

# Weekly EMP Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 2, 2022



CLAUDE AND BETTY LOU LAVAL  
ENTREPRENEUR  
MENTOR  
PROGRAM

**The Road to Success Starts with Finding a Mentor!**

by

**Bencherlie Long – Presiding Mentee**

The foundation of the Laval Entrepreneurship Mentor Program is the Mentor/Mentee relationship. Since 2005, over 100 community leaders have participated as mentors in the program. Our mentors are committed to working with the mentees selected for the cohort due to the mentee's eagerness to build entrepreneurial skills and mindset as well as the desire to put in the effort to construct meaningful mentor/mentee relationships.

Our students come from a variety of backgrounds with diverse career aspirations. Mentees are matched with community leaders (Mentors) based on their unique backgrounds and experience. It is not unusual for the mentor relationship to go far beyond the college years. **Claude Laval**, co-founder, and sponsor of the program advised the mentees that he has been an EMP mentor for 19 years. He has had a range of mentees who needed support for different reasons and in diverse ways. "I stay in contact with all of those I have mentored, including the first mentee I mentored 19 years ago!"

We started our second session over lunch hosted by Mentee **Maria Dominguez** and **John Petrogonas**. Delicious enchiladas, beans & rice from Me n Martha's in Dinuba- 505 E Tulare St. (one of Maria's favorite local spots!) coupled with lively and energetic table talk made for a great start to our Friday session.

After lunch, **Mendy Laval** kicked off the meeting by describing the importance of the EMP Mentor/Mentee relationship and why it differs from other mentor-type relationships. The role of an EMP mentor is to actively listen to the mentee's needs and give them the time and space to explore his/her solutions. Cultivating a successful mentor-mentee relationship takes time and dedication; however, it is worth the investment. Before turning the discussion over to the panelists, Mendy reminded the mentees to look at Section 4 of their EMP Workbooks which includes valuable information about the Mentor/Mentee relationship. It also contains a worksheet that the mentee can use in preparation for his/her first meeting.



Luncheon Hosts John Petrogonas  
and Maria Dominguez



Our panelists for this session were **Caren Myers** (Mentor), **Mario Soberal** (Mentor), **Leon Dermenjian** (Mentor), **Alli Villines** (Fresno State & EMP Alum), **Justin Levine** (Fresno State & EMP Alum), and current veteran mentees **Bencherlie Long** and **Marin Winek**. The panel's objective was to discuss the mentor/mentee relationship from various perspectives: Current Mentors, EMP Alums (the value received and how it currently impacts their journey), and current veteran mentees (how they started their mentee/mentor journey last semester).

Our panelists covered a lot of ground during this valuable conversation. but several takeaways about how to get the most out of the relationship stood out in particular:

- Every mentor/mentee relationship is different as each individual has their own perspectives and unique circumstances. However, one common thread with all Mentor/Mentee relationships is that you get what you put in. Establishing a positive Mentor/Mentee relationship is very much like establishing any other human relationship: It requires both parties to have a genuine desire to understand the values and expectations of each other.
- There is value in building a network of mentors who can help you grow in different aspects of your life.
- Set goals, both short and long-term. Putting some definition behind what you want to get out of your mentor/mentee relationship is one of the keys to making it successful over time.
- Exchange stories: Ask your Mentor his/her story and share yours! Share what you want, how you want to be, and how you want to challenge yourself and engage with your mentors.
- Use a calendar! (hand-written or electronic...it doesn't matter....as long as you use it!) Calendar appointments early on with your mentor. Everyone is busy, so getting a regular date on the calendar will help to ensure you have regular meetings. How often depends on you and your mentor. A calendar of any sort is critical to time management.
- Be on time! Don't cancel appointments unless it is necessary. Communicate effectively but determine the best mode of communication mutually--email, text, phone. Be respectful in everything you do--being on time and communicating well shows respect.
- Listening is also critical; according to all panelists, Absorb everything your mentor has to say and take notes of what you think is essential. It might not appear at first that it is relevant to you as a mentee, but try and apply the knowledge to your specific circumstance. After active listening, ask lots of questions!
- Veteran (2nd Semester Mentees) Bencherlie Long and Marin Winek shared their thoughts after experiencing the establishment of the mentee/mentor relationship. Marin emphasized building solid relationships with your mentors during your first semesters and concentrating on growing that relationship in the second semester. Bencherlie mentioned that he plans to reach out to other EMP Mentors this semester and concentrate on deepening his relationship with his current mentors.

After our mentor/mentee session, we turned to a new topic led by **Justin Levine** on the “Power of Gratitude.” Justin is a Fresno State and EMP Alum, Lead EMP Mentee, Launchpad Intern, and Founder of LEVRA, a company that helps athletes reach their highest playing potential by providing unique and innovative training tools that make their training more effective and more efficient.



Justin learned the importance of the “thank you note” as an EMP Mentee. Justin described why a “thank you note is more than a formality; it’s an opportunity to show gratitude, but it can sometimes create an opportunity to further a connection and make an excellent impression. Many people underrate the value of a personal note.” Justin shared many stories illustrating the impact a simple thank you can have. He has even incorporated them into every order he ships of his new product, LEVRA. According to Justin, “showing gratitude and sincere appreciation is an important leadership skill” He explained that he would continue to use this skill as he continues to grow as a professional

-----

We sincerely thank everyone that participated in this important session. We are anxious to get started building relationships with our mentors and continuing the ones started last semester.

### **Mentee's Favorite Quotes from Session 2**

- "It does not get easier; YOU get better!" Benchderlie Long, Presiding EMP Mentee
- "Listen without defending. Speak without offending!" Leon Dermenjian
- "The first meeting is very important. It is essential to come prepared and set the tone for the relationship. Speak candidly about what you hope to achieve in the relationship." Claude Laval
- "Come prepared by doing your research. There is tons of information on mentors. They have accomplished so much. Find out what your mentor's brand is before your first meeting. Understand them. Create a profile. Come with questions". -Mario Sobral
- "It takes time and effort to build a foundation. Mentees drive the relationship. Mentors are here to help you have a big head start in life." Justin Levine
- "Like a friendship, creating a mentor/mentee relationship requires trust and support. An element of friendship is always present in mentoring. We are human beings who need each other. I know that sometimes a mentee just needs a friend." Alli Villines
- "Build relationships by giving, not just taking." Caren Myers
- "If you want to do something, you can't say something is too complicated, or else you will never be able to do it. Instead, decide what your priorities are and work from there." Mario Soberal
- "Find a point of intersection in what you love and what you do best." Leon Dermenjian.
- "Tell me something about what you do. The delivery of what you say will make a difference," Caren Myers