Student Mentorship Guide

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Introduction

The University education environment can be intimidating for newcomers who find themselves in world of intellectual engagement where achievement and determination to excel are the key motivation. The busy life as students move from one class to the next, from one project or assignment to the next requires well focused, diligent, and self-driven students. However, when new students join universities, it is common to get confused and not know, which programs to pursue, who is a good friend or how to manage their newly discovered lifestyle. Often, new students feel like prisoners who have just been released from *parental jail.* Having been under the care of their parents and schoolteachers, these students find new freedom in the universities where they are free to make decisions without parental or teachers' supervision. This newly found *freedom* can lead them to divert their interest from education to non-academic interests. Those unable to remain focused on education find themselves going astray leading to poor performance. Continuous poor performance results in poor grades and eventually being discontinued from the universities.

The experience of many lecturers and administrators in the universities, show that thousands of students do not pay adequate attention on education and career growth leading to discontinuation. The results of being discontinued from university is loss of money paid in tuition, stationery, accommodation, transport, not to mention psychological torture and negative long-term effects to the students and parents. Research indicates that a quarter (25%) of students joining universities do not finish their studies as they fail to perform either in their early years of education or fall-off somewhere during their course of studies.

To change the increasing trend of poor academic performance of students in the universities and other tertiary institutions, a good mentorship program is essential. A mentorship program is a well-thought-out plan that progressively addresses students' needs and makes their university lives productive. The program empowers students with appropriate soft skills required beyond the university environment. Similarly, such a program enables students to share their academic and associated challenges with trained mentors who work hard to help them adjust easily to the university lifestyle. Research has shown that a good mentorship program is attributed to increased academic performance, professional development, positive self-image, psychological well-being, and emotional stability (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2007). The result is success in education, transformed competent graduates who are confident and able to adjust to different situations outside the university.

This mentorship guide is prepared with students' needs in mind. The purpose is to equip students with the right discipline and competencies required to succeed in their education in Daystar University. The guide also addresses other essential life-skill tips meant to prepare students for life after graduation. The guide also aims to empower students with the University core values of excellence, trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, caring and integration of faith and learning.

Who is a mentor?

According to Webster's New World Dictionary, a mentor is "a person looked upon for wise advice and guidance." Such a person is involved in numerous roles in the mentorship process, namely coaching, guiding, teaching, inspiring, supporting and modeling. A mentor is a person who helps the mentee realize his or her potential without forcing change. In the process of mentorship, the mentor does not baby-sit the mentee but assists him or her become an independent thinker able to make own decisions. The mentor is also a good listener who promotes positive thinking without negatively judging the mentee's ability or potential. In the case of Daystar University, a mentor is a qualified instructor appointed by the University to carry out the role of mentorship to students.

Why a mentorship program?

A structured mentorship program is beneficial to the students as it equips them with appropriate knowledge and competencies necessary to enable them sail through *the education waters which can easily drown poorly prepared swimmers (students).*

The Daystar University mentorship program ensures that the student:

- Is attached to an experienced expert to guide in academic matters.
- Gets an opportunity to share personal academic challenges.
- Gains confidence by knowing there is someone willing to listen and help find solutions to the challenges experienced.
- Learns from mentors who have wide experience and knowledge about university education.
- Adjusts well in the university academic lifestyle.
- Makes the right academic decisions in terms of courses or degree programs to pursue.
- Grows and matures spiritually based on the University's biblical foundation.

Mentors' Roles

To effectively mentor, one needs certain skills without which mentorship becomes ineffective. It is important that the mentor maintain student's confidence, ego, and dignity. The key roles played by a Daystar mentor are:

1. **Coach:** This is the ability of a mentor to unlock the potential of a student with an aim to improve performance. In Daystar, a coach is a facilitator of learning where he or she guides the student to discover hidden talents or abilities required to achieve desired goals. Though a coach may know the solution to a problem, the desire is to make the students find answers.

2. **Counselor:** A counselor is a trained professional who gives advice and guidance on how to tackle social, personal, and psychological issues facing the needy person. In terms of mentorship, a counselor listens to the student and assesses the type of help needed. It is very important that a counselor uses approaches that instill confidence in the students under the mentorship program. Without confidence and trust, the whole process becomes an exercise in futility. It

should also be emphasized that should the mentor discover deeply held issues that require other professional intervention, referral to more specialized help is recommended (see different mentorship programs in this guide).

3. **Relationship builder:** We are all social beings and desire to relate with others. It is the responsibility of the mentor to connect the student being mentored to the right academic groups in the University and beyond. Such groups include the right students, teachers or potential employers who may assist the student improve academic performance or get a job.

4. **Guide:** A guide is someone who gives direction. Using professional experience, a mentor can give the right guidance that would result in positive fruits in the life of the students. The guidance also covers issues like the subjects to start with in a semester, courses to drop in case of poor performance, the relationship between subjects and the best program to pursue based on student's interest and passion, personality, and marketability.

5. **Inspire and support:** Inspiration denotes the ability to cultivate a desire in someone to do something and take the right action. In the university setting, a mentor has a major responsibility of inspiring students to achieve high standards of performance, whether in personal or academic matters. The mentor also supports such students realize their dreams by providing resources (skills, knowledge, and emotional support) and networks needed to achieve set dreams.

6. **Being friendly:** The first step to winning a student's confidence is to be friendly. This encourages the student to easily get closer to a mentor and share deep-felt needs. It is through friendship that a mentor can win trust and confidence resulting to student's openness to share personal barriers to academic performance. However, caution should be exercised with the kind of friendship to be established. A mentor must put clear boundaries on the kind of friendship that the two should have, otherwise, the possibility of misunderstanding and crossing personal boundaries can lead to bad blood between the student and the mentor. For example, a mentor who is single should let the student know that though single he or she remains a mentor and the relationship is purely academic and professional, not romantic.

7. **Role model:** A role model is an example of what a student would desire to be when he or she grows up. It is the responsibility of a mentor to ensure that he or she portrays personal characteristics that can be emulated by a student. This means a mentor must walk his or her talk, otherwise, when a student sees discrepancy between the mentor and the actual person, then, the level of trust diminishes. No matter what the mentor would do, there is no way of wining the confidence of a student when one is a poor role model.

It is critical that a mentor assesses the client carefully to establish the level of needs and areas of mentorship. For instance, well focused students who are clear about what courses to do should not be given the same amount of time as those who are unsure about what to do. A mentor should focus on maintaining good relationship with a student during the mentorship period and beyond. It is also important that a mentor strictly adheres to professional ethics, integrity, and honesty as he or she carries the mentorship role.
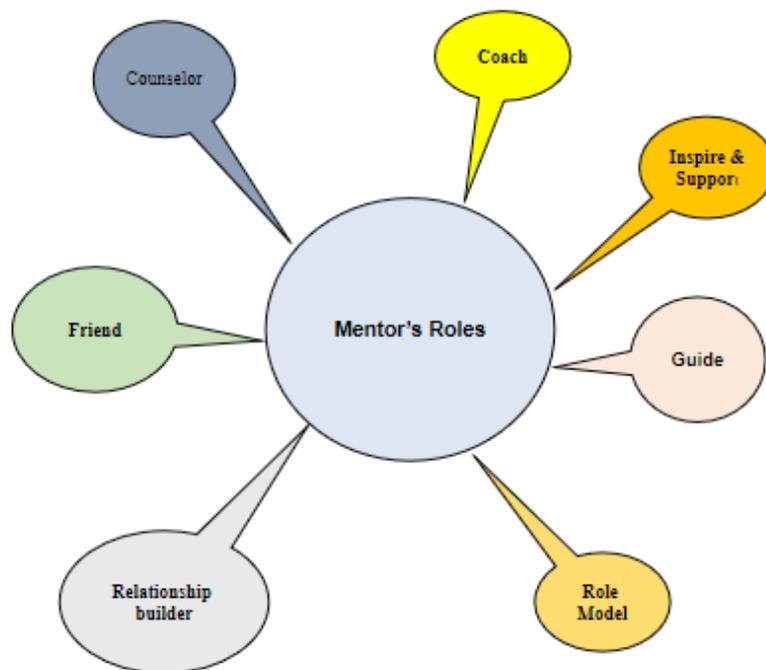
Matching Mentor and Mentee

It is important that mentors understand themselves in terms of their personalities and capabilities. While some mentors are analytical, critical thinkers, teachers, motivators, team players, others are better managers of conflicts, listeners, and delegators. Regardless of their various characteristics, they are expected to discover hidden issues that affect students' welfare. It is imperative that mentors understand their own strengths and weaknesses as they get involved in mentorship. They should identify areas of growth and work on them.

A mechanism to establish students' personalities and needs and then match these with mentors' interests is essential to successful mentorship. In cases where such a mechanism does not exist, then, mentors must clearly state the dos and don'ts (rules) during the mentorship period. For example, students to be mentored need to know the set boundaries so that they can decide early whether to participate in mentorship or not. The relationship guidelines between student and faculty member as defined in the University Statutes must always apply. Likewise, both the mentors and the students should state their expectations before the mentorship process starts. For instance, observance of certain disciplines, such as, time management, phone management and expected role of each player are important measures that if neglected can lead to disappointment of both parties. Such a setback can easily undermine gains achieved and should be avoided.

Mentorship Is Hard Work

When a mentor engages in the task of mentoring a mentee (student) for academic purpose, it is important to realize that this is not an easy task. A mentor should understand that not all students are the same in terms of comprehension of information and decision making. In most cases, the mentorship process takes time, energy, and commitment to succeed. Similarly, not all students are well focused or willing to commit their time and energy in a process which they may not consider necessary. Some may be joining the mentorship program to fulfill personal interests but not to change or even graduate. As such, they may not demonstrate commitment and integrity. At times students are known to manipulate mentors just to complete the process but with no intention to be transformed. Such behavior often discourages mentors who may become exhausted as they do their best to help the students. To ensure that a mentor succeeds, it is important that a mentor does a background check in terms of the student's history (family, school behavior, criminal records, and other social issues) deemed important for mentorship. Such records are available at the University Registrar and Dean of Student Offices for continuing students. The mentor needs to understand that the students also do their background checks to understand the persons assigned to them for mentorship. Questionable behavior such as non-attendance, poor time keeping or being rude could indicate mentees' rejection of the mentor. The mentor should therefore be cautious of such behavior and take appropriate action.

How to Succeed in Mentorship

From the prevailing discussion, a potential mentor can be discouraged and give up the aspiration of mentorship relationship. However, it possible to succeed when the right match is found, and the parties demonstrate high level of commitment. The key ingredients to succeed in mentorship are:

- High integrity and honesty
- Open-mindedness and flexible behavior
- Interest to solve prevailing problems
- Desire to gain appropriate skills
- Good communication and listening skills
- Patience and tolerance
- Being empathetic
- Commitment to mentorship
- High level of discipline
- Respect for one another
- Set agreeable deliverables

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Mentors' Preparation

For effective mentorship to take place, a mentor must be well prepared. However, this can only be successful when the mentor knows what to expect from a mentorship session. Mentorship sessions address issues of personality, interest, career development and academic challenges, peer influence, all affecting student performance (Tammy, Lisa & Mark, 2009). It is expected that a mentor will pick the essential areas of concentration in the first meeting. By so doing, the student will feel attended to and open for future sessions.

The Mentorship Process

The mentorship process involves the following steps:

1. **Meeting place:** The place or venue for the meeting should be well thought-out. This could be in an office or in a public place. For public places, the privacy of the student should be considered.

2. **Time:** It is important that meeting times be discussed in the initial meeting. The student should be made to understand that time management is important, now and in the future.

3. **Set meeting agenda:** Before starting each meeting, it is essential that the two parties set the agenda for the meeting. When this is done, both parties should stick to the agenda set.

4. **Introduction:** In the first meeting, both the mentor and the student should introduce themselves. Specifically, the mentor needs to dig into a student's academic and family background to know where to start mentorship. Some of the areas to focus the discussion include student's talents, interests, experience, skills, personal and professional life, career expectations/dreams, peer relationships and overall academic performance. It is important that a mentor does not appear like he or she is judging the student or making any decisions. Listening, taking notes, and encouraging the student to open up is critical to developing a strong bond. It is also important that a mentor shares appropriate personal information that would add value to the mentorship of the student.

5. **Expectations:** The goal of the mentorship program needs to be re-emphasized and what is expected of each party. The student should share their expectations and what they hope to gain from the mentorship program.

6. **Rules:** It is important that the first meeting establishes and agrees on the dos and don'ts of the mentorship sessions. It is these rules that should guide future meetings. For instance, how long should each session take? What type of communication channels are appropriate ? When rules are not observed, the appropriate agreed penalties should be followed.

7. **Duration:** This first meeting should be kept short to give room for the parties to digest information discussed.

8. **Next meeting:** The parties should also agree on the next meeting or meetings. The future meetings should not be spaced too far to avoid the student forgetting issues discussed in the first meeting.

9. **Number of meetings:** The number of meetings between the student and the mentor depend on issues under discussion and program under study. It is the responsibility of the mentor to assess the situation and advise the student early in the process to ensure proper planning.

10. **Closure:** Upon the completion of the mentorship program, there is need for closure. In this meeting, the mentor and the student should discuss what has worked well and areas of improvement. The meeting should also agree on follow-up meetings to keep track of student's performance. Similarly, the mentor should assure the student of future support should a need arise.

Daystar Mentorship Programs

The Daystar University student mentorship program focuses on six main areas, namely: academic progress, poor academic performance, career, psychosocial counseling, spiritual and entrepreneurship mentorship.

I. Academic mentorship

This is a program that applies to all students. Upon admission, each student is assigned a mentor based on area of concentration. The mentorship program is organized at the School level and is headed by the Dean assisted and the Head of Department. In some cases, a School may assign a coordinator(s) for the program depending on the number of students and faculty workload. The faculty (mentors) assigned students are expected to mentor them through-out their academic journey in the University. The mentorship is divided into two levels:

i. **Junior Years Mentorship:** This mentorship applies to all junior students joining the University (diploma and 1st-2nd year undergraduate students). The students are assigned mentors during the first week of orientation to ensure they are guided accordingly. During the early years of mentorship, mentors guide students to identify their right courses, developing academic discipline, matching academic programs with own interests or passions, time management, peer influence and how to address arising challenges that may affect academic performance. Since this is a two-year engagement, mentors should decide how often to meet students in a semester. At least three meetings are recommended.

ii. **Senior Year Mentorship:** For senior students (3rd-4th years, Masters, PhDs' students), mentorship should mostly focus on programme specialization, career growth, job opportunities and preparation for life beyond University. The mentors in this category should also use their knowledge, experience, and skills to empower students with skills that would enable them to develop the right networks and exploit available opportunities during and after graduation. The need to advance studies both for undergraduate and graduate students should also be explored.

In both levels of mentorship, the mentors should concentrate of the following areas:

i. **Intellectual Stimulation:** During the academic mentorship, mentors should aim to achieve intellectual stimulation of their students. As academicians, the mentor should strive to instill a culture of hard work among students aimed at developing graduates who have critical thinking abilities in problem-solving, research, data analysis and developing practical solutions.

ii. **Spiritual Nurturing:** Daystar mentors are spiritual guides able to nurture and shape students' character and ethical behavior based on biblical principles. It is therefore the role of the mentor not only to be a spiritual model for the student but should also ensure that the students participate in other spiritual activities and programs like chapel and small group Bible studies.

II. Poor Academic Performance

Daystar University values good academic performance for all students. However, although some students may be under the Academic mentorship program (see (I) above), it is possible that they may find it difficult to do well and would need to be assisted to get back on track. To avoid poor performance, students need to understand the program they are admitted, and the minimum grade required to remain in the programs. For certificate, diploma and undergraduate programs, the cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 ("C" grade) is required. Similarly, both master's and PhD students must maintain a GPA of 3.0 ("B" grade). All students who continually attain grades below the minimum requirement are placed under probation and eventually discontinued. In relationship to academic probation and discontinuation, the University Catalogue states:

i. A diploma or undergraduate student who obtains a Cumulative GPA of less than 2.00 four times will be discontinued from his/her programme of study immediately (Catalogue 2017-2021, p. 27).

ii. Each student working towards the M.A, MBA or MTh degree must maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.00 throughout his/her programme. He or she must have achieved a final minimum grade point average of 3.00 to graduate. This is also true for PGDCD and PGDE. A student is placed on academic probation at the conclusion of any semester in which his or her cumulative grade point average falls below 3.00 (Catalogue 2017-2021, p. 35)

The Catalogue, further adds that in case of academic probation,

> "…action will be initiated by the respective Dean's office to help the student on probation to overcome his/her academic problems and will include a restriction on total course load permitted in any given semester" (Catalogue 2017-2021, p. 35).

To effectively monitor and help a student get out probation, a mentor is assigned to such students. It is recommended that a student be attached to a mentor immediately after getting the first letter of probation from the Registrar's office. Such action would enable the mentor to track students' performance and take the right action before it is too late.

For effective mentorship of the students under probation, Schools are highly recommended to appoint a faculty from the students' area of concentration or major. Such mentors should be experienced and knowledgeable with academic programs and challenges facing the student. It is further recommended that such mentorship continues as long the student is on probation and extended beyond probation period subject to improved performance. It is important that a mentor gets in touch with the main academic mentor (See (I) above) of the specific student to avoid unwarranted conflicts, either with the student or between mentors. It is expected that the mentor will do regular report to the Dean indicting student's progress and actions taken. In all cases, a student's transcript should be accompany the reports.

III. Career Mentorship

This type of mentorship is recommended for senior students (3rd - 4th years). The purpose of the program is help students understand themselves, their interest, passion, and career paths available upon graduation. The program therefore assists students to:

- Gain knowledge of different employers/organisations and industries.
- Learn about different career opportunities available to them.
- Develop a realistic understanding of the real world of business.
- Have an idea of real work environment and how to fit in.
- Develop realistic career goals based on actual market situations.
- Acquire appropriate soft skills and other competencies required by the employers.
- Gain public speaking skills.
- Get firsthand experience of the real work situations before graduation.

The Program which is under the Dean of Student's Placement Office (SPO) is involved in following activities:

i. **Identify potential employers:** The Program has a database of employers and potential employers based on many years of experience and interaction with the market and industry.

ii. **Career workshop:** The Program organizes career workshops where employers and industrial players are invited. During the workshop, different employers do presentations about their companies/organisations in terms of products, vacancies, expectations and hiring procedures. Students also interact with potential employers, ask questions, and get inspired advice. The Program is organized every semester and coincides with the University Career Week.

iii. **Skill-based Training:** The skill-based trainings are workshops where students are trained by professionals on various skills required by employers and the market. Skills such as setting and prioritizing goals, writing a good CV/resume, application letters, attending interviews, work environment antiques, time management and work relations are taught.

iv. **Matching Career and job market:** Upon participating in different workshops and skill-based training, the Program mentors can match students' interest, passion, and education with the right careers. This makes it easy for student to match their interest with the right careers and

potential employers. The mentors use appropriate matching techniques and proven tools to ensure students get the right match.

v. **Networks:** Most students have no idea where to find jobs upon graduation. Through participating in Career Mentorship Program, students meet different stakeholders and develop suitable networks. Such networks are essential for future businesses, work relations, career opportunities and growth.

vi. **First day at work Experience:** The difference between classroom and workplace experience is only notable when students are exposed to real-work situations. During participating in the Program, students have opportunities to visit and work with employers of their choice. The one-day experience gives students opportunity to visit businesses, non-government organisations (NGOs), international bodies and county governments' offices to have firsthand experience on how work is done on daily basis. During the one-day visit, students are given a tour of the organisations/businesses where they have opportunity to see products, management, understand logistics and customer management practices The experience enables students to be exposed to actual work situation and change their perception of live and workplace.

vii. **Alumni:** The importance of alumni to any university is the value they add to different programs. Having being part of the Daystar University, alumni understand what areas need improvement while at the same time are able to suggest new areas to focus on. Daystar has over 20,000 graduates who are well positioned in government and non-government organisations worldwide. Some alumni are also successful both in the community and businesses. This group offers great value and are part of the University culture and family. Alumni offer good opportunities for source of employment, practicum, and networks. The Placement Office and Alumni Office are in touch with many alumni and regularly invite them to participate in different evens of the Program. The group is also a great inspiration and source of mentors for the students.

To participate and benefit from Career Mentorship Program, students must formally apply to join the program. This helps in planning and connecting them to the right employers and alumni. General training and workshop participation do not require students to apply. However, those in the Program stand to gain as they are informed about incoming activities, job opportunities and other benefits to enhance their career and personal development.

IV. Spiritual Mentorship

The Spiritual Mentorship Program (SMP) is under the Office of University Chaplaincy. The Office is responsible for all spiritual guidance in line with biblical principles and University Vision and Mission. The Office is also mandated to ensure integration of faith and learning in all programs through participating in curriculum development. Upon admission to the University, all students are subject to spiritual counsel of the Chaplain. This is done through various chapel programs such as chapel management, Bible studies, spiritual talks, player days, drama and movies, and seminars and workshops. As part of their spiritual growth, students and staff are required to participate in all

activities organised by the Office. Students are also encouraged to join Daystar Christian Fellowship (DCF), the spiritual arm of student evangelistic. DCF offers students the opportunity to nurture their leadership skills and grow spiritually. Through participating in DCF activities, students participate in numerous ministries such as evangelistic outreaches, ministry among street children, and many other ministry opportunities. The Chaplain is also involved in issues relating to discipline, conflict, and student counseling. By equipping students with spiritual guidance and nurturing them, the Chaplaincy Office ensures that Daystar students are well grounded with biblical based knowledge and make them disciples and coworkers with Christ (John 10:10).

V. Entrepreneurship Mentorship.

Daystar exists not just to equip students with theoretical knowledge or for the job market. It is the goal of University to produce graduates who can offer creative solutions to world problems. The Entrepreneurship Mentorship Program offer opportunities for students to explore new creative and innovative ideas and develop them to actual products or services. For students who desire to venture into entrepreneurship, the Program offer them room to pitch their ideas, test them and develop desired products and services. The Program is under the Director of Planning and Enterprise, a Directorate mandated to develop workable and creative programs for the University. For students, the Program offers them incubation services for viable ideas/products during and after graduation. Students interested in this Program can contact the Directorate for guidance and support. It is an opportunity that students cannot afford to miss. The Program is open mostly to students in their senior years of studies, but other students may also participate.

Conclusion

The aim of this mentorship guide is to give the Daystar University students and mentors the opportunity to improve the academic mentor-mentee relationship. The guide also allows students to explore other non-academic activities in preparation for both the job market and self-driven ventures. The guide, if used well, will enable both students and mentors to work together and develop cordial relationships that will result in improved academic performance. The Program also addresses non-academic skills and competences geared toward students' professional growth and development.

Mentorship Expectations Agreement Form

Introduction: This form aims to gather information from student relating to personal interest, career, and academic performance. The goal is to collect information that address student's expectations during the mentorship sessions.

Student Name:_____	Year of Study_____

Reason for joining Mentorship Program	Tick appropriate box(es) ☑
	☐ Discover my talents
	☐ Understand my personality and interests
	☐ Grow my career
	☐ Get advice on balancing work and academics
	☐ Improve on spiritual growth
	☐ Improve my grades

What I expected from the mentor	Tick appropriate box(es) ☑
	☐ To be listened to
	☐ To be given opportunity to air my needs
	☐ No disclose of confidential information
	☐ Will address my personal and academic challenges
	☐ To be guided to develop strategies to help me cope with academic challenges
	☐ To remain professional in all our dealings
	☐ Will help improve my academic live after mentorship
	☐ Will guide me with career advise
	☐ Mentor is a qualified professional person
	☐ Good match with the right mentor
	☐ Provide safe meeting venue

Student and mentor expectations	Tick appropriate box(es) ☑
	☐ Trust and confidence of matters discussed ☐ Will keep time and promises ☐ Will respect each other's opinions ☐ Will openly discuss deep-felt needs of the student ☐ Will be guided by integrity, honesty, and trust ☐ Use of appropriate and official forms of communication
	Signature: _____Date:_____

Mentorship Log Journal

Mentor's Name:	Student (Mentee) Name:	
Meeting venue:	**Time:**	**Date**
Topic discussed:		
Matters arising from discussion:		

Progress so far:	What is going on well	What needs improvement
Tick appropriate box ☑		
☐ Very Good		
☐ Good		
☐ Fair		
☐ Poor		
☐ Very Poor		

Way forward

Issue to address next meeting

Contacts: The mentorship Program falls under the leadership of Dean of Schools and Dean of Students. Further information concerning mentorship can therefore be attained from individual schools or from Deans of Students' Office.

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