

## *The Mentor Program: GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS*

### PROGRAM SUMMARY

Initiated by Irving B. Harris, the Mentor Program matches Harris School students in one-on-one relationships with leading policy professionals. Approximately 100 volunteer mentors participate in the program at any given time. They are experienced and interested in public policy issues and are prominent individuals in a wide range of government, nonprofit, and private organizations and agencies, including:

- Local, state, and federal officials, both elected and appointed
- Corporate executives in financial service, legal, management, and environmental consulting companies
- Directors and senior officials of nonprofit organizations, museums, and research institutions

Students are better able to channel their aspirations and interest into definable career goals through the advice, experience, and insight of their mentors, while simultaneously building a professional network. Mentors find the program to be a rewarding opportunity to meet young professionals in their fields and assist them in their career growth.

### EXPECTATIONS, COMMUNICATION, REQUIREMENTS

#### *Expectations*

The Mentor Program is very flexible and the nature of the mentor experience varies from one relationship to the next. The time and effort expended by each student and mentor differs, as does the type of activity in which mentors and students engage. However, the Harris School expects participating students to be actively involved in the program. Mentors are busy individuals who make time for this program. They expect students to contact them, make efficient use of meetings, and otherwise be engaged in the program.

As an applicant and participant in the program, you agree to the understanding that your designated policy interests serve as a guideline and does not guarantee a match with a mentor who works specifically in your area of interest. It is important to remember the goals of the Mentor Program, and that any person who is well connected in any area of policy is a great person to have as a mentor.

Should a student wish to no longer participate in the program, he or she should contact the program staff immediately so that the mentor can be notified and be assigned another student.

#### *Goals*

The Mentor Program affords students an opportunity to learn from experienced policy professionals. The overarching goals of the program include: a better understanding of career paths, professional skill development, goal setting, and an introduction to a professional network.



Mentors are not expected to provide internships or jobs for their student mentees, and students are not to ask for such opportunities. However, students who know their mentors well may ask them to serve as references in the student's job searches.

### Communication

The student is always responsible for initiating contact with mentors. Mentors are extremely busy and may be difficult to reach, so students should be persistent. If mentors are unresponsive to communication, the student should enlist the assistance of program staff.

Students should always communicate with mentors in a professional manner. It is good practice to address mentors formally (Mr./Mrs. Smith) until instructed to do otherwise. Upon initial conversation, mentors and students should establish the means and method of future contact, including the amount of communication expected and the anticipated frequency of meetings.

Students may not directly contact mentors other than their own for assistance. The possibility of overwhelming mentors or infringing on other student-mentor relationships is great and could interfere with the success of the program. Acceptable means of contacting mentors other than your own include: asking your mentor to provide an initial introduction if they know one another, asking a fellow student to introduce you to his or her mentor, or speaking to a mentor at a Harris School function.

Students should prepare for each meeting with their mentors. Being prepared includes:

- Doing homework; Research your mentor's background, accomplishments, and the organization he or she is associated with
- Being professional in attire, attendance, punctuality, and communications (in-person, email, and telephone)
- Preparing questions in advance of each meeting
- Being prepared to tell the mentor how he or she can be helpful; i.e., mentors often ask students to define the areas in which they can be most helpful to students

### Requirements

Participating students are expected to fulfill the following requirements:

- Initiate contact with their assigned mentors within the first month of the program, and participate actively and professionally in the program. Students who have not contacted their mentors within the first quarter of the academic year may be dropped from the program
- Attend program events including the Mentor Dinner and any other activities sponsored by the School in which the mentor participates
- Complete a mid-year and annual year-end program evaluation
- Respond to any requests for an "update" in regards to your progress with your mentor (usually two per year)
- Complete a formal, closing communication with your mentor to conclude the mentoring relationship

If a participating student does not fulfill these requirements, or does not conduct him or herself in a professional manner, he or she may be dropped from the program. Because there are typically more interested students than available mentors at any given time, the Harris School reserves the program for those students who will actively and professionally engage in it.

**APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

Students interested in participating in the Mentor Program must complete an application form and submit a resume along with a statement of interest/cover letter. Admittance to the Mentor Program is competitive, with second-year students matched first followed by incoming first-year students. The matching process occurs during the summer, and both students and mentors are informed of the pairings before the start of the Fall Quarter. Students not selected for the program will be notified at this time as well. Although we will make every effort to match qualified students with mentors in their requested interest areas, please realize that there are a limited number of mentors in some policy areas. Moreover, many students' interests change over the course of their study at the Harris School. Even though a student may not have a specific shared interest with a mentor, he or she will find the mentor helpful with more general questions or advice. Incoming students who are not selected to participate in the program will be able to apply again near the end their first year, for participation in their second year at Harris. Please also remember that there are many other ways in which Harris School students find mentors outside of this program—through employment, internships, alumni, etc.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

For questions, please contact:

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