

# **HRACO Student Mentoring Program - Questions & Answers**

HRACO Student Services Committee - 2009

Following are the most frequently asked questions about the Mentoring program. The answers provided should help you determine the benefits of the program and if it is right for you. Be sure to also check out the HRACO Student Mentoring Program Guide, which covers the program in detail.

## **What is the history of the Mentoring program?**

This program is beginning its 7<sup>th</sup> year. It began at the prompting of the OSU GHRA in the 2003-2004 school year in collaboration with the Student Services Committee of the Human Resources Association of Central Ohio (HRACO). It has since expanded to include students from OSU GHRA and HRA as well as Franklin, Capital, Denison, and DeVry University undergrads.

## **What's the Mentoring Program all about?**

It's designed for you, the student pursuing a career in Human Resources. An HR student (student protégé) is matched with an HR professional that is a member of HRACO. It is a way to hook up the student studying HR in the academic world with an HR liaison that is practicing HR every day.

## **What does a Mentor do?**

This HR professional is someone for the HR student to talk to about anything related to the educational pursuit of a career in Human Resources and about the real world of Human Resources. The HR Professional is really an "HR buddy" or "HR friend" and is someone for the student to build a relationship with, in a very safe environment, for purposes of seeking advice, guidance, and support.

## **How does the "match" occur?**

Each HR student submits an electronic resume and fills out a short questionnaire, sending them to their GHRA or HRA. Each Mentor does the same, sending their information to HRACO. Then HRACO Student Services Committee members get together with Officers from GHRA and HRA, and students are matched with Mentors based on the information submitted.

## **How much of my time will this relationship take?**

That is almost totally up to you. The Mentor is ready and willing to be a resource for you and is anxiously waiting to hear from you. I would suggest 2 hours a month as a guideline, but those that have had the best experiences may spend 3-4 hours some months, especially at the beginning. It varies greatly depending on how you and your Mentor might work together. I find that most Mentors would have been willing to provide more time if the student had asked.

## **What if I don't think I have the time to devote to this Mentoring program?**

Then you should not sign up. As a student, you have many things competing for your time. You have to choose your own priorities based on what is most important to you, and if you cannot commit a couple hours a month to this program, then it is clearly not for you. Some of the biggest frustrations and disappointments we Mentors have is that we get paired with a student who isn't really committed and does not engage and/or follow up.

### **What are some specific ways a Mentor can assist me?**

There are many, many ways. Suggestions are listed in page 6 of guidelines document. Speaking first hand, I'll tell you what I do that has worked wonderfully for me. Initially, I meet with my student protégé at a coffee shop to get to know them better as a person; this will take up the entire meeting. Getting to know the student, and vice versa, is critically important for the relationship to flourish. I will ask the student to take some time and prepare a document for me about how they might want me to assist them, and I simply use that document as a starting point or baseline from which to work. I prefer to meet once a month for an hour or so, as a face-to-face discussion is the best way to mentor. At the next meeting, I might critique their resume. At some point, I will do a "mock interview" with them, just to see how they do in a safe interview setting, and I may do another one 6 months later to see how they have improved. I invite them to my workplace and set up informational interviews with HR professionals that I work with, so they can get different perspectives from different HR professionals. I may invite them to be my guest at a HRACO monthly luncheon meeting once or twice during a school year. After 3-4 months, and depending on how well the student engages and their level of commitment to the Mentoring Program, I might refer them to someone for an internship or serve as a reference for them. I've even helped an international student buy a car and get her driver's license, as "friends" might sometimes do.

### **What are the expectations of me as a participating student in the Mentoring Program?**

You must be committed, and you must take the initiative, as this program is for your benefit. This means you stay committed for the entire school year, and devote the necessary preparation time and be persistent enough to make it successful. Take the initiative to come up with ideas, and follow up with your Mentor on a regular basis through face-to-face meetings, telephone calls, and email. As an HR professional to be, stay committed, as the worst thing you can do is drop the ball or act as though you really aren't serious about an HR career.

### **What happens if I don't connect well with my Mentor or they don't get back to me?**

That would surprise me, especially since the Mentors appear to be ready and willing to assist in any way, and I know most of them personally. As HR professionals, we really have to get along with everybody. However, people are people, lives are hectic, and HR professionals are extremely busy nowadays. The best thing to do is pick up the phone and call them. In this day and age of email, we've all become too reliant on the impersonal way of communicating, but to be an effective HR professional, we all have to be good at face-to-face communication and conversing on the phone. So for starters, pick up the phone. If that fails to get a response, be sure to let your Mentoring Coordinator in your GHRA or HRA know and they will get in touch with me.

### **What other responsibilities do I have as a participant?**

Your GHRA or HRA will want to know how things are going for you with your Mentor, so be sure to provide them feedback and answer the questionnaires they send out to you in a timely manner.

### **Why do Mentors do this?**

Mentors do this as a way of giving back to their profession, by providing assistance to a young HR professional to be. While in school, most of us Mentors never had a Mentor that we could build a relationship with, or just talk to, about our career aspirations or about HR-related topics. We Mentors realize that we can be an asset to a student moving into this career, and who knows, we may be "HR friends" for life.