2022-2023 FIFSW Alumni Mentoring Program Report

Program Overview
The Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work Alumni Mentoring Program (AMP) is an alumni-initiated service that the Alumni Association started during the economic downturn of the 1990s to provide graduating students with support in finding and securing professional connections and employment opportunities. The program has since evolved to include more diverse, local and international mentoring relationships, networking events, and workshops mutually beneficial to our student mentees and alum mentors.

Program Highlights
The Alumni Mentoring Program (AMP) commenced in a condensed format in December 2022 through to May 2023. Seventy-nine (79) graduate students paired with a pool of eighty (80) alum mentors. Student participation fees were waived again this year to alleviate financial hardship. Since its initiation last year and aligned with the university's ongoing commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), the Alumni Mentoring Program offered students same-gender and same-race/ethnicity mentoring relationships. Mentees and mentors highlighted rich discussions about the intersections of race and gender in the workplace, navigational tips, and psychosocial support as benefits of this initiative.

After two years of online programming during the pandemic, the Alumni Mentoring Program re-launched an in-person networking event in January 2023, with 50 program participants attending, including 33 graduate students and 17 alum mentors. The event featured a speed-networking component, where students and mentors were encouraged to network and exchange electronic business cards using the Blinq App.

Additionally, the program delivered three workshops to prepare students for graduation, including networking, resume writing and interviewing skills. The AMP program coordinator, Valerie Groysman, completed check-ins with students and mentors throughout the program and shared job posts with students.

Several program features, such as the *AMP introductory presentations* and *Lunch with a Recent Grad,* were not hosted due to several factors, including staffing transitions and time constraints. Moreover, there were no nominations for the Outstanding Alumni Mentorship award this year.

Program Evaluation Results
Student mentees and alum mentors participated in an evaluation of the program. Respondents rated the program, networking event and workshops as "excellent" or "good." Student mentees highlighted opportunities to network with multiple mentors at the networking event, learning about the STAR method of interviewing, human resources perspectives and learning about job posting keywords as highlights of these events.

Prepared by Michelle English, MSW RSW Alumni Mentoring Program Representative
Date: June 19, 2023

Mentees and mentors considered the mentoring relationship to be a mutually positive experience. The top four identified areas in which mentees felt that their mentors were helpful included:

1. *Support and encouragement*
2. *Review of resume and cover letter*
3. *Building interview skills*
4. *Job searching or leads*

Mentee and mentor respondents cited challenges included a lack of connection or mutual professional interest and limited access.

<u>Recommendations</u>

Participants in the Alumni Mentoring program provided the following feedback and recommendations for to improve the program in future:

- Provide other methods of learning and sharing of resources beyond the networking event and make materials (resume writing booklet) accessible to all students regardless of program involvement.
- Post-mentoring and graduation check-in with student graduates.
- Open and cross-networking events/opportunities whereby mentees and mentors can dictate the number of connections and level of involvement.
- More apparent expectation of timeline and frequency of contact
- Personalized interview and screening of mentee/mentor
- More faculty initiated networking events, including a workshop about utilizing LinkedIn)

The Factor Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, Alumni Association, and student graduates commend this year's participating alum mentors, especially our long-term alum mentors, for their ongoing commitment and contribution to the development and support of student graduates transitioning into the Social Work profession.

*Participants completed a program evaluation; however, due to unforeseen circumstances, a complete interpretation of these results, including statistical information, was unavailable to share at this year's 2023 Annual General Meeting (AGM). Staffing changes within the coordinator role and time constraints may have impacted the program's numbers and outcomes this year.

Prepared by Michelle English, MSW RSW Alumni Mentoring Program Representative
Date: June 19, 2023