

CRA-E/CRA-WP CSGrad4US Mentoring Program

Cohort Two Year One Key Findings Report

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COMPUTING RESEARCH ASSOCIATION



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Evaluation



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Widening Participation

CSGrad4US Mentoring Program

Summary of Year One Program Results

Cohort Two

OVERVIEW

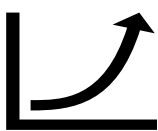
The Computing Research Association's Committees on Education (CRA-E) and Widening Participation (CRA-WP) collaboratively implemented the CSGrad4US Mentoring program for recipients of the National Science Foundation's (NSF) CSGrad4US Graduate Fellowships. The program targets individuals currently in the workforce who are planning to return to computing-related graduate programs. The goals of the CSGrad4US Mentoring Program are (1) to guide returning students through the application process towards a successful graduate admission and school selection, (2) mentor them through the transition to graduate study in the first year towards high retention, and (3) increase the domestic pipeline of students earning graduate degrees in computing.

Employing a quasi-experimental research approach with a comparative pre-test-posttest framework, the CRA Center for Evaluating the Research Pipeline (CERP) conducted an evaluation of the year one of CSGrad4US Mentoring Program. CERP used an online survey to distribute to mentees at program entry (Time 1) and program exit (Time 2). In the first year, CERP examined cohort one participants' goals, aspirations, and experiences with their graduate school applications. A summary of key findings from the year one immediate impact report is shown below, followed by detailed results for survey questions and summarized themes to open-ended questions from 68 cohort two mentees in the CSGrad4US Mentoring Program. Results are grouped according to the sections of the year one immediate impact report, including: (1) immediate impact outcomes and (2) program-specific feedback.

YEAR ONE KEY FINDINGS #1: IMMEDIATE IMPACTS

After year one in CSGrad4US Mentoring Program, cohort two participants who completed both Time 1 and Time 2 program surveys showed:

- Significant increases in the following outcomes:



Perceived mentorship support
Perceived Professional Network
Knowledge in graduate school application

- No Observed Changes in The Following Outcomes:



Identification in computing
Sense of belonging
Self-efficacy in graduate school application
Future career and employment preferences

YEAR ONE KEY FINDINGS #2: PROGRAM-SPECIFIC FEEDBACK

Overall Rating on the Quality of CSGrad4US Mentoring Program



On average, participants rated and appreciated the quality of the **CSGrad4US individual coaching** supporting their graduate school application.

Overall Rating on CSGrad4US Mentoring Program Structure



On average, mentees found **the information they received about the graduate application process** and **the coaching they received for graduate school application support** as very helpful during the first year in the program.

Overall Feedback on Program's Mentoring and Coaching Activities

Positive Feedback

- Mentees appreciated the effective coaching and their coach's involvement in their graduate school applications.
- Mentees appreciated the mentoring and program design helping them to achieve their educational and career goals.
- Few mentees were satisfied with networking opportunities, especially using Discord for the cohort-based networking and social activities.

Suggestions and Recommendations

- Some mentees recommended for the program organizers to address mental health topics in the sessions, providing better assistance for applicants dealing with mental health issues.

- Mentees advocated for more clarification and information on stipends and financial assistance from participating in the program.
- Few mentees recommended for better mentor-mentee matching based on similar research interests.
- Suggestions for coaches to maintain post-application support, especially for those transitioning from industry to academia.

Overall Feedback on Mentees' Concerns Related to their Participation.

Funding Concerns

- Mentees expressed concerns about how funds will be disbursed once they begin their first semester in their graduate program.
- Some mentees were unclear about the structure of funding and express a desire to see more details understand its utilization better.
- Mentees mentioned confusion about how fellowships work, particularly about potential interactions with other internal school scholarships.
- Few mentees were concerned about getting significant pay cut when they transition into their PhD programs.

Compliance/Program Eligibility with CISE Discipline

- Mentees expressed more guidance from coaches on what program is acceptable regarding CISE discipline.
- Emphasis on the need from coaches to clarify and review every part of the application, ensuring that the participant fulfills the program's requirements.

Future Admissions & Professional Goals

- Some mentees addressed dealing with health problems and uncertain about enrolling in their program by Fall 2024.
- Suggestions for more clarification on policies regarding deferment or potential re-application.

Overall Feedback on Valuable Aspects of Program

Mentoring & Coaching Appreciation

- Mentees appreciated their coaches helping them improve their application materials and discuss their academic goals.
- One-on-one coaching sessions were highlighted as invaluable to providing personalized experiences, and helping participants gain confidence in navigating their options.

- Networking with professors is mentioned as a valuable aspect, providing insights into academia and helping participants understand what life inside academia is like.

Community & Peer Support

- Some mentees appreciated the peer support created during the application process, maintaining Discord as a platform to hold space for resource sharing and accountability.
- Appreciation for insights gained from panel presenters and former CSGrad4US cohort members. Also, some mentees appreciated the support from various professors when it involved their application materials.

Comprehensive Program Structure

- Some mentees recognized the program's effectiveness in guiding their peers through all aspects of the application process.
- Appreciation for the organized and helpful structure of the group mentoring sessions.

Encouragement & Confidence Building

- The program and mentorship were appreciated by the participants to have the confidence to believe that attending graduate school was within their aspirations.
- The program's impact on the participant to envision themselves as a Ph.D. student was valuable, contributing to participants' understanding of the graduate school life.
- Some mentees mentioned that the impact of the program re-ignited their interest in research and academia, especially for those returning to school.

Additional Program-Specific Feedback

Overall Appreciation

- Mentees were highly satisfied with the program's impact on their educational aspirations overall.
- Provided positive feedback on the coaching and mentoring support during the application process.
- Appreciation for the program structure and the opportunity to seek support from former CSGrad4US peers and coaches.
- Some mentees were happy with opportunity to connect with their fellow peers.

Overall Recommendations

- Mentees consider including GRE prep as an optional benefit to enhance cohort preparation. Also, some feedback mentioned to consider in supporting participants in part-time doctoral programs with tuition assistance.
- Program organizers should consider including an earlier mentoring session on the GRE, like covering its structure and content.
- Mentees recommended for their coaches to address any financial challenges of leaving their jobs and relocating for full-time graduate programs.



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