Report and Feedback from Attendance of Alumni Mentorship April 8, 2026

The Mentorship and Career Insights Forum organized by ISACA UON provided practical guidance on transitioning from academic life into the professional world. A key takeaway was that soft skills are just as important as technical skills. While technical knowledge forms the basis of competence, abilities such as communication, teamwork and adaptability are what distinguish individuals in real work environments.

The session emphasized that true learning begins in the industry. Although school provides the necessary foundation, it cannot fully replicate real-world experiences. Students were encouraged to actively seek exposure beyond the classroom to better understand workplace expectations and challenges.

Another important lesson was the value of open-mindedness, especially at the early stages of one's career. Being receptive to new ideas, feedback, and different career paths enables growth and helps individuals discover opportunities they might not have initially considered.

Participants were also encouraged to be daring and step outside their comfort zones. Challenging oneself - whether by taking on difficult tasks, pursuing new roles, or exploring unfamiliar fields - was highlighted as essential for both personal and professional development.

Finally, confidence was identified as a critical factor for success. Beyond having skills, one must be able to present and demonstrate them effectively. Displaying confidence allows individuals to communicate their value clearly and make a stronger impression in professional settings.

Overall, the forum reinforced that success is a combination of technical ability, soft skills, real-world exposure and the confidence to apply and showcase one's capabilities.

BCJ

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1. Soft skills are just as important as Technical skills: The typical view of a computer scientist is someone who sits in a corner by themselves coding softwares, the alumnus stressed that skills such as communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and the ability to receive and apply feedback are what truly differentiate outstanding professionals from the rest.
2. Embrace AI: AI makes a skilled engineer 10x more effective.The key is to use it to accelerate genuine understanding and not using it as a shortcut to complete tasks.Those who use AI without understanding the hidden gaps in the system, one day the system fails and there is no AI context that can save them.
3. Building projects: Building projects as Comp Science student is the main way you prove that I can actually do things, not just understand the theory. It not only builds a strong portfolio it also shows the interviewer how I think.
4. Attending tech events: The session also highlighted the importance of attending tech events such as hackathons, alumni meetups, and conferences. These events provide valuable networking opportunities, allowing students to connect with developers, recruiters, and industry professionals. Such connections can lead to internships, mentorship, and job opportunities.
5. Putting yourself out there: It's better to apply for a role that I may think is too out of reach for me than never applying for the role to begin with. The alumnus emphasized that rejection should be viewed as a learning experience, helping individuals identify skill gaps, improve their CVs, and better understand industry expectations.

   BKK

At the ISACA mentorship session at the University of Nairobi, four speakers shared their experiences in the tech industry, including two co-founders of Bill Buddys. The session was very insightful and gave a practical view of what to expect after campus.

One of the main takeaways was the difference between working in startups and corporate environments. The speakers explained that startups usually involve more work and responsibility, but they allow you to learn faster and see your work being implemented quickly. On the other hand, corporate roles help build professionalism, especially in areas like communication, structure and public speaking.

They also emphasized the importance of applying for as many opportunities as possible. According to them, getting internships or jobs is largely a numbers game, and being consistent with applications increases your chances of success.

Overall, the session encouraged me to be proactive, open to different work environments, and intentional about building both technical and soft skills.

VG

My key take-aways were teamwork and confidence are key. This meant that soft skills were just as important as coding skills. Being ambitious was also nonetheless important! You have to try out with these attachments everywhere, take that risk, take that chance to dive into the world unknown. Develop your data structure and algorithm skills using stack overflow and leetcode since they are compulsory for almost every interview.

Furthermore, it is better to join a startup company for your first job or internship as it enables you to enhance your soft skills , rather than joining a developed company which is likely to diminish your hard earned skills.

Last but not least, what you learn in school sometimes may not apply in the real world but it gives you a solid foundation of a place to start and boost yourself from.

Finally, the elephant in the room, AI should be used to your advantage to hone your skills to be sharper and more precise. Move beyond it, enhance it, embrace it for the world is moving towards that direction so ensure you are moving with it too.

AO

The ISACA alumni meeting was an incredibly enriching experience, and I left with perspectives that I believe will genuinely shape how I approach my career.

The session covered a broad range of invaluable ground. A recurring theme was the importance of developing a well-rounded professional profile — one that balances strong technical knowledge with equally important soft skills and interpersonal abilities. The alumni were emphatic that technical competence alone is rarely what distinguishes candidates; the ability to communicate, collaborate, and navigate workplace relationships often proves just as decisive.

One of the highlights for me was the practical guidance on salary negotiation during a first job offer — a topic rarely addressed in the classroom. The advice to anchor negotiations in current market data rather than personal expectations was particularly eye-opening. This naturally tied into the broader point about maintaining awareness of industry trends and the job market, which the group stressed as an ongoing responsibility, not a one-time exercise.

The emphasis on networking through professional events was equally compelling. It was made clear that opportunities frequently arise through relationships built long before a job search begins, and that alumni communities like ISACA are precisely the kind of circles worth cultivating early.
EP

The Mentorship and Career Insights Forum organized by ISACA Student Group UON, where four alumni, alongside Najma (President) and Priscilla (Vice President), shared their journeys from university into industry.
I took detailed notes and wanted to share the key lessons I learned: -

- **Academic vs. Industry Gap:**What we learn in school is foundational, but industry requires adaptability. Alumni highlighted that tools and platforms evolve quickly (WordPress, Groupworld, Google, Stack Overflow), and students must bridge the gap between theory and practice.
- **Skills Emphasis:** Critical thinking, problem-solving, and fast decision-making are as important as technical skills. Alumni stressed investing in both technical (Windows/Linux servers, cloud platforms like Microsoft Azure and AWS) and non-technical skills (communication, networking, relationship-building).
- **Career Journeys:** Each alumnus had a unique path—ranging from theoretical physicist and reverse engineering to telecom, project engineering, financial service engineering, prompt engineering, software engineering etc. Some discovered their fit through attachments and internships, realizing what environments suited them best.
- **Practical Advice for Students:**

➔ Position yourself gradually and invest in relationships.
➔ Focus on fundamentals of computer science and hands-on skills (projects, GitHub, hackathons).
➔ Use AI as an enabler, not a shortcut—understand the core concepts deeply. One alumnus compared it to choosing the elevator over the stairs: you can use AI for assignments to explain steps and learn deeper, saving time to focus on other things.
➔ Be disciplined, avoid distractions, and remain productive.
➔ Network actively and apply widely, even if opportunities seem out of reach.
➔ Be fluid and adaptable—careers can be deliberate or discovered after school, but passion and persistence matter.(There's nothing in tech that goes obsolete)

- **Industry Insights:**

➔ Big tech vs. startups: startups offer fast-paced learning, while big tech may have slower processes but broader exposure.
➔ Interviews: focus on two programming languages you're comfortable with, demonstrate problem-solving with DSA while keeping in mind about the time allocated, explain thought processes to allow the interviewers to know what is going through your head, and show confidence.
➔ Negotiation: defer salary ranges and focus on value.

- **Mindset Shifts:** Alumni encouraged us to cut out noise - for example AI replacing computer science, step into unfamiliar spaces with confidence, and always return to the fundamentals of computer science. One key message was to have the audacity to step into places we aren't comfortable in, because that's how we get exposed to more opportunities and grow. They reminded us that computer science is more than coding - it's about solving real-world problems and evolving with the industry.

Listening to their experiences, and seeing Najma and Priscilla lead the session, gave me a clearer perspective on how to align my studies with industry expectations. It motivated me to be intentional about developing both technical and soft skills, while remaining adaptable to change.
Thank you for encouraging us to attend such forums. They are truly eye-opening and inspiring.
SO

The session highlighted the gap between classroom learning and real-world application of computer science. While academic environments focus on structured problems, theoretical concepts, and individual performance, the real world demands practical problem-solving, adaptability, and collaboration in complex, unpredictable situations.

A major takeaway was the importance of going beyond the classroom. Lectures provide a foundation, but they are not sufficient for industry readiness. Students are expected to take initiative by exploring additional resources, learning new tools, and staying updated with evolving technologies.

The alumni emphasized the need to build a strong personal brand through projects. Instead of relying solely on grades, students should develop real-world projects that demonstrate practical skills. Platforms like GitHub play a crucial role in this process by allowing students to showcase their work, track progress, and present a portfolio to potential employers.

In addition to technical expertise, the session stressed the importance of developing soft skills. Communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability are essential in professional environments where collaboration and clear interaction are key.

AO

The session was informative

The greatest lesson being that what the university teaches us is enough and we should not be worried about the field since you will acquire practical skills as you progress.

SO

The session was highly insightful, and I found the advice shared by the speakers to be valuable for both our current academic environment and our future careers.

Here are the takeaways from the session:

1. **Seize Opportunities:** It is important to actively apply for and embrace new opportunities as they arise.
2. **Project Confidence:** Maintaining self-assurance during interviews is essential for making a strong impression
3. **Master the Fundamentals:** Being deeply comfortable with Data Structures and Algorithms (DSA) and other fundamentals.
4. **Focus on Problem-Solving:** The industry requires us to think beyond just writing code. The core focus should always be on problem-solving
5. **Leverage Startups for Growth:** Startups provide an unmatched environment for building and refining a skill set.
6. **Maintain Ambition:** Staying ambitious is necessary for long-term career growth.
7. **Connect academics to the Workplace:** Work life directly relates to school life, as our current education builds the foundational concepts needed for industry success
8. **Prioritize Soft Skills:** Interpersonal and soft skills are critical, often proving even more important than purely technical abilities.
9. **Persevere:** The professional journey is long, but embracing the process and staying dedicated ensures we will eventually reap the fruits of our labor.

Thank you for organizing such a practical and motivating session. I look forward to applying these lessons to my own professional development.

RW

The session started with the mentors explaining the different career paths they have followed, and later they compared working in startups and big companies when a student asked about it. Among the many points they shared, my key takeaway was that in startups, you get to learn a lot and gain hands-on experience because you are involved in many tasks and your code is reviewed often. In contrast, big companies often have structured processes, and it may take a long time, sometimes even a year, for your code or ideas to be reviewed and implemented. However, working in a big company is definitely valuable for your CV, since you get to contribute to well-known projects that are recognized in the industry.

Additionally, I learned many useful tips for building my career and preparing for interviews. One key point was about handling coding interviews, especially DSA (Data Structures and Algorithms) questions. It is important to focus first on understanding the logic of a problem and how to solve it, then explain the time and space complexity. Even if you cannot write the full code, showing your thought process clearly is what matters. Being confident, even when you don't know the exact answer, is very important.

Another important lesson from the event was about handling questions on salary expectations. We were advised never to give an exact figure during an interview, because we might end up understating our value. Instead, it is better to politely defer the question and say that you would like to discuss compensation after receiving an official offer. This approach ensures that you have a clearer idea of the role and benefits before committing to a number, and it also shows professionalism and confidence in your worth.

The event also emphasized networking and taking every opportunity seriously. Sending CVs widely, attending events and meeting new people can open unexpected doors. We were encouraged to use AI tools to understand coding concepts and solve problems and questions in general, rather than just to copy answers since it also helps save time. One analogy shared really stuck with me: if there are stairs and an elevator to the 7th floor, there is no joy in struggling up the stairs; meaning we should work smart, not just hard. Overall, the event was very helpful in showing practical ways to improve skills, prepare for interviews and grow professionally.

MA

The event carried out by ISACA students club regarding mentorship session featuring accomplished alumni. It was an informative session where the alumni were questioned on their experience both outside the university, the beginning of their professional career, and when they were still studying in the university.

The alumni were very helpful and gave very insightful advice to the students that were present there, which were ranging from first years to fourth years, they told about their experiences when starting their professional lives, and then advised students on what to expect, what to prepare for and how one should handle various technical issues.

TK

First, thank you to everyone who made the Mentorship & Career Insights Forum possible. I was very glad to attend, especially since the first ISACA mentorship last year was such a transformative experience for me.
Notably, one alumnus mentioned that his class only learned three programming languages during their time at the university. As a second-year student already working with multiple languages and exploring web development, this gave me perspective on the opportunities currently available to us, which I intend to utilize fully.
There was emphasis on the necessity of building a strong portfolio. This was highly motivating and will be applied directly tin the second year project.
Furthermore, the alumni stories about leveraging hackathons to land first jobs were very inspiring. While on-campus hackathons are currently scarce, I am now motivated to seek out external coding competitions.
As someone eager to secure an internship and gain practical experience, the advice the alumni shared regarding job hunting and networking was invaluable.
VO

The session was very eye-opening because it showed that being good at school is only one part of building a career.
What I Learned

- **School is just the start**: I realized that while getting a degree is important, it isn't enough on its own. The workplace moves fast, and I need to keep learning on my own to be truly ready for the workforce.
- **Networking is key:** I learned that many people get internships and jobs just by talking to others. Building connections is a huge part of finding opportunities, which is why it is so important to keep attending events and meeting people in the industry.
- **Soft skills matter:** Technical skills are great, but you also need soft skills to survive at work. We talked about how communication and teamwork are just as important as the hard skills we learn in class. If you can't work well with others, it's hard to succeed.
- **Do n0t underestimate skills learned in school:** I learnt that I should not ignore the skills I am gaining in school as most people assume because they lay the foundation.

Conclusion: This event taught the need to be more proactive. The plan from now going forward is to work more on my communication skills and attend all school events in order to build a strong professional network.
HA
