

CRA-E/CRA-WP CSGrad4US Mentoring Program

Cohort One 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 One

OVERVIEW

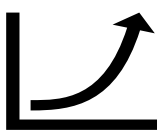
The Computing Research Association's Committees on Education (CRA-E) and Widening Participation (CRA-WP) collaboratively implemented the CSGrad4US Mentoring program for recipients of the National Science Foundation's (NSF) CSGrad4US Graduate Fellowships. The program targets individuals currently in the 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 34 cohort one 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 one mentees who completed both Time 1 and Time 2 program surveys showed the following:

- Significant increases in the following outcomes:



Perceived mentorship support
Perceived professional network
Knowledge in graduate school application

- No Observed Significant 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

Quality of CSGrad4US Mentoring Program



On average, participants highly rated and appreciated the quality of the CSGrad4US [individual coaching](#) supporting their graduate school application.

Overall Feedback on Program's Mentoring and Coaching Activities

Positive Feedback

- Mentees highlighted the program's impact on building confidence, facilitating career transitions from industry to graduate school, and providing valuable mentorship.
- Mentees appreciated the effective coaching and their coach's involvement in their graduate school applications.

Suggestions and Recommendations

- Mentees express the need for more information on identifying research interests, selecting classes after acceptance, and understanding the research process to make decisions about choosing the right school.
- Mentees expressed a desire for increased social time and coordination among attendees to discuss application progress and doubts about graduate school life.
- Mentees recommended using communication platform, such as Slack, for fellows to connect and support each other throughout the process.
- Some mentees noted redundancy between meetings and coaching sessions and recommend minimizing repeated information.

Some mentees suggested that the timing of certain sessions, such as those related to succeeding in graduate school and the PhD application process, could be more aligned with the application cycle timeline.

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.

Transitions & Lifestyle Adjustments

- Mentees expressed general concerns about going back to school after several years, including the challenges of adjusting to a new lifestyle.
- Some mentees raised the question of whether the program has any issues with participants working while enrolled in their program and seeks clarification on this aspect.

Future Admissions & Professional Goals

- Some mentees expressed concerns about whether they will be able to get admitted next year, possibly tied to personal factors.
- Few mentees expressed their concern not to be dropped from CSGrad4US for not being admitted to a program.
- Mentees discussed the challenge of keeping their goals secret from their employer, indicated a potential need for support in managing professional and academic aspirations.
- Some mentees expressed a desire for periodic meetings to discuss their progress, indicated the need for ongoing guidance.

Overall Feedback on Valuable Aspects of Program

Mentoring & Coaching Appreciation

- Mentees found the individual weekly or bi-weekly mentor meetings very helpful in the process of writing and completing their graduate applications.

- One-on-one coaching sessions were highlighted as invaluable, providing personalized experiences, and helping mentees gain confidence in navigating their options.
- Networking with mentees were mentioned as a valuable aspect, providing insights into academia and helping mentees understand what life inside academia is like.

Increase Knowledge in Graduate School Process

- Some mentees emphasized the significant value of learning the complexities of the application process, providing clarity on what is needed to make their applications stand out.
- Mentees appreciated the value in learning about the process of applying to graduate school, indicating a better understanding of the steps involved.

Perspective Shift & Confidence Building

- The program and mentorship were appreciated by the mentees to have the confidence to believe that attending graduate school was within their aspirations.
- The program's impact on the mentees to envision themselves as a Ph.D. student was valuable, contributing to mentees' understanding of the graduate school life.

Additional Program-Specific Feedback

Overall Appreciation

- Mentees acknowledged the impact of working with their mentors describing it as one of the defining moments of their life. This emphasizes the positive influence of mentorship in the program.
- Few mentees shared their personal journey from industry to academia, highlighting the importance of programs like CSGrad4US for individuals prioritizing financial stability before transitioning to a research career.
- One feedback voiced their belief that academia and research must offer higher pay and continue creating programs like CSGrad4US to attract and retain passionate researchers, particularly from underrepresented communities.

Overall Recommendations

- Mentees recommend having meeting videos available immediately after sessions in format with notes. This feedback indicates a preference for easily accessible resources to reinforce learning.



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