Long-Distance Mentoring Tips

Engaging in a mentoring relationship from a distance can be challenging at times, but can also lead to amazing opportunities that might not be found locally. Since a good amount of UNC CS graduates do not stay in North Carolina upon graduation, it is important to have diversity in the location of mentors in the program.

Here are a few tips to make the most of this mentoring relationship if someone in the mentorship is not local:

- **Discuss expectations:** Firstly, it is important to set expectations in terms of communication in the mentoring relationship. Some questions to ask are: “How will you set up your meetings? Via email? Text?” “What form of communication do we want to use primarily? Phone? Zoom/Google Hangouts?”
- **Find ways to establish rapport quickly:** Instead of using only phone, text, and email as the primary communication methods, it is important to have a face-to-face meeting virtually early in the mentoring relationship. This is recommended for each monthly meeting as well.
- **Plan ahead:** Remember that there is an expectation of connecting at least once per month, and it is helpful to set this recurring time up at or right after the program kickoff. It can also be helpful to create a small agenda before each meeting and a summary after as well. Have an idea of what you want to talk about before reaching out to a mentor if you are a mentee.
- **Be spontaneous:** In between monthly check-ins, mentees can send a quick text or call your mentor if they run into questions about internship or job applications, etc. This allows for the conversation to keep going in between the required communication and for it to feel more informal.
- **Grow your network:** Barring mentor approval, if you are a mentee, your mentor might be able to connect you with their contacts in the RTP area to potentially engage in job shadowing or just meeting for coffee. It is estimated that around 85–90% of jobs are landed via networking, so this is a critical component of professional development.