

HRACO Student Mentoring Program: *A Complete Guide*

HRACO Student Services Committee, 2009

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History of Mentoring Program

The Human Resources Association of Central Ohio's (HRACO) Student Mentoring program was initiated during the 2003-04 school year in a partnership with, and at the request of, the Ohio State University (OSU) student Graduate Human Resource Association (GHRA). In its first year, 18 students (all OSU graduate-level MLHRs) were matched with HR professionals from HRACO. Building on that initial success, a total of 45 students were matched in the second year, and the Mentoring Program was also extended to include the OSU undergraduate HR student chapter and undergraduate HR chapters at two other universities in central Ohio (Franklin and Capital). Participation in the program continues to grow each year with additional students and schools, such as Denison and DeVry Universities. The program is available to any full-time student pursuing a degree in Human Resources or with an emphasis in Human Resources.

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Definition and Purpose of Mentoring

Mentoring is an age-old tradition of pairing someone generally more senior and experienced who provides support, encouragement, and guidance to a student protégé. In an occupational setting, a mentor often serves as a trusted counselor or teacher. A mentor accelerates the protégé's growth by giving advice and sharing their experience and wisdom.

Therefore, mentoring is really about building a partnership between a mentor and protégé through the sharing of ideas, successes, and failures. Mentoring produces professionals with greater self-confidence in their own abilities and judgment and encourages them to embrace responsibility, accept challenges, and take action. A student protégé benefits from a mentoring relationship by increasing networking contacts, building relationships, and receiving career-related

advice. A mentor benefits, too, by offering advice to a student protégé, then watching them grow personally and professionally.

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What are the Goals of the HRACO / Student Mentoring Program?

- To pair HR professionals with HR students in a meaningful mentoring relationship, for one school year.
- To support the educational and professional development of HR students.
- To assist students new to human resources in becoming familiar with the human resources profession, its many roles, and the purpose it serves in the corporate world.
- To assist students with networking and gaining some relevant experience.

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Benefits of Mentoring in HRACO

- Giving back to the HR profession and local community with development of the next generation of HR.
- Being part of a program that has already helped hundreds of new HR professionals transition more successfully into the workforce.
- Opportunity to develop a lasting friendship.

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Who can request a Mentor?

- The program is targeted at full-time, Central-Ohio college students pursuing an HR field of study. This includes undergraduate and graduate-level students.
- Students should be a member of their student HR chapter and/or be a national SHRM member to participate.

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Why request a Mentor?

- Mentors can be a resource for advice on professional development and gaining an understanding of the various specializations in Human Resources.
- Mentors can offer their perspectives as working professionals and share knowledge of the core competencies needed to be successful as an entry-level HR specialist, generalist, or manager.
- Mentors can assist students interested in human resources in becoming more familiar with, and expose them to, HR issues, trends, and corporate protocol.
- Mentors are a point of contact for a wide variety of questions on HR-related topics.

- Mentors can advise students on such things as resume preparation, interviewing skills, networking techniques, internships, and possibly be a professional reference in a job search.

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What are the Time Commitment Requirements?

- A HRACO student mentoring relationship needs to be ongoing to be successful, and 1-2 hours per month is recommended. The initial meeting should be face-to-face.
- A plan with goals and objectives should be established along with a regular follow up plan.
- Students are responsible for taking the initiative and to maintain the relationship, but HR professionals shouldn't hesitate to follow up and encourage when necessary.
- Both parties mutually agree what works best for them, but getting together face-to-face initially is critical, and on occasion is certainly beneficial and encouraged.
- Time requirements of the mentors may consist of taking time out to answer emails and phone calls or meet with their student protégé.
- The most effective mentoring relationships involve monthly or periodic meetings. Relationships over the phone can work, but only using email is very ineffective. A combination of all three (meetings, phone, email) seems to work the best.

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General Guidelines

- A request for a mentor or to become a mentor, may be made at any time, although we strive to pair mentors and protégés in the fall for the benefit of working together for a full academic year.
- A mentoring arrangement generally lasts one academic year.
- Mentor and student pairings typically change every year, so both parties benefit by working with individuals that have different experiences and interests.
- Students are responsible for taking the initiative and to maintain the relationship.
- Some form of correspondence (meetings, phone, email) should take place at least once a month.
- Frequency of face-to-face meetings varies based upon the needs and availability of both individuals.
- Mentoring contributes to the professional development of human resource professionals and is endorsed by SHRM and the student HR chapters.
- Meetings between mentors and protégés are considered professional development activities.
- Information exchanged within the relationship is considered confidential.

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Recommendations for Mentors

Once the match is made, it is the responsibility of the student protégé to contact the mentor for an initial introductory meeting and for the two of you to work out details for a face-to-face meeting and/or review topics for discussion. Once both parties agree to the details of the mentoring relationship, it should be ongoing. Mentors need to be responsive and be available to their student protégés.

Effective mentoring does not require large amounts of time, but it does require the dedication of both parties. The most important feature of this program should be that both parties meet their commitment to each other and stay connected for the entire school year, with no one dropping out. Although the student is responsible for initiating contact with discussion topics, you are the one with the HR experience and knowledge that can suggest how to best assist the student in his/her endeavors. Some prompting, encouragement, and follow up on your part may be necessary, especially early in the relationship. If significant concerns or issues arise with your student protégé or the mentoring relationship, inform the responsible HRACO SSC coordinator.

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Mentoring Topics (just a partial list of ideas)

- Resume preparation and critique
- Interviewing techniques
- Professional attire
- Mock interviews
- Phone screens
- Informational interviews with HR co-workers
- Job search techniques
- Cover letters
- Thank you notes
- Networking
- Internships
- Shadowing
- Company tour
- Attend social events together
- Various components of HR specialization
 - Recruiting
 - Employee Relations
 - Compensation
 - Benefits
 - Training and Development
 - Safety
 - Human Resource Information Systems
- HR trends
- Outsourcing
- Union vs. non-union
- Legal Issues in HR

- HIPAA
-and the list goes on and on. Whatever topic makes sense, suggest it!

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Expectations and Recommendations for Student Protégés

The Human Resources Association of Central Ohio (HRACO) is here to help, but each university student chapter is responsible for effectively administering their Mentoring Program.

The primary beneficiary of this Mentoring Program is the student protégé, so the Mentoring Program's success is dependent on the active participation and commitment of the students. Stay committed and don't drop out! Students individually have to take the initiative and develop this relationship.

You will be required to provide feedback (how things are going) through a survey questionnaire administered by your student HR chapter coordinator, so this program can be monitored and improved upon. This will be required on two occasions (February and May). If significant concerns or issues arise with your mentoring relationship, inform your student coordinator.

Once you are matched with a mentor, your mentor will receive an electronic copy of your Protégé Information Form and your resume. You will receive a copy of their Mentor Information Form, and this will give you both a little knowledge of each other for a start. You are to initiate contact with your mentor within 72 hours. The faster you follow up, the better, as your mentor is expecting to hear from you! Always be prepared for the unexpected, in the event a mentor contacts you!

View your HR mentor as a "friend" or "HR buddy," not a "boss." They are there to provide you support, guidance, and advice, not to "rate" or "grade" you. So if there is something you would like to do or discuss with them, go ahead and ask. It's a very safe environment for you, and most Mentors would be willing to give you more time that you could ever ask for.

Remember, how you deliver a message is critically important to how you are perceived as a professional. So think about "how" you communicate! You should be well prepared ahead of time for any meeting or conversation with an HR professional, and be on time. Think ahead about what you might like to gain from this relationship. For emails, think "carefully and thoughtfully" as you're writing it, and SPELL CHECK before sending. Information exchanged between the mentor and protégé should be confidential.

Thank your mentor for their time and interest in this program. Do it with a smile and tell them you really appreciate that they are giving of their time for you. During your initial conversation, include something like, "I'm anxious to get to meet with you and get to know you."

Request an initial face-to-face meeting. Make sure your mentor knows your schedule/availability and transportation concerns, if any. Encourage them to come visit you.

See if you can get the mentor to commit to a specific day or an amount of time, say 15-20 minutes every Wednesday, or an hour for coffee every third Monday of a month, etc. By doing so, you can establish a regular follow up plan.

Ask your mentor to analyze and critique your resume, or evaluate your communication skills, or presentation style, whatever. This will really help open the door for them to be helpful to you. This is constructive criticism at its best, in a safe and friendly environment, with enormous benefit to you.

Consider sending your mentor an email on a regular basis, about every 2 weeks. This email helps encourage them to keep you in their minds and respond to you as well. As your relationship builds with your mentor, consider including such general topics in your email as: what's going on at school, updates on your classes, your community involvement, accomplishments, obstacles, extracurricular activities, part-time jobs, career aspirations, whatever. Remember, this mentor is a friend, and these topics are of interest to them. This email also serves another purpose, on a regular basis, in that it will force you to self-assess what you've been up to and how your student-mentor relationship is progressing.

Get out-of-the-box and consider asking the mentor to attend a school function or to meet for dinner or attend a social event with you. The more ideas you come up with, the better the relationship can potentially become.

Value and take advantage of this opportunity. The benefits to you can be enormous.

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How does the Mentoring Program work?

- The HRACO Student Services Committee (SSC) designates a SSC committee member to be the primary coordinator for HRACO members interested in being mentors.
- Each participating university is required to designate a student and/or a faculty/staff member to be their student coordinator for the Mentoring Program. Coordinators serve as the primary point(s) of contact for students interested in being mentored, and it is also a significant administrative responsibility. At OSU, there would be one student coordinator for the undergraduate HRA and one student coordinator for the GHRA.
- The HRACO SSC coordinator solicits and collects electronic Mentor Information Forms from HRACO professionals, and each student coordinator solicits and collects electronic Student Protégé Information Forms and resumes from their students.
- These forms provide information about the student protégés' professional goals and objectives and the mentors' experience and reasons for being a mentor. This information is shared among the student coordinators, SSC members, and faculty/staff, as appropriate, in order to match students with mentors.
- Matching may occur in a discussion group setting (early in the school year) or as a result of a one-on-one discussion between the SSC coordinator, a student coordinator, or faculty/staff member, since students can enter the program and request a mentor at any time during the school year.

- Matches are communicated in writing (email) by the respective student coordinators in a joint email to each pairing of mentor and student protégé.
- Once the match is communicated, it is the responsibility of the protégé to contact the mentor (within 72 hours) to set up an initial face-to-face meeting to review topics for discussion. The student is the primary party responsible for success.
- Feedback will be required by responding to a survey questionnaire on at least two occasions during the school year (February and May). Feedback from the student protégés will go to the student coordinators and feedback from the HR professionals will come to the SSC coordinator. This feedback ensures each mentoring relationship is going well and helps improve the Mentoring Program overall.

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