Why Invest in STEM Mentoring

America faces an acute gap in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) workforce. STEM-related occupations are the second-fastest growing in the country, coming in just behind jobs in the health care industry, according to a Georgetown University study. While the nation is expected to have more than 8.6 million STEM-related jobs available in 2018, the National Math and Science Initiative warns as many as three million of those jobs could go unfilled at the current rate the U.S. produces workers trained in STEM. If the United States is to keep up with the growing number of jobs in STEM and computer science and keep pace with its global competitors, there is a critical need to invest in strengthening STEM education programs and our STEM pipeline throughout the country.

This issue is compounded when we consider the demographic trends occurring in the United States. These trends reveal there is a need to, not only create more STEM graduates, but also attract more women and minorities to these fields. Only 18 percent of undergraduate computing and information science degrees are awarded to women.

About Great Minds in STEM & MentorNet

Since 1989, Great Minds in STEM (GMiS), a national 501(c)3 educational non-profit, has been at the forefront of implementing innovative programs and partnerships focused on the continuous expansion of K-20+ STEM education opportunities for our nation’s underserved communities. GMiS leads a national coalition of educators, public, private and government partnerships along with student groups that are working together to increase STEM talent nationwide.

Launched in 1997, MentorNet, a division of GMiS, supports the academic persistence and advancement of underrepresented students in the STEM fields. MentorNet delivers a nationwide social network for one-to-one mentoring that is open to all STEM students in higher education and to STEM professionals who serve as their mentors (http://mentornet.org/join). Our goal is to ensure that all students interested in STEM have the opportunity and support necessary to persist in their education, to enter the U.S. workforce, and to contribute to scientific advancements and technological innovations.

MentorNet’s program is a hosted Platform-as-a-Service platform and has familiar features from social networks like LinkedIn and Facebook.
**How MentorNet Works**
After completing their profiles, mentees are presented with potential mentors based on matching of their profile information.

**MentorNet's Discussion Topics for STEM Students in Higher Education** – designed for each education level from first year through Ph.D. The topics are derived from research on the factors that impact the persistence of underrepresented groups in STEM fields. MentorNet’s matched pairs are encouraged to spend at least 20-30 minutes each week in active communication during their four-month mentorships.

**In Their Own Words**

**Mentee Testimonials:**

**Jillian, Computer Science Student @ U.C. Riverside...**
"I have completed two mentorships. I have gotten a lot of great advice and support. It’s immensely helpful to get objective advice from someone with experience and not invested in your life – outside of professors and family. I recommend MentorNet to others."

**Ernie, Mechanical Engineering Student @ Cal State University, LA...**
"I enjoy the MentorNet discussion topics. They help start the conversation and we can take it from there. My mentor challenges me to think differently and to grow as a student leader. I now understand the value of mentoring."

**Mentor Testimonials:**

**Barbara, CTO @ Cirrent...**
"What I like most about the MentorNet is that my mentees have been very appreciative of my advice. It feels very worthwhile when they ask for my input, and then follow up on what I have suggested. I like the weekly emails to guide the conversation – we don’t stay entirely on topic, but it’s a good conversation-starter."

**Aleksander, Industrial Design Strategist @ Intel Corporation...**
"The MentorNet experience has been great so far! I’ve been able to touch base with my mentee around his academic and professional goals. We’ve established a few transition plans into the design world and user centric thinking, and I’ve also helped him prioritize his approach to finding a position in Tech that he will love. I have really enjoyed the MentorNet program thus far, and I am spreading the word internally for more mentors!"
A MENTORNET CUSTOMIZED COMMUNITY INCLUDES:
• A virtual mentoring service that pairs high priority students with your current employees in meaningful mentorships
• A company branded customized community
• Research-based program facilitating effective mentorships in your community and promoting mentee persistence to complete their STEM degree
• Data about your community that supports your mentoring goals

The core strength of MentorNet’s service is the STEM focus of our mentee/mentor discussion topics delivered based on a college student’s developmental level – freshman through Ph.D. Topics are served up weekly along with short learning modules to help guide both the mentee and mentor through the mentorship. A key objective is to make the process of mentorship easy so the mentee and mentor can focus on student success.