

UB LAW SCHOOL ALUMNI MENTORING PROGRAM

GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS

Welcome to the UB Law School Mentor Program. We hope that you find your mentoring experience to be rewarding and enjoyable. Below are some guidelines to assist you in approaching the mentoring relationship.

THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM

Law is a social profession. Professional networking and informational interviewing are essential skills to develop as you progress through your career. You have been matched with a mentor who fits your stated criteria as closely as possible within the WNY area. The purpose of having a local mentor is to enable you to meet each other in person, and to make it easier to develop a working relationship. As with any networking exercise, this program is essentially designed to give you an opportunity to seek out AIR: Advice, Information and Referrals.

TO BEGIN

Your mentor's name and contact information has been provided to you. We encourage you to contact your mentor within right away to introduce yourself and to schedule a first meeting.

You and your mentor are responsible for establishing goals for your individual mentoring relationship, working towards them and evaluating your collective efforts.

The program is mandatory. You are expected to return calls and/or emails to your mentor, just as you would be responsible to return calls and emails to your clients, opposing counsel or judges when you practice law. If your mentor does not respond to you, please contact Dean Patterson.

YOUR ROLE AS A STUDENT MENTEE

1. The role of the mentor is to provide a realistic view of the legal profession. Appropriate topics for discussion between students and mentors are issues of current concern to the profession, the mentor's approaches to ethical and professionalism dilemmas, career goals, types of legal and law-related jobs, law practice management issues, and quality of life issues in law school and after.
2. It is not appropriate for a student to seek assistance or research, on substantive courses or substantive legal issues, from the mentor.
3. It is not appropriate for a student to seek advice on the selection of UB Law courses or faculty from the mentor.
4. While you may discuss with your mentor matters such as the locations and types of practice you may be considering, the Mentoring Program is not designed to serve as a recruitment device or job placement program. Mentors are not forbidden to hire their mentees, but there should be no expectation that they will.
5. Students and mentors are encouraged to meet informally for breakfast, lunch, at the mentor's office, or anywhere else that is mutually convenient. Mentors are asked to invite students to attend hearings, meetings, lectures, CLEs, or any special law-related event.
6. Please remember that it can be challenging to accommodate schedules and it is the quality of the relationship, not the quantity of time spent that determines the success of the program. Students are expected to respect the time and limited availability of mentors. In some cases, telephone and/or email may be the primary means of communication between students and mentors.
7. Conversations between students and mentors are confidential.

WHAT NEXT?

The nature of your mentor/mentee relationship will largely depend on what you decide is best for you and your mentor. Some mentors and mentees continue to stay in touch, and others meet a few times and consider the result satisfactory. Feel free to express to your mentor what you hope to learn from this program.

We have broken the program up into PHASES to help the program progress. You will receive periodic emails to remind you of these benchmarks:

PHASE I: Reach Out by MARCH 1

Your mentor is given your name and contact information and may contact you before you get a chance to do it. However the impetus is ultimately on you to reach out to your mentor. You are encouraged to contact your mentor as soon as you receive their contact information, but if you do not meet them at the Mentor Matching Reception on February 24, you should email or call them by March 1 to set up a time to meet. (Note: “Reaching out” does not mean that you have to settle on a plan to meet. You may find that it will take a few tries to actually make contact with your mentor. You should make your first call or email during this phase.)

SAMPLE LANGUAGE FOR CONTACTING YOUR MENTOR

Here is some sample language for initiating contact, either by email or phone (it is a very loose guideline for a phone conversation). If you call and do not reach the person, this is the message you should leave, either on voicemail or with a person:

“Dear Mr./Ms. “Last Name”:

My name is “name” and I have been assigned as your mentee in the UB Law School 1L Mentoring Program. I am calling/emailing to introduce myself and to arrange a time and place for us to meet. I am generally available (insert information here—“on Fridays”, “any day after 3:00,” etc.) My phone number is (insert information here, including alternate contact method if desired).

Thank you so much for taking the time to participate in this valuable program. I look forward to hearing from you.

PHASE II: First Meeting by MAY 1

During this period, you will make contact with your mentor and meet for the first time. You may need to follow up a few times to get hold of them.

SAMPLE LANGUAGE FOR RE-CONTACTING YOUR MENTOR

“Dear Mr./Ms. “Last Name”:

My name is “name” and as you may remember, I have been assigned as your mentee in the UB Law School 1L Mentoring Program. I am calling/emailing to follow up with you to arrange a time and place for us to meet. (Insert something about your enthusiasm here, like, “I am looking forward to discussing your work at the DA’s office.”)

My phone number is (insert information here, including alternate contact method if desired). I look forward to hearing from you.

If you have continuing difficulty making contact with your mentor, try calling the reception or main number for their workplace to see if they have an assistant who can help you schedule your meeting. If you still cannot get in touch, please contact Lisa Patterson (716-645-2056, lpatter@buffalo.edu or Dawn Skopinski 716-645-6261, skopinsk@buffalo.edu).

Once you have made contact with your mentor, you should set up a time and place to meet. This is usually at their office, at a café or restaurant, or any other mutually agreeable place. It is standard to set the time of the meeting for about an hour, but certainly, you can agree on the duration with your mentor.

PREPARE FOR YOUR MEETING

Before you meet with your mentor, take some time to prepare:

1. Learn about yourself. Do some self assessment. Check out the Self Assessment Workbook in the UB Law CSO Document Library in Symplicity! What do you like to do? What kind of work do you excel in? Why did you choose law school? This will help you describe your goals and preferences to your mentor, so they can help you make choices about professional development.
2. Learn about your mentor. Find out what you can about your mentor by researching online. If you have trouble finding any information, contact the CSO.
3. Be prepared to talk about yourself. This first meeting is a “get to know you” event, and the goal is to relax, have fun, and find common interests. Talk about your life before law school, your family, your personal interests, etc. Ask the mentor about his or hers, too!
4. Think of some questions that the mentor can answer. If you can’t, remember to ask for AIR: Advice, Information, Referrals!
Advice: What do you think I should do if I want to get more involved in politics?
Information: What professional journals and publications do tax attorneys read?

Referrals: I don't really know what I want to do, and I'd like to meet a few people who practice in different areas. Can you refer me to anyone who practices Family law?

FOLLOW UP

Don't forget to follow up with a quick thank-you note, either by email or written card. Remember, your mentor needs positive feedback too, and will be more likely to continue the mentoring relationship if he or she feels that you are benefitting from it and appreciate it!

PHASE III: Continuing activities, THROUGHOUT SUMMER (Optional)

If you hit it off, you should keep in touch with your mentor, and ask if you can meet again, or if he or she is willing to participate in any further activities with you. If appropriate, the following are some suggested follow-up activities, but you are not limited to these:

1. Shadowing your mentor at work for a period of time
2. Accompanying your mentor to a work-related event (non-confidential), such as a court appearance, deposition, conference or negotiation.
3. Accompanying your mentor to a professional social event, such as a Bar Association dinner, CLE, community charity event, employer social event.
4. Meeting with other people to whom your mentor refers you, either with or without your mentor present.
5. Other enjoyable activities, based on shared interests, such as sports events, art shows, etc.

This is also the time to be following up on advice that your mentor might give you, such as joining their bar association or trade association, reading an industry-specific journal, reaching out to a contact they gave you, or subscribing to a blog they recommend.

PHASE IV: Progress Report to Mentor, CONTINUING, but by AUGUST 1

Mentoring is a reciprocal process. At least once, you must contact your mentor to follow up and update them on your current situation. You should include some feedback on the outcome of advice, information or referrals he or she has given you, e.g. "I took your advice and attended the CLE on Real Estate Law, and met a really great person named John Smith. Do you know him?"

Even if your mentor's initial advice didn't have an immediate effect or outcome, check in anyway, to say that you tried it, and that it wasn't quite right for you. Ask if he or she can advise you on how to get the most out of their advice, or if they can suggest an alternative, e.g. "I joined the Bar Association Litigation Section as you suggested, but I haven't seen much activity from it. Can you suggest a way I can get more out of my

membership? Or, is there another more active organization you can recommend?” Your mentor may be able to advise you to contact a particular person, or to volunteer to help with a particular event.

Ideally, when you do follow-up on a mentor’s suggestion, you should be letting them know the outcome. This needn’t be lengthy and onerous. It might involve a quick email, or a short follow-up meeting to go over your progress.

NOTE: PHASE III and IV do not really end. They repeat and continue for the length of your mentoring relationship. You will repeat them as many times as is naturally feasible, based on your compatibility and time constraints.

PHASE IV: Program Feedback, By SEPTEMBER 1

This program improves based on your feedback! We will ask you to fill out a feedback form next fall to let us know about your experience.

Finally, here are a few tips to consider as you progress through the mentor program:

MYTHS ASSOCIATED WITH MENTORING

Here is a list of misperceptions about Mentoring!

- You need a toga. Gone are the days of protégés sitting at the feet of the wise one; you NEVER know who might be a powerful learning influence.
- Mentoring only happens on a one-to-one, long term, face-to-face basis. (With modern technology mentoring can take place by e-mail, telephone or fax and may need only a few hours over the long term.)
- Taking time to mentor decreases productivity. (Mentoring improves productivity through better communication, goal clarity, increased commitment and success planning.)
- A mentor needs to be older than those they mentor. (Innovations happen so rapidly or personal experience is such a great teacher that younger people often have opportunities to mentor older people. Peers are effective mentors!)
- Mentoring is a rare experience and only occurs for a few great people. (Informal mentoring is probably the most frequent method of transmitting knowledge and wisdom in society. Virtually everyone has experienced it in some way.)
- Mentoring requires a great time commitment that most people can't afford. (Being mentored does not guarantee career advancement, but it does significantly increase learning, thereby accelerating opportunities. In this way, most people can't afford NOT to become involved with mentoring.)
- The person being mentored is the only person who benefits from the relationship. (For a mentor to be effective, all parties must perceive benefits!)
- The best mentors are those who set out to be mentors. (The majority of mentoring occurs without conscious knowledge of either party, but it does help to cultivate key mentor attitudes and behaviors.)

REASSIGNMENTS

Most mentor matches work out nicely, but there are times when a mentor may not be able to assist a mentee for various reasons. In that case, a Mentee may feel they require a reassignment for various reasons. The mentee should feel confident in requesting such a referral. You may want to ask for a new mentor if:

- If you feel your mentor is not supportive.
- If the mentor repeatedly misses meetings or arranged contact, arrives late or is not an active participant in meetings and contact.
- If your mentor relationship becomes inappropriately and uncomfortably personal
- If there are other issues which cause rise to concern on your part as a mentee.

QUESTIONS??

If you should have any questions about this program or your assigned mentor, please feel free to telephone the Associate Dean for Career Services, Lisa M. Patterson at 716-645-2056 or email at Lpatter@buffalo.edu.