

Instructions for Mentors

Welcome, Mentors

Thank you for serving as a mentor in AREC 224: *Introduction to Agribusiness Entrepreneurship*! This course would not be what it is without your time, experience, and presence. You'll help students gain real-world insight into entrepreneurship by sharing your story, offering feedback, and encouraging their growth.

This guide outlines your role, the timeline, and how to prepare.

Your Role

You'll be paired with a small group of students (a “pod”) who will:

- Interview you in a student-produced podcast (recorded on campus)
- Prepare a business case concept based on your story
- Present the business case concept at the end-of-semester competition (think of this as a “story-telling” event about your entrepreneurial journey—framed around a real dilemma or decision point that students explored and built into a formal case study).

As a mentor, you will:

- **Be interviewed** (Week 4–6) for a 30–40 min podcast episode. We'll provide sample questions and a recording studio.
- **Meet with your pod twice** during the semester to provide feedback and guidance.
- **Attend the final case competition and networking event** during Week 15 (2-hour event).

Timeline of Activities

The course runs from **August 25 to December 14, 2025**, and follows a weekly schedule. Weeks are numbered based on the academic calendar. You can refer to the [Course Schedule](#) for specific dates associated with each week.

The table below outlines major milestones involving mentor-student engagement, along with expectations for both mentors and students.

Week	Activity	Mentor Action	Student Role
1	Course Launch	–	Students begin learning about case studies, podcasting, and interviewing
2	Initial Contact	Respond to students' outreach and confirm an intro meeting time	Initiate contact with mentor and schedule an intro meeting (virtual or in-person)

Week	Activity	Mentor Action	Student Role
3–4	First Pod Meeting	Join 30–45 min check-in; share background and answer questions	Conduct first pod meeting; prepare questions and document key insights
4–6	Podcast Interview	Attend a 30–40 min recorded podcast session at CSU studio	Host and produce podcast episode featuring mentor’s story
8	Mid-Semester Feedback	Submit short feedback form for each student in your pod	Receive and reflect on mentor feedback for E-IDP refinement
12–13	Second Pod Meeting	Join second 30–45 min check-in; provide guidance on business case direction	Present progress on business concept and solicit mentor input
15	Final Competition	Attend and watch student presentations; submit final feedback form	Present final business case inspired by mentor story

We’ll coordinate scheduling via email and provide reminders.

Preparing for Your Interview

The podcast interview will be student-led and conversational. You don’t need to prepare a script, but here are suggested prompts they may explore:

- What problem did you set out to solve?
- What was your “aha” moment—or was it gradual?
- What challenges did you face early on?
- What business model did you choose and why?
- How did you define success?
- What advice would you give your younger self?
- How do you see your business evolving?

You’re welcome to share lessons, numbers, pivots, and surprises—anything that brings your story to life.

Supporting Your Pod

You’ll meet your student group twice—once mid-semester and once as they prepare for final case presentations. These are informal 30–45 minute virtual or in-person sessions.

Students may ask for your perspective on:

- Customer needs
- Market trends
- Growth strategies
- Communication and branding
- Your feedback on their evolving business idea

You don’t need to “grade” anything—your role is to guide, challenge, and encourage.

About the E-IDP

Each student is building an [Entrepreneurial Individual Development Plan \(E-IDP\)](#) throughout the semester. This plan helps them reflect on and strengthen key entrepreneurial skills—ranging from creativity and persistence to opportunity recognition and team leadership.

At **Week 8**, we'll ask you to submit a short feedback form (3 questions) based on your interactions so far. This is not an evaluation—it's a chance to offer encouragement and suggestions for growth. We'll ask for a second round of feedback after the final case presentations in **Week 15**.

Your perspective helps make this learning experience more real and more personal for each student.

Final Case Competition

At the end of the semester, students will present their business concepts (inspired by your story) in a class-wide competition. You'll be invited to attend as a guest and cheer them on.

Save the Date:

Thursday, December 11, 2025

5:00–7:00 p.m.

Nutrien Building, Room 135 (Colorado State University)

Expect lively presentations, creative ideas, and some light refreshments.

[Add to Outlook Calendar \(.ics\)](#)

Click the link above to download and open the calendar invite.

[View Case Competition Assignment](#) to see what they're expected to prepare.

Travel Reimbursement

If you travel to Fort Collins to participate in the podcast interview or final case competition, we can reimburse you for travel-related expenses.

Eligible expenses may include:

- Mileage (based on standard CSU reimbursement rates)
- Parking costs
- Meals

To process a reimbursement, you'll need to complete a CSU vendor request form. Please let us know in advance if you plan to request reimbursement so we can set you up in the system and provide the necessary paperwork.

Be sure to save any receipts for expenses you'd like reimbursed.

Questions?

Please reach out anytime to:

Lauren Chenarides

lauren.chenarides@colostate.edu Colorado State University, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics

Thank you again—we're so grateful to have you join us.