WHAT’S NEXT

In 2018, the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce set out to bridge the gap between college students and professionals in the Asheville area. With the help of our partners at UNC Asheville, Western Carolina University, Warren Wilson College, and WNC Human Resources Association, we developed NEXT AVL, a mentorship program for second- and third-year college students. NEXT AVL pairs local university students with local professionals over a 9-month period to help students develop their professional acumen and make professional connections locally.

We are invested and committed to the success of NEXT AVL because in the real, working, professional world, economic opportunity and mobility are less about who you know than about who knows you. Working professionals rely heavily on connections and networks when filling open positions. As we reflected on our role in helping businesses grow and find talent, we knew this program would have to offer an opportunity for the students and professionals to cultivate meaningful and lasting connections with each other and others in their professional field. The big idea is that if the student develops professional connections and networks in the area before they graduate, they can leverage those relationships and find their first job here in Asheville post-graduation.

WHO’S NEXT

Mentees

College students who are interested in professional job opportunities in the Asheville area post-graduation and able to commit 6-8 hours per month for meetings and assignments over the 9-month academic year. Additionally, we intentionally seek students that meet any of the following criteria:

- First in family to attend college
- Students with strong work ethic who may need additional professional or career connections
- Students from under-resourced communities
- Students from low-income families
- Students with culturally diverse backgrounds

Mentors

Seasoned professionals who agree to extend their professional networks and connections to their mentees. NEXT AVL mentors commit about 6-8 hours per month working with their mentees during the 9-month program.

www.nextavl.org
OBJECTIVES

As a result of this mentorship program, students will:

- Develop a clear vision of their career aspirations and goals
- Be able to talk about themselves and their professional aspirations clearly and concisely in public or private settings
- Identify 3-5 employers in the Asheville area within their field of interest
- Have professional contacts in their field of interest to help them continue navigating their transition from college to career

PROGRAM CURRICULUM

Mentor Meetings

On a weekly basis, mentee and mentor meet one-on-one as a pair to get to know each other and discuss career aspirations. These meetings can vary in form – from a check-in text thread, to a phone call, to meeting for coffee, or checking in with a video call. Together, the mentor and mentee also develop entry-level job skills, including resume writing, interviewing, networking, and talking about their professional aspirations.

Monthly Networking Meetings

All NEXT AVL participants – mentors and mentees – meet for networking and leadership development at a set time each month.

Assignments

During the monthly networking meetings, new assignments are shared, including draft resume, Holland code assessment, career competency skills inventory, and a 3-minute pitch. The final assignment for the mentee will be to publicly pitch themselves at our Closing Celebration and Reception.

Job Shadows / Informational Interviews

Mentors and mentees work together to identify other Asheville area employers and select 2 that they would like to visit for a short job shadow or virtual information interview. The objectives are to get to know the employer, explore the field of work, and provide insight into day-to-day job responsibilities. Mentees will arrive to their job shadows independently without their mentors, but mentors will help to set up the visit for their mentees.

Networking Events

Mentors and mentees will identify 1 or 2 industry-related networking events to attend together.