

Future Leaders Academy – Mentorship Feature

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Future Leader Gabe Schmidt, pictured with Mentor Don MacPherson (upper left), introduces his mentorship goals during the Mentorship Kick-off event in June 2022.

Future Leaders Academy Update

Meet Gabe Schmidt and Don MacPherson

Future Leader, Gabe Schmidt is a freshman studying civil engineering at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He also participates in a swim club at the University. Gabe's values are family, friends, independence, challenge, and adventure.

Gabe's mentor, Don MacPherson, runs a media company called [12 Geniuses](#). "I get to interview geniuses from around the world about trends shaping the way we live and work," says Don. "I share these trends with our global audience of about 80,000 people around the world." Don admits that some of his values have been influenced by the podcast and that the podcast has also been influenced by Don's values of family, health, curiosity, autonomy, and happiness.

As Gabe navigates the transition to college life in a new city, he is working with Don on two goals to support his success at Madison and beyond: 1) minimize procrastination so he can become a more proactive student, and 2) find a position of leadership within his environment. “I’m in an engineering class right now, and I’m actually able to take a leadership position within our group,” says Gabe. He’s also making progress on being proactive. “It’s getting easier to manage the procrastination goal, especially on days when classes are spread out and I’m able to focus for hours on end and actually get stuff done,” he says.

Don, who’s been mentoring young people for 30 years, hopes to hold Gabe accountable in meeting his goals in an encouraging way, like a gym partner. He also wants to help Gabe in any way Gabe sees fit. “I let him know that he is able to ask me any question he wants, there’s nothing off limits. I may not answer every question, but I want him to feel comfortable asking me questions that he may not be comfortable asking another adult,” says Don. Through this open invitation, Don plans to offer Gabe “some experience and hopefully some wisdom.”

“I have learned so much as a mentor and being mentored has been also instrumental for me,” says Don. “Having people who are confident in me and who have challenged me, there’s no way I would be where I am today without those two things.”

Gabe's Values	Don's Values
Family	Family
Friends	Health
Independence	Curiosity
Challenge	Autonomy
Adventure	Happiness

Gabe enjoys their conversations and values Don’s advice. He recently sought Don’s help in creating a successful presentation. “The advice Don gave me was to think of the three main points and break that down into subtext points and then you can break those down even further if you want to elaborate more,” says Gabe.

Don's advice mirrors the Future Leaders Academy training Gabe found useful for meeting his goals. "I think one of the main things that help me was when we talked about taking bigger tasks, and breaking them down into smaller tasks," says Gabe. "It actually has helped me quite a bit to stay on top of everything and make everything seem more manageable." The Future Leaders Academy program also helped Gabe practice his skills. "After going through the entire course, any leadership that I had to do in my group actually became easier and less stressful than it used to be," Gabe says.

Learn more about the Future Leaders Academy: [Flyer](#) and [Website](#)

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