Making the Most of the McGeorge Alumni Mentor Network

The goal of the Alumni Mentor Network is to initiate mentoring relationships between McGeorge alumni and law students or recent graduates. The Network provides students with a means to obtain informal advice on a wide range of topics including law school, legal practice areas, and professional development. It is an invaluable way for students and recent graduates to begin to develop a professional network early in their legal careers.

Remember: the Mentor Network is not intended to serve as a recruitment device or job placement program.

1. Selecting a Mentor
   a. Think about why you want a mentor and what type of information you’re seeking—talk with a career advisor if you’re not sure how a mentor could help you.
   b. Consider selecting mentors from a variety of practice and geographic areas.
   c. Research potential mentors in order to select the best match.
      i. Consult Martindale, WESTLAW, LEXIS and search the web for information about the mentor and his or her firm/employer.

2. Initiating Contact
   a. Your initial contact can be made through email or with a phone call. Your Alumni Mentor Network confirmation email will include your mentor’s email address. The mentor is expecting you to initiate the first communication.
      i. Be professional and if emailing, remember to proofread! If you need a sample of an initial email, please see the CDO handout called “Informational Interviewing.”
      ii. If calling, consider writing a script to help make your delivery concise.
      iii. The first communication can be intimidating; if you want additional advice about reaching out to your mentor, make an appointment with your career advisor.
   b. Be mindful of the pressures inherent in legal practice when contacting their mentors.
      i. Be patient when waiting for replies.
      ii. If you have not heard back within a week or two, follow up with a polite email or call.
      iii. If several weeks go by, please contact Molly Stafford at mstafford@pacific.edu.
   c. If you meet in person, make sure you arrange a meeting place that is convenient for your mentor.
   d. If you are working with a mentor out of our geographic area, you can still get valuable information through phone or email contact and you may schedule in-person appointments when you are in the mentor’s region—just make sure to plan ahead since attorneys are busy!

3. Preparing for the First Meeting
   a. Background research
      i. Learn as much about your mentor as you can—practice area, clients, big cases, accomplishments, or the professional organizations they belong to.
   b. Prepare questions and talking points (see below for ideas).
   c. If you and your mentor will be meeting in person, make sure to dress professionally.
4. Potential Conversation Starters
   a. Career path advice—information about different practice areas, practice environments (i.e., big firms, solo practice, nonprofit, government), and where and how to gain practical experience.
   b. Course selection for law school (1st or 2nd year students).
   c. Effective studying and exam-taking habits.
   d. Steps to take during law school to prepare for the bar exam.
   e. Balancing professional and personal life demands.
   f. Mentor’s workload balance (e.g., courtroom exposure, case load, level of client interaction, research and writing).
   g. Strategies and opportunities for networking in mentor’s field, including professional associations, boards, and institutes to join.
   h. What do you like most about your job?
   i. What publications do you read? What professional organizations do you belong to?

5. Following Up
   a. Always send a thank-you note. An email or handwritten note is an appropriate way to show your appreciation for your mentor’s time and help.
   b. Some may consist of multiple conversations or meetings, while others might be as short as one email exchange or a phone call.
   c. If you’d like to connect with your mentor again, here are some ideas:
      i. Email updates or questions as they come up. An easy follow-up email is a request to be referred to other practitioners within the field.
      ii. Ask if you can meet in your mentor’s office, or ask to shadow your mentor for a few hours.
      iii. Schedule a meeting over breakfast or lunch (offer to pay—they are volunteering their time! If they insist on paying, then it’s okay to accept, of course).
      iv. Ask if you can attend a bar function or other professional meeting with your mentor.
      v. See if your mentor would have time to conduct a mock interview with you, or critique your resume and cover letter.

✓ Demonstrate your commitment to your career
Mentors are more willing to give you their time and attention when they know that you are committed to your career and the legal profession. Show that you’re motivated and mature. Be responsive—answer phone calls, emails, and requests from your mentor promptly and professionally. Check your outgoing voicemail message—is it professional?

✓ Even though the Mentor Network is not intended to serve as a recruitment device or job placement program, your mentor may be willing to help with career-related questions such as, “What advice would you give a candidate seeking a position in this field?” or “What is the best way to find out about job openings on this field?”

✓ Keep your mentor posted. Let them know the impact he or she is having on your professional development—tell them how you used their advice.

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Contact Molly Stafford at 916.739.7011 if issues arise or if you have any questions.

Last updated August 6, 2013