



UNITED ADWORKERS



UNITED ADWORKERS 2025-2026

FOSTERSHIP PROGRAM KIT

A Guide for Mentors & Mentees

INTRODUCING THE FOSTERSHIP.

The United Adworkers Fostership program is a year-long mentorship experience pairing professionals with students pursuing careers in our industry.

These careers range from the wide variety of positions within an agency to adjacent fields such as photography, videography, illustration and production. The program is sustainable, flexible and valuable for both mentor and mentee, with just enough structure to make the relationship meaningful, without becoming overwhelming.

PROGRAM GOALS

- Help students build networks, gain confidence and understand how things work in the real world
- Foster lasting and meaningful industry relationships
- Offer professionals a structured, low-stress way to give back
- Strengthen ties between United Adworkers, industry professionals and local schools



WHY THE NAME FOSTERSHIP?

**'FOSTERING'
IMPLIES A DEEPER
CONNECTION
THAN MENTORING
AND ENCOURAGES
STRONGER
COMMITMENTS.**

ROLES & EXPECTATIONS

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Mentors

- Show up with openness and curiosity
- Share your experience and feedback honestly
- Respect the mentee's time and capacity
- Be consistent—even when the schedule is casual
- Show, don't just tell

Mentees

- Take initiative to keep communication flowing
- Be prepared with questions or topics to explore
- Be open to feedback, even when it's tough
- Respect your mentor's time and boundaries
- Say thank you often

TIME COMMITMENT

Our Fostership Program runs for a full school year, including the Fall and Spring semesters.

- Mentors: ~1 hour/month
- Mentees: ~1–2 hours/month



MONTHLY FRAMEWORK

These are suggested guidelines, not rules. Make it your own.

OCTOBER

Kickoff Event & Introductions

Get to know each other and goal setting.

NOVEMBER

Portfolio Review Pt. 1

Review current work. Give thoughtful feedback and help set a direction.

DECEMBER

Social Celebrations

Attend a holiday party and/or social event together.

JANUARY

Creative Challenge

Tackle a short brief together or work side-by-side on a fun project.

FEBRUARY

The 99, Feedback & Growth

Attend The 99 together. Discuss progress, roadblocks, and goals thus far.

MARCH

Portfolio Review Pt. 2

Check-in on portfolio & resume evolution

APRIL

Reflection & Prep

Talk about next steps (internships, jobs, etc.)

MAY

Closing Event & Showcase

Share wins, optionally present work at event

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

BE PRESENT.

There's no "grading" in this program. No mandatory outcomes. No checklists that make or break the experience. If you leave this program feeling seen, heard and inspired, that's success.

Here's what success can look like:

- A student walks into an interview with more confidence
- A mentor re-engages with the passion that brought them to this field
- A new connection is made that lasts beyond the program
- A great question leads to a conversation that shifts someone's perspective



FOSTERSHIP KICKOFF

We're starting this journey with a relaxed, in-person kickoff designed to help mentors and mentees connect in a meaningful way.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Meet your mentor or mentee face-to-face
- Light guided activities to break the ice
- Group welcome from the United Adworkers Board
- Time to talk through goals and set your first check-in

WHAT TO BRING

Mentors:

- A few stories or talking points about your creative journey
- Openness and curiosity
- *Recommended: a pen and a notebook*

Mentees:

- A piece of work you're proud of (digital or print)
- Questions you've been wanting to ask someone in the industry
- *Recommended: a pen and a notebook*

YOUR FIRST CONVERSATION

We'll provide a printed prompt card at the event with these to help you get started:

- What drew you to your creative field?
- What's something that's inspired you lately?
- What would make this mentorship meaningful for you?
- What's one thing you want to work on this year?



PROMPTS

This relationship is what you make it. Start with intention. There's no wrong way to connect.

You can meet virtually, co-work, swap playlists, review resumes, talk about imposter syndrome or watch a YouTube case study together.

Need Help Starting a Conversation? Use These.

- What's a project you've worked on that you're really proud of?
- What's something you're struggling with in your creative process right now?
- What surprised you most about working in this industry?
- How do you handle creative blocks?
- What do you wish someone had told you when you were starting out?
- Where do you want to be in 5 years—and what's one step you can take now?

Helpful Tools & Platforms

- Video Calls: Google Meet, Zoom, FaceTime
- Portfolio Sharing: Google Drive, Notion, Behance, Adobe Portfolio or Website of choice
- Asynchronous Check-Ins: Email, Slack, Voxer (voice messages) or Loom (video messages)
- Scheduling: Calendly, Google Calendar, Outlook Calendar

Tips for Success

- Schedule your next meeting before ending the current one
- Keep it casual, but consistent
- Ask questions, not just for answers—but for connection
- Follow up with gratitude. Always.

MENTORS: GIVING FEEDBACK

FEEDBACK & DELIVERY MATTERS

In creative work—and especially in mentorship—feedback is fuel. It helps us see blind spots, grow stronger, and build work we're proud of. But for feedback to be effective, it has to be constructive, respectful and mutual.

The way feedback is given and received can make or break the experience.

SHARED FRAMEWORK: THE CCF METHOD

A simple structure to follow in any critique:
Compliment → Critique → Forward Direction

Example:

"I love how concise your writing is. One area to tighten might be the headline. It feels a little vague right now. Maybe try making it more benefit-driven to hook people faster."

FEEDBACK IS A TWO-WAY STREET

Mentors—ask your mentees for feedback, too.

- "Is this format working for you?"
- "Do you feel like you're getting what you need from our time together?"

Creating a space for open dialogue builds trust and better work.

GIVING FEEDBACK THAT BUILDS CONFIDENCE & CLARITY

1. Ask Permission First

This gives the mentee agency and sets the tone. Instead of jumping right in with critique, try:

- *"Would you like feedback on the concept, the craft, or both?"*
- *"Can I share some thoughts on this piece?"*

2. Lead With What's Working

Start with something specific you genuinely like.

- *"This layout is clean and confident—it shows a strong sense of hierarchy."*
- *"I can tell you really thought about the target audience in this concept."*

3. Offer Insight, Not Just Opinion

Move beyond "I don't like it" by explaining why.

- *"This color might feel off because it clashes with the tone of the brand."*
- *"This copy could land better if it spoke more directly to the pain point."*

4. Ask Questions, Don't Just Deliver Edits

Great mentors are also great coaches. Try:

- *"What were you trying to communicate here?"*
- *"How do you feel about this piece compared to your earlier work?"*

5. End With Encouragement or Direction

Feedback should make someone want to keep going, not quit and shut down.

- *"You're heading in a great direction—try pushing the concept a little further next round."*
- *"This shows real growth. Keep building from here."*

MENTEES: RECEIVING FEEDBACK

FEEDBACK & GROWTH GO HAND-IN-HAND

Getting feedback on your creative work can be vulnerable, but it's also one of the most important skills you can develop as a student and future professional.

The way you receive, reflect on, and apply feedback will shape how quickly you grow and how well you collaborate. This program is your space to practice receiving feedback with openness, curiosity, and confidence.

YOU'RE ALLOWED TO FEEL THINGS

It's totally normal to feel a little nervous, defensive, or even disappointed when receiving critique. That's okay. What matters is how you respond once those feelings show up.

- Take a breath.
- Listen all the way through.
- Ask questions if something's unclear.
- Reflect before reacting.

YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO HAVE IT ALL FIGURED OUT

That's why you're here. You're learning. You're exploring. You're doing the hard (and rewarding) work of becoming a creative professional. Getting critique on your work can be tough, but it's one of the fastest ways to improve.

RECEIVING FEEDBACK WITH OPENNESS & OWNERSHIP

1. Listen First, React Later

It's normal to feel a little defensive when someone critiques your work. But pause, breathe, and let them finish. You can always reflect later.

2. Ask Clarifying Questions

If something isn't clear, it's okay to ask for more.

- "Could you explain what you mean by 'more contrast'?"
- "Can you give an example of how you might approach this differently?"

3. Don't Take It Personally. Take It Professionally.

Critique is about the work, not about you. You're not expected to get everything right the first time. That's why you're here.

4. Decide What to Use and What to Let Go

Not all feedback will resonate, and that's okay. Take what's helpful. Leave what doesn't align with your goals or values.

5. Show Gratitude

Always thank your mentor, even if the feedback is tough. They're showing up for you and that deserves acknowledgment.

MAKE IT A TWO-WAY CONVERSATION

Feedback isn't a one-sided lecture, it's a dialogue.

Ask your mentor:

- "What would you have done differently?"
- "How do you usually handle situations like this?"
- "Can you show me an example of what you mean?"

That curiosity will serve you far beyond this program.

FOSTERSHIP PROGRAM 2025-2026

PROGRAM CLOSE & CELEBRATION

To celebrate everything you've created, learned, and shared, we'll be hosting a Closing Showcase.

MENTORS & MENTEES ARE ENCOURAGED TO SHARE

- A favorite piece of work from the year
- A personal reflection
- Or simply what this program has meant to them



FOSTERSHIP PROGRAM 2025-2026

WE'RE HERE FOR YOU.

HAVE QUESTIONS, SCHEDULING ISSUES, OR WANT TO SHARE A WIN?

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