

# Welcome, Mentors!

Thank you for serving as a mentor in *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.

[View the Mentor Cohort, Class of 2025!](#)

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

## Video Walkthrough

In this video, I walk you through the course website, giving an overview of the semester.

<https://youtu.be/X-hhXjtMr2A>

## What is Your Role as a Mentor?

At the start of the semester, you'll be matched with a small group (or, "pod") of at most four students.

Your interactions with your pod will directly inform several major assignments throughout the course. By getting to know you and learning from your journey, students will complete the following:

- Interview you in a student-produced podcast (recorded on campus)
- Develop a business case concept based on your experience, including a real dilemma or decision point
- Present the case at the end-of-semester competition *Think of this as a storytelling event—your entrepreneurial journey becomes the foundation for a formal case study that students analyze, refine, and present as a team.*

Your story, insights, and challenges will serve as inspiration and real-world context for their learning.

## What is the Time Commitment?

As a mentor, we ask that you engage with your student pod at four key points during the semester:

- (1) Introductory Meeting (Weeks 2–3) A casual 30–45 minute meeting to get to know your pod, share your background, and hear about students' interests.
- (2) Podcast Interview (Weeks 4–6) Join your pod in a 30–40 minute recorded interview at CSU's podcast studio. We'll provide sample questions and handle logistics.
- (3) Pod Check-ins (Mid-semester and pre-finals) Meet with your pod twice more—once mid-semester and again before the final presentation. Each check-in is 30–45 minutes and can be virtual or in person.

- (4) Final Case Competition & Networking Event (Week 16) Attend our two-hour end-of-semester event where students present their business cases inspired by your story. Enjoy light refreshments and connect with other mentors, students, and faculty.

We also welcome additional engagement if your schedule allows—this could include site visits, virtual Q&A, or informal chats. If you're open to hosting a visit (by your pod or even the full class), please let us know and we'll help coordinate.

## Timeline of Activities

The course runs from **August 25 to December 14, 2025**, and follows a weekly schedule.

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

Table 1: Feel free to visit the [Course Schedule](#) to check out what the students will be learning each week.

| Week  | Dates         | Activity              | Mentor Action   | Student Role   |
|-------|---------------|-----------------------|---|--|
| 1     | Aug 25–29     | Course Launch         | –   | Students begin learning about case studies, podcasting, and interviewing |
| 2     | Sep 1–5       | Initial Contact       | Respond to students' outreach and confirm an intro meeting time             | Initiate contact with mentor and schedule an intro meeting               |
| 3–4   | Sep 8–19      | First Pod Meeting     | Join 30–45 min check-in; share background and answer questions              | Conduct first pod meeting; prepare questions and document key insights   |
| 4–9   | Sep 15–Oct 31 | Podcast Interview     | Attend a 30–40 min recorded podcast session at CSU studio                   | Host and produce podcast episode featuring mentor's story                |
| 10    | Oct 27–31     | 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 | Nov 10–21     | 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            |
| 16    | Dec 11        | 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.

## Save the Date: 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.

## FAQs

### How Can You Prepare for Your Podcast 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.

### How Can You Support Your Pod?

After your introductory meeting, 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.

### Guiding Student Growth: Your Role in 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 7**, 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 16**.

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

## How Can You Submit for 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.

## Other Questions?

Please reach out anytime to:

**Lauren Chenarides**

[lauren.chenarides@colostate.edu](mailto: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.