

MENTOR HANDBOOK



Version 1.0

Introduction: The Black Future Lawyers Program

Black Future Lawyers Program (BFL) is a collaboration between UofT Law, our Black Law Students Association (BLSA), members of our Black alumni community, and the broader legal profession. Funded by UofT's Provost's office, BFL offers supports and engagement opportunities to Black undergraduate students who aspire to go to law school and become lawyers. BFL's goal is to increase the number of Black students who apply and gain admission to UofT Law and other law schools across Canada and beyond.

The BFL Mentorship Program fosters supportive connections between Black undergraduate students and Black lawyers. BFL students will benefit by gaining exposure to a lawyer's support and experience, as well as learning about different career paths within the legal profession.

This handbook was created to support you as a mentor and to help you get the most from your participation in the Black Future Lawyers Mentor Program. In this booklet you will find a brief introduction to mentoring, along with a collection of supports and resources.

See Website: bfl.law.utoronto.ca

Why mentor?

According to Hatton-Yeo et al (2011) most adults have participated in some sort of mentoring relationship either formally or informally. If you have been assisting someone else to grow and develop towards their potential, manage changes, and grasp new opportunities, you are participating in some sort of mentoring.

By participating in the BFL Mentoring Program, we hope that our mentors will create one-to-one relationships based on encouragement, constructive comments, openness, mutual trust, respect, and a willingness to learn and share from each other. Research studies have found that mentoring provides young people with support, guidance and opportunities to help them succeed in life and meet their goals (Hatton-yeo, 2011). Mentoring has the ability to create caring, empathetic, confident and long-lasting relations. Mentoring allows for both parties to tap into existing knowledge, skills and experiences.

What is a Good Mentor-Mentee Relationship?

A good mentor-mentee relationship is an interactive, mutual and has a genuine commitment from the parties involved. Mentoring is a relationship that is active and facilitates a process meant to promote learning and the development of the mentee. Good mentoring depends on a reciprocal learning relationship between you and your mentee. Together you form a partnership to work collaboratively on achieving mutually defined goals that focus on developing your skills, ability, knowledge and thinking. Zachary et al (2009) define this through 5 elements: reciprocity, learning, partnership, relationship, and mutually defined goals.

Reciprocity

This means you and your mentee have equal engagement. Essentially you both are responsible for nurturing the relationship. You both have much to gain from the relationship. Recognizing that your mentee has something to bring to table as well is critical.

Partnership

We encourage the involvement of both mentee and mentor as partners. Research has shown that when the mentee and mentor focus on a collaborative approach to mentoring, it requires both the mentor and mentee to bring their experience, history, diversity and individuality to the partnership (Hatton-Yeo, 2011).

Relationship

It takes time to develop meaningful relationships. This is also true in mentoring; it is difficult to learn if you don't feel supported and secure in the relationship. Therefore, it is critical that mentoring partners work on maintaining and establishing trust. To have authentic and honest conversations and commitment, there needs to be a solid foundation that underpins the relationship (Zachary et al, 2009).

Mutually defined goals

To effectively mentor it is important to define the goals both you and your mentee want to achieve. Clarifying and articulating your learning goals can lead to a satisfactory outcome. Once you outline your goals it is also important to continuously revisit them throughout the mentoring relationship to stay on track.

Mentoring Best Practices

Best practices are a set of guidelines, ethics or ideas that represent the most efficient and effective course of action. The best practices set out below are recommended ways you can gain the most out of your mentorship relationship.

Confidentiality & Professionalism

- Establishing confidentiality in the mentoring relationship is important to creating successful mentorship experiences. Confidentiality will build trust and promote open communication between mentors and their mentees. Mentors may be told confidential information about their mentee in order to best support them in the program, and Mentees may be told personal/confidential stories by their mentors.
- Mentors and mentees agree to maintain strict confidentiality in regard to information received in their respective roles within the BFL mentorship relationship. Mentors and mentees agree that all matters discussed in the mentorship relationship will be kept confidential unless otherwise agreed upon by both participants.

Transparency

- Mentorship is an exchange of ideas, experiences and perspectives. Mentor/mentee relationships are built on trust and professionalism.
- Mentorship is most effective when both the mentor and mentee are open and honest with each other about their struggles, successes, expectations and experiences.

Meeting Places

- It is common practice to meet in public spaces, such as cafés (especially and the beginning of your mentor/mentee relationship). This way, mentors and mentees are meeting on common ground and in an approachable, casual manner.
- When it is not possible to meet in person, mentors and mentees should meet via an online platform like Zoom, or by phone.

Communication

- In most successful mentorship programs, mentors and mentees speak at least once a month to maintain ongoing communication and to build a strong relationship. Given COVID-19 we recommend meeting via video conference until public health restrictions are lifted.

Social Media

- The mentorship relationships mentors and mentees are building are exciting and you may want to share that on social media-feel free to do so! However, be mindful that the confidentiality mentioned earlier applies to social media as well. Please seek out consent from your partner before posting a photo and/or info about your mentoring experience. Be mindful of what you post and be sure not to include personal details pertaining to your mentor/mentee in your posts.

Sample Questions for Mentors to ask their Mentees

Background Questions

- What do you hope that you will get out of this relationship?
- What are your goals for our mentoring relationship?
- Why did you decide to participate in the BFL Mentorship program?
- Have you been mentored before? How did it benefit you?

Career and Professional Experiences

- What are you currently taking in university?
- What are some things about being a lawyer that you're curious about?
- Tell me about your experience in university so far. How are you liking it?
- What are some of the educational/personal reasons you want to be a lawyer?
- Are there certain things you've become involved in to help prepare you for law school?
- How can I help you to achieve your goals?

Frequently Asked Questions about the BFL Mentoring Program

How long is my commitment as a mentor?

Each mentorship period lasts runs from early fall until May of the following year which follows the natural school year. In May an email will be sent to both mentors and mentees to formally recognize the official end of the BFL mentorship program.

What should I do if I am having trouble contacting my mentee?

If after being matched with a mentee you are unable to reach them, please send an email to bfl.law@utoronto.ca and we will try to get in touch with the mentee. If we still cannot contact the mentee, we will rematch you with a mentee from the waiting list.

How often am I expected to meet with my mentee?

We ask all mentors to commit to meeting their mentee at least (3) times within an academic year which runs from September – May.

Who should I contact if I have any questions or concerns?

If you require any support from the BFL team, please send an email to bfl.law@utoronto.ca.

Mentoring Resources

The Impact of mentoring

- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/maryabbajay/2019/01/20/mentoring-matters-three-essential-element-of-success/#1f5c35a745a9>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/26/smarter-living/why-mentoring-matters-how-to-get-started.html>
- <https://www.practicepro.ca/wp-content/uploads/2002/04/2002-04-mentorship-lsuc.pdf>
- https://www.huffpost.com/entry/mentoring-desparately-nee_b_8193238
- <https://trainingindustry.com/magazine/issue/making-it-personal-the-four-pillars-of-high-impact-mentoring/>

How to be a Great Mentor

- <https://hbr.org/2017/02/what-the-best-mentors-do>
- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/laurencebradford/2018/01/31/8-tips-for-an-amazing-mentor-relationship/#454c55b321e2>

The importance of Mentoring in the Black Law Community

- <https://www.readersdigest.ca/culture/mentoring-young-black-women/>
- <https://www.utoronto.ca/news/u-t-mentorship-program-helps-black-youth-pursue-post-secondary-education>
- <https://www.bigbrothersvancouver.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Mentoring-Relationships-Study-REPORT-June-13-2014.pdf>

References

Hatton-Yeo, A., & Telfer, S. (2011). *A guide to mentoring across generations*. Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice.

Hudson, Peter B. "[PDF] Forming the Mentor-Mentee Relationship.: Semantic Scholar." N.p., 01 Jan. 1970. Web. 05 July 2020.

Zachary, Lois J., and Lory A. Fischler. *The mentee's guide: Making mentoring work for you*. John Wiley & Sons, 2009.