

## Finding a Mentor

Mentoring is a collaborative, developmental partnership where an individual supports the growth, learning, and success of another. Through guidance, encouragement, and shared knowledge, mentoring fosters personal and professional development, helping individuals navigate challenges, build confidence, and achieve their goals.

Mentors can come from your department, across USC, or through professional networks. Seek out people whose experience aligns with your goals and start with simple, intentional conversations. Follow the steps and guiding questions below to aid your quest to find a mentor.

### 1. Clarify Your Intent

- What skills, experiences, or guidance am I hoping to develop right now?
- What types of growth or learning feel most important at this stage of my career?

### 2. Reflect on Existing Mentors

- Who do I already go to for honest advice or perspective?
- Who pushes me to grow or think differently?
- Who has experience in areas I want to develop?
- Who has seen my work and can speak to my strengths?
- Who has expressed interest in my success?

### 3. Identify Potential New Mentors

- Who is one to two steps ahead of me whose path aligns with my interests?
- Which leaders, colleagues, or professionals are doing work I'm curious about?
- Where might I naturally encounter people I could learn from (projects, events, communities)?

### 4. Take Thoughtful Action

- How can I engage before reaching out (e.g., shared work, meetings, events, or following their work)?
- What specific question or topic could I bring to a short conversation focused on learning?
- How can I come prepared and respectful of their time?
- How might I build the relationship gradually through genuine, low-stakes interactions?
- What value could I offer in return (perspectives, resources, or support)?