

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR THE HAWL MENTORING PROGRAM

Why Do We Need Mentors?

- To introduce the law school student to appropriate norms and behaviors of the profession.
- To help the student recognize ethical dilemmas more quickly.
- To help the practice of law reach a higher level of professionalism with better prepared lawyers.
- To help reduce the stress of the unknown experienced by law students as they prepare to enter the profession.
- To help women realize that they can have successful careers while being able to balance it with their family and personal lives.
- To help make you a better, more professional lawyer.

What Does a Mentor Do?

- Offers support and encouragement.
- Provides advice and guidance.
- Helps to bypass bureaucracy and provide access to resources – ‘informal networking’.
- Uses their position to help the student gain an opportunity to demonstrate knowledge & skills.
- Clarifies the values and goals, the “big picture” and “unwritten rules,” of the legal profession.
- Coaches and provides corrective feedback.
- Provides information to help student avoid harmful situations.
- Serves as a role model, demonstrating appropriate job behaviors, attitudes and social skills.
- **While you may wish to offer career advice and assistance, you are NOT expected or obligated to offer employment to this student.**

Why should I participate as a mentor?

- You can help enhance the spirit and intent of the lawyer’s code of conduct by promoting professionalism.
- As an officer of the court, whether in private or government service, you have a duty to insure the high ethical and professional standards designed to protect the public.
- The public’s trust and confidence in the whole professional group is influenced by each lawyer’s performance.
- Mentoring forces you to reflect on what you are doing as a lawyer and allows you to experience a fresh sense of accomplishment.

My student does not respond to my e-mails. What can I do to encourage responses?

Keep trying. Ask different questions about classes, goals and school related activities. This may be one case where you could try short, yes/no questions, so the student can give a short response. You could try using open-ended questions (why, what, where, how) in hopes that the student may find a topic of interest to write about. Explain how valuable a mentoring relationship can be in one of your e-mails. If you do not get a response after several tries, please contact the HAWL Mentoring Program. If you would like to continue mentoring, the HAWL Mentoring Program will try to find you another student.

How should I communicate with the student?

The Mentoring Program provides several opportunities for you to interact with the students. Other than these scheduled activities, you can meet in person or communicate through email.

How often should I meet with the student?

The HAWL Mentoring Program requires one face to face meeting between the mentor and mentee each semester during the school year, although the mentor and mentee can meet more frequently if so desired. The HAWL Mentoring Program strongly encourages you and your mentee to attend the Mentoring Program Kickoff Event, Shadow Day, the Holiday Party, the Spring Mixer and the Annual Dinner Banquet. In addition to these events, the HAWL Mentoring Program highly recommends that you attend the HAWL Judicial Reception, the Diversity Picnic and the HAWL Softball Tournament. All other contact between you and your mentee is up to you.

How long will the mentoring relationship last?

The HAWL Mentoring Program assigns mentors with mentees once a year, typically in the fall semester. The Mentoring Program is designed to last until the end of the spring semester. The HAWL Mentoring Program asks that you commit to mentoring for the full school year. However, we hope that you would consider mentoring the student until they graduate. After that, the relationship is entirely up to you and the student.

Are my conversations with the student confidential and/or privileged?

Generally, the student should feel comfortable asking you any question. They should be assured that you will not be judgmental about their questions and concerns. However, they should also be aware of your obligations to the legal profession and duties under the Rules of Professional Conduct.

What happens if the student raises a question or situation that I do not feel capable of answering?

Questions such as: "I committed a felony, should I tell my law school or The Board of Bar Examiners?" or they discuss client information learned while clerking for a firm?

This goes back to your obligation as a licensed member of the Bar.

(Some of the information provided herein was obtained from the Henry Latimer Center for Professionalism on the Florida Bar website.)