To: Dr. Erika Paterson, ENGL 301 99A Instructor
From: Eugenia Fasciani, ENGL 301 99A Student
Date: October 14, 2020
Subject: Proposal for increasing the number of participants in ACSA’s Mentorship Program

**Introduction**

The Arts Co-op Student Association (ACSA) represents the student body responsible for bringing together Arts Co-op students, alumni and staff in order to enhance the cooperative education experience. ACSA offers its members the opportunity to network with established professionals, attend résumé building workshops and participate in mock job interviews. A fundamental component of ACSA is the mentorship program which aims to facilitate professional relationships between students and those already in the workforce.

First established in 1999, ACSA has seen an increase in the number of participants in the mentorship program with the exception of the last two years. The 2019/2020 cohort saw a total of 40 participants (20 mentors and 20 mentees) take part in the program; this represents a 50% decrease from the year prior which saw a total of 80 participants. The lack of social media promotion for the program combined with a lack of objectives for the mentors/mentees has contributed to the decline.

**Statement of Problem**

If current trends continue and the mentorship program finds that it cannot sustain itself, it will be difficult for ACSA to meet its objectives for providing students an opportunity to network and learn from established professionals. There are three major implications of this problem: one, ACSA may see a reduction in membership rates across the board if the mentorship program is no longer being offered; two, it will be more difficult for ACSA to request funding from AMS and the Arts Co-op Office in order to support the club; and three, students and professionals that wish to be part of a mentoring relationship will be denied the invaluable experience to do so.

**Proposed Solution**

One solution to increase recruitment may be to develop a strategic approach to online marketing. This would need to take into consideration that the target audience would be a combination of potential mentees and mentors. As more and more people are spending time online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this would be an opportunity for ACSA to explore creative ways that they could interact with those that may be a good fit for the mentorship program. The first step would be to outline clear objectives for the program and incorporate those objectives into tangible goals for the mentoring pairs. The second step would be to develop a robust social media presence. The third step would be to create promotional materials that would appeal to potential participants.

**Scope**

To assess the feasibility of developing a strategic marketing plan for promoting the mentorship program with the aim of recruiting more participants, I hope to pursue the following six areas of inquiry:

1. How many participants are there in the mentorship program for the 2020/2021 cohort in comparison to previous years?
2. What are the current social media statistics with regard to ACSA’s social media platforms? How much engagement (i.e. likes, comments) are posts relating to the mentorship program receiving?
3. What are students/people in the workforce looking for in a mentoring relationship? How can program incentives be marketed?
4. What feedback would previous mentees/mentors have for ACSA with respect to the mentorship program?
5. Is anything being done differently this year that would particularly benefit the participants? Is there anything that *can* be done differently?
6. Would an online marketing plan include any costs? How much time would be needed to create and implement a plan?

**Methods**

My primary data sources will include consultations with past and current ACSA executives. Additionally, I hope to implement oral surveys with former and current ACSA members that are connected to the mentoring program who may be able to shed light on challenges to recruitment that may not be visible to someone outside of the program. If applicable, I would reach out to the Arts Co-op Program to see if they could provide any insight into the low turnout rate.

Secondary sources would be publications about the effectiveness of online marketing strategies in recruitment for student-led activities. It may also be beneficial to also consult with past transition reports created by former ACSA executives leading the mentorship chair.

**My Qualifications**

As a former ACSA Mentorship Co-Chair, I have insider knowledge about the inner workings of the club and about how the mentorship program is facilitated. I am aware of some of the strengths and weaknesses of the program that were present when I co-facilitated the experience some time ago, giving me an advantage in seeking out a solution to the problem. As someone who benefitted greatly from their time working with ACSA, and being a current member of the Arts Co-op Program, I have a genuine interest in seeing both programs grow and flourish.

**Conclusion**

The goal of any organization whether big or small is to continue growing and providing good-quality service. In the case of the ACSA Mentorship Program, further action is needed to explore why participation numbers have steadily declined. By addressing the six areas of inquiry mentioned above, I can determine whether a strategic online marketing plan would reverse these trends. With your approval, I will proceed with next steps as soon as possible.