

M.M.P.

Minority Mentor Program



PennState Law | University Park, PA

Tips for Faculty and Staff Mentors

About the Minority Mentor Program

The Minority Mentor Program (MMP) began with a matching seed grant from the Office Educational Equity of Penn State University and now operates as an independent program at Penn State Law. The mission of the MMP aims to foster support and mentorship to minority law students by “matching” them with an “internal” faculty or senior administrator and an alum. Alumni mentors are minority professionals in the legal field and can help mentees achieve academic success and emotional well-being for the duration of the students’ law school journey. Additionally, the mentorship program continues to provide invaluable support after students enter the legal profession.

Role and Responsibilities of the Internal Mentor

Being a mentor to a minority law student is an important opportunity to connect personally and professionally with someone who you can help grow and excel in law school and beyond. A good mentoring relationship can be richly rewarding for both mentee and mentor. You can serve as a trusted adviser, providing input and feedback as your mentee progresses in school, leading to their career. The first year of law school can be challenging and therefore building a strong mentoring relationship from the beginning is important for our students to achieve academic success and feel welcome.

Learn About Your Mentee

Gather information about your mentee’s background and undergraduate experience. Why did they decide to pursue a legal education? Why did they choose to pursue it at Penn State Law? Get to know about the lived experiences of your mentee and how these experiences have shaped them.

Learn about the Needs of Minority Law Students

Learn more about the needs of minority law students and the important role mentoring plays. Underrepresented law students have unique needs. They must deal with societal pressures and frequent negative stereotypes as well as usually being a token in their law school (Thomas et al., 2007). Mentoring relationships among underrepresented law students is a vital component in the academic experience (Culver, 2017; Patton, 2009).

Schedule Time to Meet

Take the lead in scheduling a meeting with your mentee and. Your first call or meeting can be one-on-one time where you can talk informally, discuss expectations for your relationship and plan to speak/email semi-regularly. Talk with your mentee about how often they would like to connect and preferred methods to do so. The mentor relationship works best if there is a commitment to ongoing sharing, authentic conversation, and relationship building.

Topics to Discuss with your Mentee

Minority law students benefit from mentors who can provide academic and emotional support and career advice. Internal mentors can also help fill a gap for students who are the first in their family to go to law school. In the past, dialogue between mentees and mentors have included advice on careers and networking, challenges related to COVID-19 and racial trauma, transitioning to law school, achieving academic success, how to navigate microaggressions, communicating with professors, and difficult topics in the classroom.

Monitor Progress

Make a habit of checking in to monitor your mentee's progress. Some of the entry points for meeting after final exams, before a writing deadline, or before job or internship season.

Have Fun

Enjoy the time you spend together. Celebrating milestones and accomplishments can be an important part of a mentor relationship.

Resources and Questions

Read more about best practices for mentors:

https://www.lclidnet.org/media/uploads/resource/Mentoring_Tool_Kit_092021.pdf

If you have any questions, need ideas, or if there is anything I can do to help, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Wende' Ferguson (she/her), Associate Dean for Diversity Equity and Inclusion and Assistant Dean for Student Services, at wpf5069@psu.edu.