade through their second year out of high school.
- 2-out-of-3 of iMentor students enroll in college after high school graduation (5pts higher than CPS as a whole).

# Strength of Relationship

*One of the most profound standout components of iMentor's design is our 1:1 matching. This allows for true relationships to be formed between mentees and mentors, relationships that ideally continue and grow beyond the breadth of our formal program.*

- **93%** of mentees say they "trust their mentors"
- **97%** of mentors say their relationships with their mentee is "very important to them"
- **92%** of mentees say their mentor is "a good match" for them
- **91%** of mentees say their mentors "played a role in choosing their best post-secondary option"

Mentees sought advice and input from their mentors:

- **80%** in the "college planning process"
- **74%** around "career exploration"
- **62%** connected to "life advice"

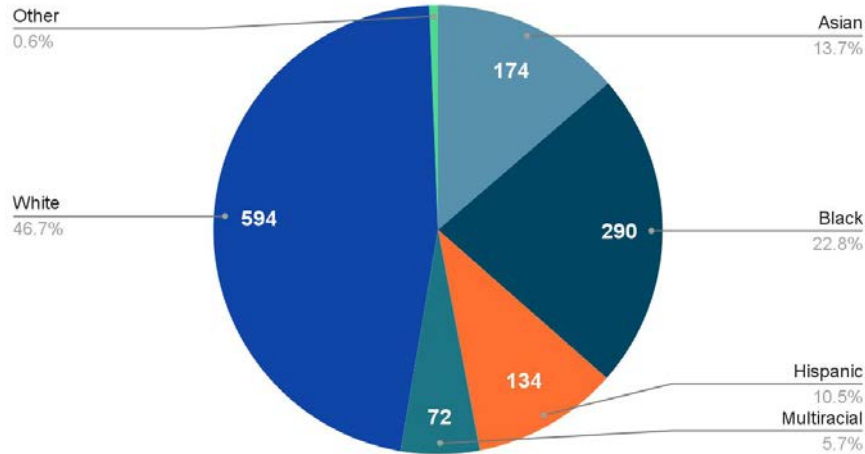
# Practical Strategies to Engage Career Professionals

What we know:

- Access to different perspectives can support students in navigating the complexities of the Post-Secondary process to create the future they want for themselves.
- It is vital to provide First-Gen students access to different adults who share similar interests and identities.
- Career professionals **want** to support students, but sometimes they just don't know how.
- Tapping into different networks is the key way to begin to engage career professionals
- Coach career professionals on how to engage their networks to give students more access

# Practical Strategies to Engage Career Professionals

Volunteer Mentors - Race/Ethnicity



High Impact, Large Scale

1: Corporate Relationships

- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
- Human Resources/New Hires (HR)
- Affinity Groups (ERG/BRG)

High Impact, Small Scale

1: Word of Mouth (current mentors)

2: LinkedIn Engagement



# Practical Strategies to Engage Career Professionals

- Identify the need + the capacity added by career professionals
- Identify the wants by the students and the school community

## Background Research

- Identify the capacity of the career professionals and their role - and provide an array of experiences
  - One-on-one mentoring vs. one time volunteer opportunities

## Provide a Variety of Opportunities

## Establish Networks

- Leverage Alumni first
- Pinpoint target audience, and the groups that relate to this target audience

## Provide Support/Training

- Provide clear, structured + supported asks of the career professionals

# Role of Career Professionals



## *Relationship Driver*

Model consistent communication with mentee and identify opportunities to build a strong personal relationship



## *Thought-Partner*

Collaborate with mentee to weigh options and help them pick the pathway best for them



## *Guide*

Lead your mentee through the post-secondary planning process.

# Role of Career Professionals



## *Cheerleader*

Encourage your mentee to do their best and achieve their goals.



## *Researcher*

Find and collect pertinent resources to share with your mentee

# Training and Empowerment

If we want Career Professionals to be able to...

- Build Relationships
- Research and Provide Resources
- Create Opportunity

We need to provide...

- Training in how to engage with students and in career and college content
- Opportunity for connection
- Resources
- Structure

# Training and Empowerment- Relationship Building

**Supporting Career Professionals to build relationships with First-Gen students**

Provide structure and routine

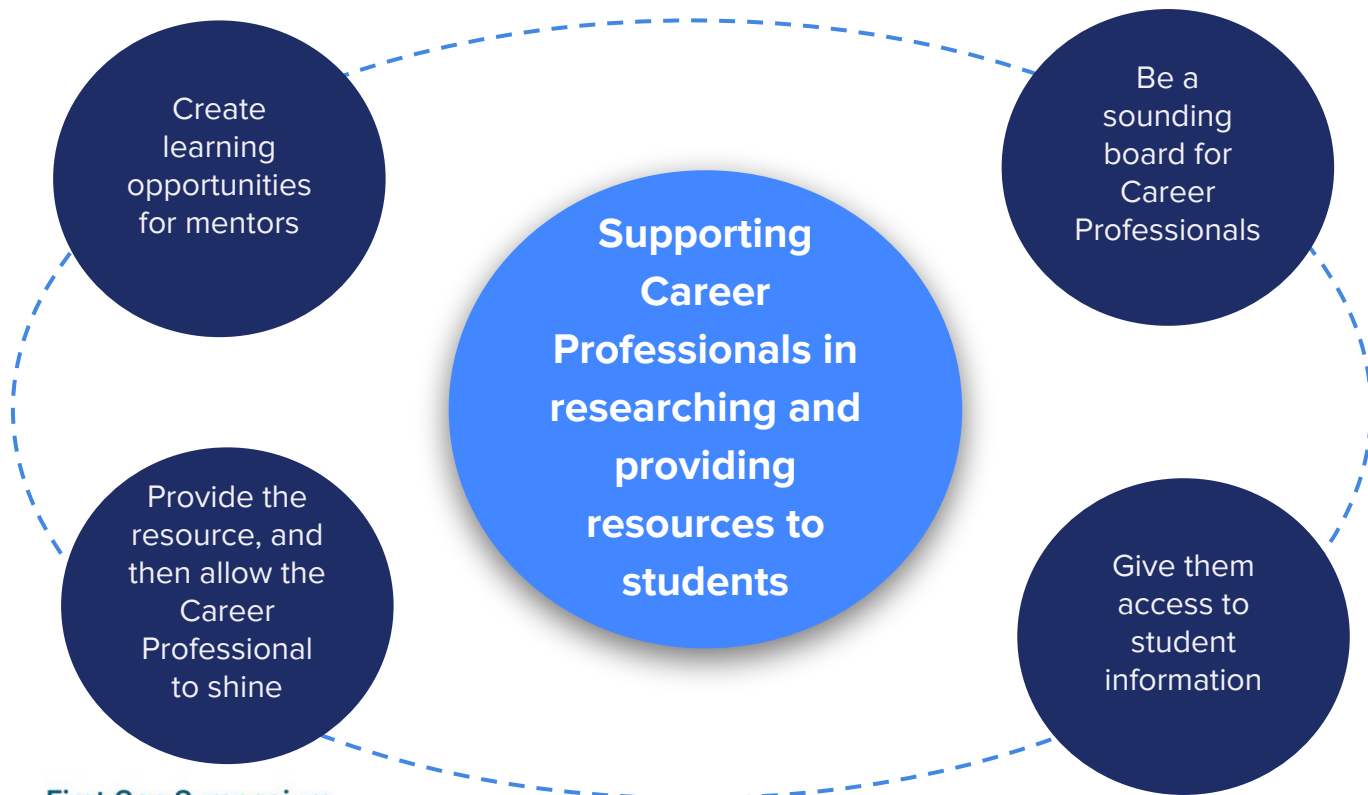
Provide opportunity for Career Professionals

Act as a safety net for Career Professionals

Provide constant and consistent feedback

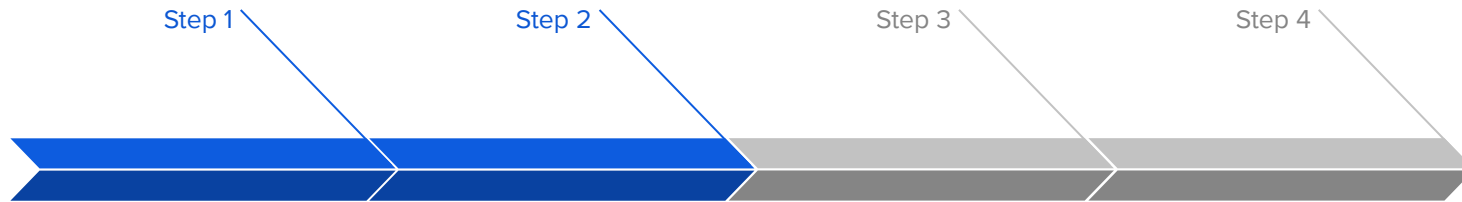
Provide training focused on mentoring through an anti-racist lens

# Training and Empowerment - Research & Provide Resources



# Training and Empowerment - Creating Opportunities

## Supporting Career Professionals in Creating Opportunities for Students



### Ideas + Resources

Career Professionals need access to ideas, plans, and strategies on what type of opportunities to create for students

### Create Student Buy-In

After the Career Professional determines a list of possible opportunities for the student, help them with creating buy-in from the student

### Provide Logistics Support

As Career Professional and student embark on the opportunity, make sure to fill any communication gaps when it comes to completing the opportunity

### Follow Up with the Career Professional

After the opportunity is over, check in with the Career Professional on any positive and things that could be better for the next opportunity, as well as what are next steps from Career Professional, student and any others involved in the experience.

# The Potential Power of Career Professionals

- All students, but especially first-gen students benefit from having a wide array of support networks, beyond the school building and classroom.
- Support can look different depending on the student and school need, AND the availability of the Career Professional. While iMentor employs a 1:1 model, there are a variety of ways to utilize Career Professionals.
- The key to successful support is relationship building, and there are many different roles Career Professionals can play.
- It is up to us, the education professionals in the room, to provide the Career Professionals with the support and training they need to be a champion for the students they engage with.