

SLAB Mentor Overview

Subtitle : A guide for college students mentoring the next generation of builders

What Is SLAB?

SLAB (Student-Led Architecture & Building) is a mentorship program where college students in construction management, architecture, and related fields lead K-12 students through simple, meaningful design-build projects in the classroom. These short-term builds expose young students to the world of design, building, and teamwork — while giving college mentors real-world leadership experience.

At its core, SLAB is about access: showing students that design and construction are exciting, hands-on, and within reach.

Why Mentor with SLAB?

- **Impact Local Classrooms**

Bring real-world building knowledge into schools and make construction feel creative, collaborative, and fun.

- **Gain Leadership Experience**

Learn to teach, communicate, and adapt — all transferable skills for project managers and professionals.

- **Build Your Resume**

Show future employers that you've worked directly with teams, led educational projects, and engaged your community.

- **Network with Peers and Professionals**

Connect with other student mentors and industry supporters who care about the built environment.

How It Works

Each classroom project is led by a small team of college mentors (around 5 per class), guiding students through a multi-week build designed to fit inside a standard classroom.

The projects are hands-on and age-appropriate — think planter boxes, tool caddies, benches, or model structures — and focus on creativity, problem-solving, and basic building skills. You'll work directly with students in small groups and support the classroom teacher along the way.

What You'll Actually Do:

- Introduce design concepts like sketching, measurement, and layout
- Demonstrate simple tools like tape measures, squares, or saws
- Lead small-group brainstorming and collaborative building
- Help with safety, pacing, and encouragement

- Share your own journey — what you study, why you love it, and what a real builder or designer does

Time Commitment

Most SLAB builds include four total classroom visits, with each visit lasting 60 to 75 minutes.

Estimated Total Commitment: 5 to 6 hours

Includes classroom time, group prep, and optional debrief or reflection

This model is intentionally lightweight, making it easy for busy students to participate — even during a school quarter or semester.

What's Expected of You

Be Present and Prepared

- Arrive ready to engage — no need to be perfect, just involved
- Read the lesson guide or build outline before each session
- Dress respectfully and professionally (school-appropriate attire)

Act as a Role Model

- Bring positivity and patience to every session
- Respect the classroom teacher's authority and classroom management
- Encourage creativity, not perfection

Lead Through Questions

- Let students explore and learn by doing
- Ask guiding questions: "Why do you think this is wobbly?" or "How could we make this stronger?"
- Support teamwork and celebrate small wins

Prioritize Safety

- Follow the safety guidelines provided in your training
- Supervise tool use closely
- Step in quickly and calmly if a situation seems unsafe

What You'll Naturally Teach

Without even realizing it, you'll introduce students to:

- How buildings are designed and built
- The tools builders use and why they matter
- The roles of architects, project managers, and engineers
- How creativity and planning come together on real projects

You don't have to be a professional teacher — just share what you're learning in your own studies and show students what's possible.

How to Get Started

After confirming your participation, you'll receive:

- A one-page session outline and build summary

- A quick-start mentor guide
- Access to the SLAB Learning Library (videos, PDFs, tool guides)

You'll be grouped with fellow mentors and paired with a local classroom. All projects are pre-planned, age-appropriate, and supported by teachers on site.

Final Word

SLAB mentors aren't expected to know everything — just to care, show up, and make the experience fun and meaningful for the students they're guiding. Your presence might be the moment a kid first sees themselves as a builder, designer, or leader.

You bring the spark. SLAB gives you the tools.