

A Guide to Mentorship: The Big Picture



What mentorship means to students

Mentorship offers students opportunities for support and development. A mentor may be one of the first attorneys to whom a law student can turn for understanding and encouragement – someone who knows the demands of law school, provides suggestions about how to meet those demands, and grants some reassuring perspective when progress seems daunting. At the same time, students appreciate a mentor who treats them like fellow professionals by offering tactful but honest feedback and by challenging them to do more, and better, than the students may have thought they could.



What mentorship means to UB Law

- As a student-focused institution, UB Law is continually looking for ways to deliver to students resources and experiences that will enrich their education and broaden their prospects. Mentorship is a highly effective supplement to the classes, clinics, and extracurricular opportunities that promote student learning and growth – one that can help reinforce some teaching while simultaneously offering additional enrichment.
- As you know, UB Law does not simply forget its students once they graduate. Our alumni remain a part of the UB Law family forever, and we believe that those alumni who volunteer to mentor new classes of law students are not only giving but also receiving – receiving the pleasures and benefits of working with lawyers-to-be, receiving the satisfaction of giving something priceless back to UB Law, and receiving the earnest gratitude of those of us whose students you are helping.
- UB Law also recognizes that the school, its students, and its alumni are also a part of the wider legal community in Buffalo and throughout New York and the nation. The participation of members of this community, including those who are not UB Law alumni, in our mentoring program provides yet another way for the school and the community to work together for the benefit of all.



What mentorship means to you

Mentors may derive a great deal of satisfaction from “paying it forward” by contributing their time and attention to the development both of the UB Law Mentoring Program and of individual law students who may someday do the same for the next generation of lawyers. But mentoring also brings practical benefits: opportunities to sharpen your own interpersonal and management skills; conscious reflection on, and possibly improvement upon, past lessons learned; and the development of relationships contributing to a broader network of colleagues. Being a mentor is a win/win for everyone.

Nurturing the mentoring relationship

Mentoring can be a boon to both participants in part because it pushes mentor and mentee both to use their strongest gift and to develop lesser talents. At the beginning, the more experienced mentor is expected to take the lead in arranging meetings and getting to know the mentee. Over time, and especially as the mentee begins to open up, the mentor may begin working in less familiar capacities, perhaps helping the student to develop skills or to navigate new environments. Your wisdom will not be all you have to guide you! UB Law will provide resources to help you make the mentor experience fruitful to both of you.



Goals for Students

When considering how best to mentor your student, it may help to identify specific goals. Keeping in mind the benefits you may hope to deliver to your mentee can help the relationship grow beyond nebulous conversation over coffee and into a genuine transmission of the fruits of your experience:

- **Knowledge:** Before you became an attorney, you were a law student, too. The perspective you now have on that experience can be invaluable to new law students trying to get a handle on the law while at the same time trying to navigate choosing classes for their next year or deciding whether Moot Court or a Clinic might be more appropriate for them. If your mentee takes on an externship or a summer job, your experiences when you first started practicing can also be valuable.
- **Skills:** Students come to law school to develop the analytical and communication skills they will need to thrive as attorneys. They may come to you as mentees with specific questions about legal analysis, time management, or test taking, or you may perceive, in your interactions with them, opportunities to help them improve their skills.
- **Professionalism:** Students may exhibit a range of awareness of the nuances of legal culture: some may fret about every aspect of dress and address, while, perhaps more frequently, others may be unaware of some of the basic conventions. Your advice about these details may be among the most valued information you share.

The future of mentoring

As we hope that the UB Law Mentoring Program grows into a premier resource, providing support to students throughout their three years in law school and beyond, so too do we hope to promote the possibility of every individual mentoring relationship, however long it persists formally, to develop into a long-term collegial connection.

