



The Mentor Program:

STUDENT FAQ

Q: HOW MUCH CONTACT CAN I EXPECT TO HAVE WITH MY MENTOR?

A: This is entirely up to you and your mentor. Your mentor expects you to be the one to take the initiative in maintaining the relationship and to be very aggressive in making contact. Also, refer to the Mentor Program Student Guidelines for more information, available online at: <http://harrisschool.uchicago.edu/Centers/cpp/mentors.asp>

Q: WHY AREN'T THERE MORE EVENTS LIKE THE MENTOR DINNER FOR STUDENTS AND MENTORS?

A: The purpose of the dinner is to introduce you to your mentor for the first time in person. After that, we want you and your mentor to define a relationship that will work for both of you specifically. Structured events such as the Mentor Dinner do not allow you to practice the persistence and flexibility necessary to succeed in a professional setting.

Q: WHAT DO I DO IF I AM MATCHED WITH A MENTOR NOT IN MY INTEREST AREA(S)?

A: Be creative, and realize that mentors who are matched with students in the program are authorities in their field and have extensive policy experience. You should utilize that person to explore the intersection of different policy areas and the potential of how they might overlap.

Q: WHAT DO I DO IF MY MENTOR DOES NOT RETURN EMAIL OR OR PHONE CALLS?

A: Be persistent and do not take it personally. Most students will say that their mentors have been more or less unresponsive at some point in the relationship. This is okay. Mentors (like you) are very busy people and will often say how nice it is when students are persistent and keep emailing and calling until they get a chance to respond. They like to hear from you, and expect to hear from you, even if they are too busy to reply. If you feel that there are serious issues in contacting your mentor, we are happy to help. Please call or email Kathi Marshall to discuss the matter.

Q: WHAT PROFESSIONAL ADVICE SHOULD I SEEK FROM MY MENTOR?

A: This may include any of the following:

1. Understanding your mentor's career path, successes, and failures to help you in your search
2. How to network in professional settings
3. Tips on how to best "break into" your mentor's field
4. Your mentor's perspective on current, relevant topics in policy
5. Classroom learning vs. real world experience, what is your mentor's take on this relationship?

For questions or further tips/suggestions for interacting with your mentor, contact Kathi Marshall.

Q: WHAT DO I DO IF I HAVE A PROBLEM WITH MY MENTOR?

A: Always be professional and polite to your mentor. Then, contact Kathi Marshall immediately so to discuss the matter.

Q: CAN I EVER BE TOO AGGRESSIVE IN ATTEMPTING TO CONTACT MY MENTOR?

A: Most likely, no. Your mentor is going to consider it perfectly reasonable for you to attempt to contact them and/or their assistant once a week until you are able to meet. In between meetings, sending your mentor a quick email to say hi once a week, and/or forwarding them an interesting news article relevant to their work, again once a week or once every few weeks, is great.