

# Meet your mentor

The idea of an LSE alumni professional mentoring network was originally conceived three years ago. It now has a solid foundation with active alumni mentors in 15 countries representing 35 different professions and sectors, helping to connect alumni of various ages and experience.



**Mentee: Sukanya Gupta**  
(BSc Industrial Relations 1998)

Having worked at Ernst & Young and Powergen, Sukanya is now at Cardiff University, Wales, working towards her PhD in Economics.



**Mentor: Dirk Robertson**  
(BSc Sociology 1987)

An actor and freelance writer, his fourth book, *Bad Day for a Fat Boy*, was published in October 2002.

**Sukanya:** 'I was bored with my job and I wanted a change, something completely different. I contacted the alumni mentoring network originally because I was interested in working in New York, but through the network I made contact with Dirk. I found his outlook especially helpful because he was doing something different. What particularly helped me was the fact that he did not direct me or tell me what I should do but merely pointed out my own comments and guided me to think about what was important to me. This taught me to think specifically about what I wanted and to question my own reasons for change. I do still keep in touch with Dirk – we have met in Cardiff and I was invited to his latest book launch – but this is now more a friendship than a mentoring relationship. I would certainly recommend the alumni network to other LSE graduates.'

**Dirk:** 'If I am going to give anything to any institution it will be my time to LSE. I enjoy giving practical and concrete advice to individuals whom I feel I understand in some way. Sometimes people from LSE are very used to success and not to failure or rejection. I constantly encounter rejection in my professional life and it is of no more consequence than a rain shower. It is therefore a great source of pride to me that I can offer some guidance to mentees so that they do not make a wrong decision at the wrong time in their professional or academic life – I consider it a good thing if they do not proceed with a fantasy.'



**Mentee: Claire Pryde**  
(BSc International Relations 2001)

Claire is now studying a postgraduate course in broadcast journalism at Cardiff University, Wales.



**Mentor: Martin Lewis**  
(BSc Government 1994)

A consumer finance journalist, he is the regular expert on Channel 5's *Open House*, a reporter for BBC News, and a columnist for the *Sunday Express*. A former LSE SU general secretary, he is also a past chair of the Alumni Media Group.

**Claire:** 'After I graduated, the LSE Careers Service put me in touch with mentors who had experience in broadcasting and journalism. I made contact with Martin who gave me lots of advice, the best being that I should get some practical work experience. After a couple of placements I was considering a postgraduate course and contacted Martin again to get his opinion – he recommended the diploma in broadcast journalism at Cardiff. There was stiff competition for places on the course but he helped me with my application and preparation for my interview. Without his help I would not have been offered a place because he helped inject some real-world experience into my understanding of the course and journalism as a career. I was also seeking funding for the course, and asked Martin about the BBC sponsorship programme. He was honest and said that it was tough competition, nevertheless he helped with my application. Despite not getting sponsored, I did get down to the shortlist and made some great contacts. More than anything, Martin as a mentor has helped me understand the industry I wish to work in and has given me valuable tips about progressing in my career. I would certainly recommend others to use this network.'

**Martin:** 'I have been contacted by about 50 people through the network but I was especially prepared to help Claire because she was serious about journalism and has the right ability for such a career. I felt that I offered most help in preparing her for her Cardiff application. She definitely needed to understand what professionals would look for and I hope I gave her a practical insight into the industry. A few years ago, I was helped by Loyd Grossman – then chair of the Alumni Media Group – who gave me excellent advice and direction, and so for me, being involved as an alumni mentor enables me to put something back. I would also say, however, that the networking opportunities are excellent, which in the media industry is always helpful. The LSE ethos is not so much about helping those with 'the old school tie' but about building your own network. A word of caution though: the mentees need to be realistic about what the mentors can offer. We can only help those who are serious about what they want to do.'



**Mentee: Gonzalo Wartjes**  
(MSc Geography 2002)

Gonzalo has returned to his native Argentina to complete his MSc dissertation. He studied at Harvard University before coming to LSE, where he also played fly-half for the rugby team.



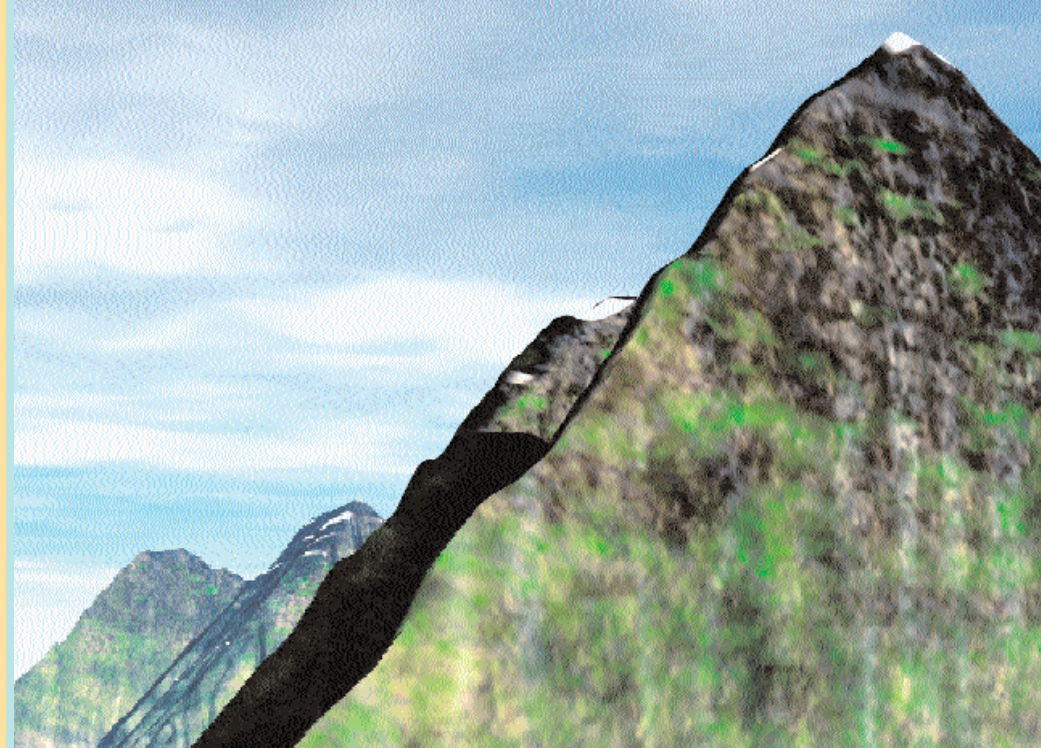
**Mentor: Sina Shahram-Nia**  
(MSc Industrial Relations 1991)

Head of institutional sales, Germany, for Bank of America in London. He has previously worked for Salomon Brothers and Goldman Sachs and graduated from the University of California, Berkeley in the USA before attending LSE.

**Gonzalo:** 'Towards the end of my MSc course, I contacted the network and received many helpful responses. The slow-down in the US economy, with impending worldwide recession, has led companies around the world to freeze their hiring and I wanted to contact an alumnus to find out the best way to approach job-hunting in these difficult times. There are traditional ways for finding information and contacts, and this is simply an additional route. Sina exceeded all my expectations and was extremely helpful. He continues to be my mentor and we still keep in regular contact via email. On our first meeting he asked what I wanted to achieve, and helped me to work out where I should be going. As my first degree was from Harvard, I try to help out other students from there with my own experience, and will be very happy to help LSE students and alumni in the future myself. I would definitely recommend the network to LSE graduates and young alumni.'

**Sina:** 'I was happy to try and help Gonzalo. He had realised that the current economic climate was very difficult and was seeking advice on how to make a career in fund management. After meeting him, I was convinced that he was a high quality talent, with all the right attributes for a career in finance. I would advise other young alumni

that they should treat their mentor as they would a 'client'. Realise that mentors can be powerful advisers but they will only have a limited amount of time to give, so use it wisely. We can offer advice and perhaps open some doors, but you must make the breaks yourself. With Gonzalo, besides his stellar academic credentials, he convinced me as a person. I have no doubt he will be a very successful fund manager in the future, and I look forward to staying in touch with him. Furthermore, one day I am sure he will become a great mentor to someone at LSE!'



### What is mentoring?

The classic definition of a mentor is an older, experienced guide who is acceptable to a young person and can help ease the transition to adulthood through a mix of support and challenge. Homer's account of the myth of Telemachos and Mentor is usually drawn on to illustrate this definition. In today's world, mentoring is perhaps more a combination of 'who you know' and 'what you know'.

The alumni professional mentoring network aims to provide both kinds of support. Its purpose is to create one-to-one relationships, primarily helping recent graduates and those with less experience, with their careers or professional development. But, beyond this, the network can introduce alumni to people outside of their current business and personal situations.

### Who are the alumni mentors?

All mentors are LSE alumni with a few years professional experience. What they all have in common is the desire to help others in the LSE community by sharing their skills, knowledge and experience:

'I believe I owe LSE a considerable debt... and I would also have benefited from an

alumni mentor when I left the School,' said Joseph Sexsmith (BSc Industrial Relations 1985), managing director, MD Holdings, Toronto.

Jean-Luc Priez (MSc Government 1989), chief executive of Cotswold Care Hospice in the UK, simply wanted to 'share my experience and provide guidance if possible'.

### Who are the mentees?

This is a network for all LSE alumni. Although many younger alumni will benefit from making contact with mentors, those seeking career progression or even a change of direction are also encouraged to get involved. Mentees should still use traditional professional information sources such as the LSE Careers Service but this network is an extra bonus for the alumni community and, used carefully, can be an extremely powerful tool.

### How will you benefit?

Mentees gain from making that all-important bridge between university and employment. But all those involved in the alumni professional mentoring network will benefit from building their network of contacts. Many existing mentors say that making connections with younger alumni is rewarding in itself.

### How can I get involved?

Those wishing to volunteer their time as mentors, and those seeking help or advice, should make an online application to the Alumni office setting out why they want to get involved.

Applications can be made at [www.lse.ac.uk/alumni/mentoring](http://www.lse.ac.uk/alumni/mentoring), email: [alumnimentoring@lse.ac.uk](mailto:alumnimentoring@lse.ac.uk) or tel: +44 (0)20 7955 6412.

Alumni mentors with at least five years work experience will have their details listed on the mentoring web pages.

Mentees can email a mentor directly if they wish to contact someone in that profession or with that experience. Once contact has been established, it is up to both parties to create the purpose and boundaries of the relationship. The Alumni office will provide guidance and support. For updated information on this network and other alumni events, send your email address to [alumni@lse.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@lse.ac.uk) quoting 'newsletter' to receive a regular email bulletin. ■

# ART at LSE

### The lost horizon – a work in progress.

This, and the front cover image, are the result of joint work so far between artists Matthew Cornford and David Cross, Stephen Emmott of LSE's Business Systems and Services division, and Irina Sidelnikova and Matt Spittle of American Express Financial Services Europe Ltd. The images were produced using Bryce 5 (Corel) with materials from Bruce MacLeod (Watchful Eye). The peaks are the values of a share through time, while movement left or right is a function of how the stock's value has changed. The final screensaver image will be available on LSE's PC screens in early 2003.

In 2000 the School established Art at LSE, an initiative to enrich the student and staff experience through more cultural and artistic events and connections, and promote the interaction between a laboratory of the social sciences and various forms of art application. The programme aims to encompass permanent art commissions as well as temporary artworks, exhibitions and events at the School. It also reflects a growing trend of artists working away from traditional gallery spaces, and collaboratively with other disciplines.

Two years on, four art projects are reaching completion. **Ben Eastop**, Art at LSE coordinator for the projects, explains more.