2020 iGEM Mentorship Program Guidelines

The Mentorship program is Coordinated by the After iGEM Education Committee (After-Education@igem.org) and supported by After iGEM Coordinators Ricardo (ricardo@igem.org) Guilherme (guilherme@igem.org) and Dorothy (dorothyzhang@igem.org)

Objective
This program aims to provide iGEM alumni an opportunity to reconnect with the iGEM community and hone their communication, mentorship, and consulting skills.

Mentors, experienced iGEM volunteers, will directly interact with teams and share experiential knowledge from both iGEM and their area of expertise. By fostering a strong After iGEM community, new and returning iGEMers can build their skills in light of both the competition and future pursuits.

Program Structure

Each participating team will receive the support and guidance of a mentor throughout the summer. The mentors and team should have regular weekly video calls to discuss the progress of the project and any questions they might have, related to the main objective of the program.

Each team and the mentor will receive a separate Handbook for themselves, which consists of an extensive list of iGEM website links and other resources to provide guidance regarding the medal criteria for iGEM 2020. Mentors will be required to complete exercises made in collaboration with the iGEM Executive Judging Committee to update them on the latest judging requirements.

It is mandatory for all the participants to connect to the iGEM Mentorship Slack Channel. We encourage the teams to share any questions surrounding their iGEM experience on this platform. The Slack Channel is a way to ask questions for any other teams and mentors to answer. Mentors are encouraged to post answers to questions from their team meetings and narrate informative personal experiences on the channel if they believe the answer would be useful to other teams.

At the end of every month, both teams and mentors will answer the questions in feedback forms sent by the Education Committee, allowing the program coordinators to follow-up their progress.
A special Mentorship Workshop will be held at the 2020 iGEM Jamboree, where those who participated in the program and other jamboree attendees will be invited to share their experiences and brainstorm about the Mentorship Program and other tools to support iGEM teams. We invite all participants of the Mentorship Program to attend this workshop.

**Benefits to iGEM Teams** An iGEM mentor will help new iGEM teams and advisors in the following ways:

1. Covering the basics from competition deliverables to important deadlines.
2. Mentors require experience on iGEM teams. Therefore, mentors are primarily a resource for firsthand experience and secondarily a resource for expertise in specific subject areas your mentor may specialize in.
3. Address broad questions that team advisors have about synthetic biology in general and about teaching synthetic biology information and lab techniques to their students if they fall into the expertise of the mentors.
4. Provide tips and remind advisors and students about how to submit key iGEM deliverables.
5. When possible, answer questions about troubleshooting an experiment, refining protocols, and other issues that the team experiences.

**Benefits to Mentors** The connection with an iGEM team and its advisors will benefit alumni mentors as follows:

1. Provide an opportunity to demonstrate and improve skills in science communication, design, ethics, and other crucial aspects of an iGEM project.
2. Collaborate with other alumni mentors to advise teams in key iGEM skills such as discussing the local/global impact of potential iGEM projects, identifying and addressing safety considerations, developing a team wiki, designing a part, and virtually submitting a part or device.
3. Expand one’s synthetic biology career network.
4. Acquire familiarity with the iGEM judging process that prepares participants to serve as effective iGEM judges in the future.

**Program Expectations**

*Teams*
1. Make sure to explain your project to your mentor.
2. Meet with mentors in scheduled weekly Zoom meetings, from July to October, to discuss themed topics. Teams should be the primary creators of agendas for meetings, with additional input from the mentor if necessary.

3. When preparing to ask a question to your mentor, check the documentation on the iGEM site to understand where information is missing and what specifically you want to know that is not available.
4. While we ask you to research background on questions before asking them to your mentor, please ask questions on slack without prior research, because someone might be having the same question and others might pitch in to help you answer that.
5. Answer the monthly Team Survey to help us better understand how every team and mentor are doing in an effort to follow up and improve the Mentorship Program. These will be distributed via Slack.
6. Respond to a final yearly survey about the mentorship program.

Mentors

1. Must commit to helping teams from July to October at weekly Zoom meetings with appropriate preparation time to develop a plan (e.g. a one-hour meeting between the mentors and an additional hour to write and submit the plan)
2. Remain up to date on the mentors’ Slack channel in case there are questions to answer.
3. Set up additional meetings with the team by Slack or video chat/conference call if the team requests additional help beyond the meetings (optional/as needed)
4. Acknowledge instances when you do not have the expertise to provide informed answers for questions and help connect team outside sources to obtain answers.
5. Respond to the monthly Mentor Report (Zoho Form) to help us better understand how every team in the Mentorship Program is doing in an effort to improve the program. These will be distributed via Slack every month.

The email after-education@igem.org should be used for logistical or administrative questions. We are always open to feedback, hearing your concerns, and any comments that could help us improve the overall mentorship experience and make it fulfilling to all participants regarding the mentorship program. This email will notify everyone on the After iGEM Education Committee.

After reading through the requirements and the mentorship program description, please confirm in the form that you have read and agreed to the terms and responsibilities outlined in this document.