



Vice-Chancellor's Mentoring Programme

Best practice case studies

Introduction and overview

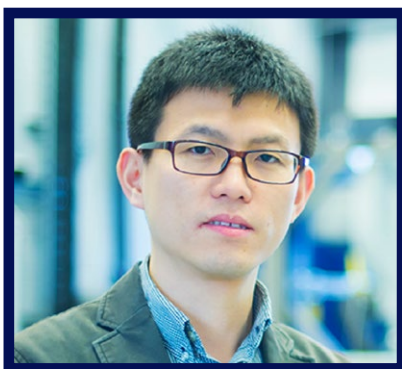
The Vice-Chancellor's Mentoring Programme was launched in 2017 as part of the University of Nottingham's activities to develop an inclusive culture. It signalled a personal commitment from Vice-Chancellor Professor Shearer West CBE to support senior leaders with protected characteristics more fully.

An annual programme open to senior leaders across all job roles in the university, it combines personal 1:1 mentoring meetings with the Vice-Chancellor; shadowing a minimum of two senior university meetings – one of these being a University Executive Board meeting; Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) assessments; and connecting together as a mentee group.

Now in its third year, 26 individuals have been mentored personally by the Vice-Chancellor. 57 unsuccessful applicants have also been matched to alternative Executive Board and other senior leader mentors, demonstrating the university's continued commitment to supporting and developing the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) agenda through personal connections.

This case study provides an insight into the experiences of one of the unsuccessful candidates who were matched to an alternative mentor, their reasons for applying, and what they gained from the experience, even though they didn't make it onto the programme.

For further information about the University of Nottingham's Vice-Chancellor's Mentoring Programme, contact Carol Steed, Leadership and Management Director.
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Tao Yang, Associate Professor within Electrical and Electronic Engineering, University of Nottingham.

Q. Why did you apply for the Vice-Chancellor's Mentoring Programme?

A. This Vice-Chancellor's Mentoring programme provided me an excellent opportunity to be able to engage with senior staff and learn from them key leadership and management skills. This programme also enabled me to have closer insights into the management systems and decision making systems of the university. By reflecting that, I can better understand what skills I may need to strengthen and develop myself in that direction.

Q. Are there specific challenges you believe you faced that you thought this programme could help you overcome or deal with more effectively?

A. As an alumni of University of Nottingham, I am very keen to contribute more to this university. Apart from excellence of

research and teaching, I am eager to get myself ready for a more challenging role in the university or faculty. At the point of applying for the Vice-Chancellor's Mentoring Programme, this path was not clear to me at all. Also, how to balance research, teaching and management, even family life is a critical skill I wanted to learn from senior staff within the university.



Q. You weren't successful in gaining a place on the programme because of the high volume of applicants, but you were offered an alternative option – what happened and how did that work out for you?

A. I was assigned another mentor, May Tan-Mullins at the University of Nottingham Ningbo China (UNNC) as an alternative, which I am actually very happy with. May and I have regular online meetings through the year. She has given some very helpful, valuable suggestions and advice which I really appreciate.

Q. Has engaging with an alternative mentor had any impact on you, your learning and/or your career, and if so, how?

A. My monthly discussion with May through the year has had a great impact on my career planning. I am now very clear. At the end of each meeting, May and myself will agree on something which I should be focusing on and we aim to reflect on this during the next meeting. I find this is very helpful. Together we have identified my weakness or areas I need to improve, which gives me the right direction I need to focus on.



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Q. Are there any specific elements of learning that you have found useful, and have you been able to apply these into your workplace/working practices?

A. I'll share one example here. During the mentoring programme, May has talked about being able to confront people (when needed). Sticking to professional principles is sometimes critical as a leader. We discussed some examples and she shared with me some of her own experience during her career. I found it is very helpful.

Q. What advice would you give to others who might be considering getting involved in a mentoring programme?

A. This programme is really valuable for people who have higher ambition and who want to contribute more to the university. Mentors are very approachable (certainly in my case at least) and they can really give you very invaluable advice in terms of career development, career planning etc. When you have signed up for this programme, it is critical that both you and the mentor get engaged. Trying to book another appointment at the end of each meeting is also important to make sure the mentoring progresses in properly scheduled way.