

Abramson Scholarship Foundation Mentoring Experience

THANK YOU for serving as a Mentor with the Abramson Scholarship Foundation (ASF). We have developed a unique and personal mentoring program for our Scholars which is managed by ASF staff and volunteers.

Every Abramson Scholar is paired with one mentor. Our mentoring model engages Abramson Scholars or Mentees with as much support as possible. Most Abramson Scholars come from disadvantaged backgrounds and truly appreciate the mentoring relationship and benefit greatly from the experience. Most are the first in their families to attend college. Advice from caring, engaged professionals in the community will make a significant difference in their lives.

Your role as an Abramson Mentor will be to provide academic, professional and emotional guidance and support as your Scholar navigates the college process and works to secure internships/jobs during the summers and after graduation. By establishing trust, an open rapport, and a proactive approach, you can help your Scholar make the best decisions when planning their course schedule, choosing a major, fulfilling academic requirements to graduate on time, developing effective study habits, managing time, pacing themselves, producing a résumé, seeking academic, physical or mental health support on campus, making the most of their college's resources, navigating the social scene and campus clubs/activities, securing internships, and evaluating career options.

Building trust takes time and effort. Frequent, yet respectful and tactful, communication, as well as efforts to establish a genuine personal connection are the most important parts of this relationship. Meet in person (and/or through video chat) with your Scholar several times over the summer, so that you can reinforce the relationship before your Scholar heads to college in the fall. Meet again during school breaks and video chat at least every other month. For those of you who mentor a local student, aim to meet in person a few times throughout the semester as well.

Students' needs are broad and unique, however, and we want to encourage mentors to draw on our Abramson Network of Advisors in various fields of skills and expertise, to supplement your mentorship as needed.

Our Abramson Scholars experience one of their greatest life transitions as they complete their college education. Having adults that are present, available and supportive are important attributes of the ASF Mentoring Program.

Mentor Expectations

~ COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR SCHOLAR ~

- **Communicate regularly.** Proactively communicate 2-3 times per month with your mentee. Determine early on how frequently you will communicate and preferred methods: text, emails, phone or video calls (e.g. FaceTime/Zoom/Google Hangouts); we encourage a combination of the above. Insist on speaking via video call or phone a few times per semester because more can be gauged from voice or video interactions than from text or email. Be sure you have up-to-date contact information for your mentee and that they have yours.
- **Get to know each other.** Meet in person (or video chat, if in person is not possible) a few times a year when your Scholar is in town (Summer, Thanksgiving, Winter & Spring Break). The first summer is particularly important to establishing a trusted relationship. Learn about their family, interests, passions, journey thus far, their main concerns about college, what thoughts they have about possible careers, go through the courses they are planning to take. Share your life story, challenges, and experiences with your Scholar. You are here because you are kind, giving, and compassionate; let these qualities shine through your sincerity and genuine commitment and Scholars will learn to trust you. If your Scholar will be studying in the DC. area, meet in person a few times during the semester.
- **Tip: Start with open-ended questions.** This will allow for free-flowing conversations, which is especially important when establishing your relationship or reestablishing contact. Some examples are: What do you like to do for fun? What are your concerns about college? What's a typical day like for you? What's been most surprising to you this semester? What do you hope to experience that you haven't already? Tell me about your family. Tell me more about...
- **Take extra care during times of stress.** If your Scholar is going through a particularly difficult time, check in more regularly to make sure they feel supported. Send stressed students frequent encouraging notes without expecting a response; let them know that you are thinking about them and rooting for them during challenging times, and remind them that you are there to listen if they need to vent, brainstorm, or prioritize. Our efforts matter even if the student doesn't say thanks.
- **Show your mentee that you are listening to them.** After meeting or talking with them, follow up with an email, text, or phone message highlighting what was discussed, any follow-up action on your part and theirs, reminding them that you are there for them, and the next time you plan to communicate. By doing so, you are modeling the importance of follow-up communication and showing appreciation for the relationship (all helpful for their own professional and personal development as well).
- **Model a balanced attitude that appreciates the successes, but also the challenges for what they are: opportunities to learn and grow.** For many Scholars, college is a gateway to a dream job or lifestyle. As motivating as that is, it can also be a lot of pressure. College is filled with ups, downs and

everything in between. Remind Scholars that college is a place to process and figure out what they like to do, don't like to do, and to explore the various and different parts of their identity and interests.

- **Beware of silence.** When Scholars are not connecting with mentors despite your insistence, it is *frequently* a sign of distress and/or embarrassment that they are struggling. We are investing in them and they may be worried that we will be disappointed. They may also think that there is nothing you can do to help. They may even fear that they could lose their scholarship. This is exactly the time to consistently reach out and offer support and problem-solving wisdom. Remind your Scholar that you are always there to listen, encourage, and help them prioritize. It does not matter why they are facing a problem or concern, you are there to help them move forward from that moment onward, without judgement.

- **Learn all about your Scholar's college.** You can be most helpful to your Scholar if you research their college's curriculum, requirements, and resources (mental health, writing center, tutoring, career services, academic & career advising, study abroad options). Your Scholar's academic calendar as well as core and major requirements are online and easily accessible, so it is easy to familiarize yourself with them. Consider adding key dates to your calendar (pre-registration & add/drop deadlines, midterms/finals, winter and spring breaks) so you know the right time to reach out to your Scholar.

- **Take interest in your Scholar's curriculum planning.** Ask pointed questions; it is a great chance to talk about what courses they are taking, what they are interested in, whether they are fulfilling graduation and major requirements, or if they have a major research project due at the end of the semester. Do they plan to study abroad and, if so, are they considering this when planning their courses? The more you learn about their field of study and requirements, the richer your interactions will be. *Your involvement, the voice of experience and reason may help ensure that they graduate on time and prevent them from accumulating even more stifling debt.*

- **Encourage your Scholar to visit their professors often and early on.** Tell them to go to office hours early on and introduce themselves, ask questions about the class, and ask if professors have any advice to help them succeed in their class. If they are first generation students, they may even share this and ask for any advice and resources that may help them succeed at that college. Professors will likely appreciate this, take an interest, and may share valuable information.

- **Major and Career Guidance are key.** From the start, ask your Scholar: What are their favorite and stronger subjects; What possible careers do they have in mind or would like to explore?; What majors/minors may they consider; What practical/transferable skills do they wish to develop while in college? Are they keeping in mind the return of their college degree as an investment? Most of our Scholars do not have the luxury to explore courses freely and see where it takes them. Every semester means substantially higher student loans. College majors frequently do not translate into clear career paths or starting salaries. Most of our Scholars will need to quickly secure a good job upon graduation and, realistically, most positions expect graduates to have prior experience or transferrable skills. Many colleges do not assign career advisors and students must proactively and thoughtfully seek out

the help of Career Services. However, Scholars may not be thinking about these difficult issues and could benefit greatly from your pragmatism in tactfully highlighting their importance.

- **Help your Scholar build a career path and basic tools.** Periodically review your Scholar's résumé, LinkedIn page, and basic cover letter to ensure that they have sharp and up-to-date tools to pursue internships and jobs. Consider writing a letter of recommendation for them as a mentor, which they can submit for internships, jobs, and academic programs. The summer is a crucial time to update these basic tools and to network with professionals in their field of interest who may provide perspective as well as practical and effective internship strategies, shadowing, or internship opportunities. Urge your Scholar to apply for summer internships and jobs the prior summer. Many employers start the recruitment process through the universities the summer prior and in the early fall, so encourage your Scholar to explore career resources offered by their universities (internship listings on Handshake, making appointments with Career Services office, reading job postings via emails from their college, etc.). Brainstorm good leads with them. Reach out to the Mentoring Committee for access to field professionals in our Abramson Network.
- **Big issue or decision? Talk to you first.** Urge your Scholar to always share a big issue or run a major decision by you: struggling academically, dropping a class, taking a semester off, changing majors, feelings of homesickness, anxiety or depression, thoughts about dropping out.
- **There is *always* something more you can do to help your mentee reach a little higher.** Some Scholars will need more support than others, but even the most organized, driven, and well-adjusted student can benefit from a caring sounding board, positive feedback, perspective, experience, and access to professional networks.
- **Check in/nudge your Scholar to RSVP** in a timely manner to our events and **encourage them to participate**, especially if you will be there. The earlier you ask them, the more likely they will be there to meet you.

~ STAY CONNECTED WITH ASF ~

- **Respond promptly to any communication from ASF**, including prompt RSVPs to events, surveys, and check-ins by ASF staff or volunteers.
- **Attend all Abramson events throughout the year.** An annual calendar will be provided each summer so you may plan accordingly. We will also host virtual events and expect you to make every effort to participate. This is important so that you can connect with your Scholar, participate in our ongoing training and support, and to strengthen your ties to the ASF community. We promise your efforts will make the mentoring experience even more gratifying.
- **Read our Mentoring Matters newsletter.** ASF will provide important updates and reminders for your check-ins with Scholars, including suggested topics to address during that time of year, and much more to make your mentoring experience more effective and gratifying.

- **Keep us updated by using GradSnapp and by responding to our surveys.** Our online student management platform is VERY easy to use and an essential tool for Abramson to track Scholars' progress, assess the Mentor-Scholar relationship, and to reduce the burden on our Scholars to keep several of us updated with details. GradSnapp is a depository of student information where mentors and other ASF representatives can quickly log a summary of their interactions with the Scholars. It's almost like sending us a quick email but it gets stored in our system, and it's as simple as:
 - Clicking "Create Note"
 - Selecting from 4 drop down menus: Date, Type of interaction (text, video chat, email, in person), Category (personal, general, academic, etc), Time spent
 - Writing a Subject Line
 - Summarizing the main points covered

- **Share your *Special Moments* and photos with us.** If you have a particularly meaningful interaction with your Scholar, post it on GradSnapp, and send us a note (clear it with your Scholar first, however). You can help us inspire other Mentors and we can share your highlight in our social media and seasonal newsletters. This is also the best way to show our supporters the strength of our mentoring program. Share a joint photo with us every time you meet your Scholar. It makes us happy and reassures us that your relationship is going well.

- **Warn us promptly about red flags.** Inform us ASAP if you are having difficulties maintaining regular communication with your Abramson Scholar, despite your insistent efforts, or if it is clear that they are struggling. Email the Mentoring Committee at mentoring@abramsonfoundation.org.

- **Think of ways that you can help strengthen our program.** If you or one of your contacts can help us with professional development initiatives, participate in a virtual or in-person career panel to provide perspective, advise within various professional fields (especially non-legal fields such as engineering, business, accounting, finance, health care, teaching, FinTech, STEM, etc.), or provide an internship for one of our Scholars, please connect us!

- **Share our story.** Follow us on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn & Twitter.

- **ALWAYS Shop on AmazonSmile** and effortlessly support Abramson! **AmazonSmile** is a website operated by Amazon with the same products, prices, and shopping features as Amazon.com, but when you shop on AmazonSmile, it will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charitable organization of your choice. Tell your friends and family to support your work by supporting us!

We are always available to answer any questions or help you in any way.

For mentoring questions, contact the Mentoring Committee: mentoring@abramsonfoundation.org

For questions regarding Scholars' financial needs, contact the Executive Director: Danielle Verbiest (danielle@abramsonfoundation.org) or call/text (202) 470-5425