

# Thesis Proposal

---

Author: Drake Lambert

Date: 10/1/2018

## Description

When I first arrived at LSU, like my peers, I was overwhelmed with the amount of available opportunities and information that was being sent my way. It was difficult to sort through all of the stimulus to find the things that mattered to me, and it was hard to notice the small things that would end up having a large impact on my college career. Living in the East Laville dormitory for my first two years at LSU, I became aware that nearly all my peers faced the same challenge. We were all going to the seminars, reading the newsletters, attending supplemental instruction, scouring emails, and trying to squeeze advice out of professors, but we still all couldn't find quite the right answers.

During my first semester, I was fortunate to get an on campus job working at with the Network Engineering & Architecture Department. Though the technical challenge of the experience was rewarding, I consider the mentors I met there to have been the most important aspect of job. My mentors were my coworkers; they were nearly all seniors in Computer Science, my own major.

As I worked through my first semester, I always had my coworkers to help me through the tough decisions: scheduling, housing, parking, career preparation, study habits, etc. Due to the fact that I worked with so many welcoming people, I could always find someone who had the knowledge to help me on whatever quest challenged me that week. With their help, I was able to take advantage of more programs LSU offered, make more friends, get a jump on my studies, explore career options, and so much more.

One of the greatest things I got from my coworkers was inspiration. I saw that others were facing the same challenges I was: being lost in a sea of information. I got to experience people giving their time to solve my problems, and I wanted to do the same.

Starting sophomore year, but really gaining steam in junior year, I began to look for any opportunity to support my peers at a one-on-one scale. I paid attention to the people brave enough to ask older peers for help, read and answered the questions posted on social media, volunteered to tutor for free, and went out of my way to make myself available for those who needed it. The best part was, I loved doing it!

Over time, I learned that there was nothing as valuable as having a person who had walked a path similar to yours, and who was willing to share their experience. We call those people mentors. They don't have to be professionals, over thirty-five, or even have to have succeeded. They just need to be willing to share.

I want to use my passion for technology to help every student at LSU find their mentors.

## Plan

I plan to tackle this challenge in the format of a design project. The final product will be some arbitrary service that students can use to connect with the most relevant mentors.

This project will be as much of a business challenge as a technological challenge. My aim is not only to build the solution, but also engage a large number of students with the goal of the project outliving my time at

LSU.

The tentative steps to the completion of the project are below. I am currently on step two.

1. Gather relevant information from LSU mentor organizations. An example organization is the Society of Peer Mentors.
  - How do you find students to mentor?
  - How do you match mentors with students?
  - What type of contact do mentors have with students (email, phone, in person)?
  - How long do students stay in contact with mentors?
  - Do mentors get any rewards for volunteering?
2. Gather relevant information on similar online platforms not necessarily related to LSU. An example service is [www.Score.org](http://www.Score.org).
3. Gather relevant information from the target audience: students.
  - How do you find answers for your questions regarding:
    - coursework
    - physical health
    - mental health
    - careers
    - hobbies
    - etc
  - Have you ever been mentored?
    - If so, did it help you, and how?
  - Would you be interested in the proposed service?
4. Gather relevant information from those who would be interested in being a mentor.
  - How much time would you commit to being a mentor?
  - How would you describe what topics you would like to mentor on?
  - Would you be a mentor without compensation?
5. Define use cases / user stories for the service.
  - How will users use the service from both a mentor and mentoree standpoint.
6. Design the software architecture for the service.
  - Will the service be a:
    - Web service
    - Phone app
    - Web site
  - How will the service be hosted?
7. Design the software itself.
  - Use visual modeling to describe the domain of the project.
8. Implement the software design in code.
9. Test the design with users.
  - If issues are present, go back to step 7.
  - If no issues are found, move on.
10. Make the service public.
11. Find avenues for promoting the service.
  - LSU organizations
  - Introduction courses filled with freshmen
12. Promote the service.

- Using promotional items
  - Using promotional activities
  - Newsletters
13. Continuously improve the mentor and mentoree experience
- Use feedback from users
  - Constantly integrate new features
  - Constantly polish old features
14. Investigate ways for the service to transcend myself.
- The service needs to be able to operate without me to ensure that it will really make a difference for students in the long run.
15. Hand off project to the relevant party.
- Ideally this would be LSU, but it could also be a group of people who have the same vision as I do.

## Significance

I am a Computer Science major concentrating on Cloud Computing. I have been working in web service development since my freshman year. Since then, the thing that I am most confident that I have learned so far, is that I will never have enough experience. I want to use this project to not only challenge myself technologically, but also use it to develop my product marketing skills and my user interaction skills.

I am passionate about designing solutions to real world problems. I want this project to be part of my expression of giving back to my community. I still haven't quite determined if I enjoy the technological design more or the internal reward I feel for making a positive difference in others' lives. I do know that wrapping them both up into one project gets me very excited!

## Expenses

Item	Cost
A domain name (such as lsu.edu)	\$12/year
Web hosting (2 virtual machines)	\$300/year
Promotional Items (Flyers, T-shirts, etc)	\$200
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$512</b>

Costs should be considered for the first year only.