

## **Mentors' Guide for the Westmoreland/Shaw Scholars and Mentorship Program: Expectations, Commitments, and Impact**

### **What difference do mentors make?**

Because the research is so strong about the positive personal, social, academic, and career effects of mentoring students before and during college, we have built in a mentorship program as an integral dimension of our Westmoreland/Shaw Scholar and Mentorship Program. Mentoring is part of what helps close the college access and graduation opportunity gap. Before college, mentoring kindles college aspirations, enhances a stronger preparation for college, and contributes to a successful transition to college. For first-generation college students, mentoring can erase some of the mystery about what college is, how to get there, and how to succeed once in college. Strong mentoring also has a positive effect on persistence and on preparation to be successful in professional careers and can contribute to higher grades in both school and college.

### **What is a mentor?**

There are many kinds of mentors, and students benefit from having a variety of mentors in their lives, both in school and out, and from college faculty and other college staff when they transition to higher education. *The Role of Mentoring in College Access and Success* explains there are several common characteristics of mentors:

- a learning partnership between a more experienced and a less experienced individual;
- a process involving emotional (friendship, acceptance, support) and instrumental (information, coaching, advocacy, sponsorship) functions, and
- a relationship that become more influential to both parties over time.

Mentors, in other words, are not tutors, guidance counselors, psychologists, or social workers. But they are friends, good listeners, advocates for the students, advisors, genuinely interested in helping the student achieve college goals, and ready to assist a mentee network with people and open doors to new opportunities.

### **What are the expectations of me as a mentor?**

To enhance the success of Westmoreland/Shaw Scholars, we are identifying the recipients of the \$5,000 per year college scholarships when students are rising seniors in high school and are committed to mentor them over their four years in college. The mentor will therefore be paired with a mentee in the late summer of 2017 just before the mentee's senior year begins and remain in contact while the student is in college. The commitment is to serve for five years as a mentor to a student.

The first year will be characterized by more face to face opportunities to strengthen the relationship and build trust, while the college years will be sustained largely from a distance except during winter and summer breaks.

***Mentor Orientation:*** Before mentors meet with their mentees, SJA will bring the mentors together for a two-hour workshop led by our Mentorship Coordinator who will work with the group to voice questions, reinforce practices that make effective mentors, and provide additional resources. For the first two years of the program, we will hold quarterly meetings with the group of mentees to insure everything is on track, mentors have the resources they need, and draw on the collective wisdom of the group to resolve common or singular problems that might arise along the way. SJA will also prepare a set of resources for the mentors that offer referral sources that can address a variety of different issues that are beyond the scope of our mentorship program (college fairs, guidance counselors, financial aid resources, etc). Often a mentor is most useful in directing the mentee to the people and resources that have the information a student needs.

***Opening Program for Everyone:*** In the late summer or very early September of this first year of the program, SJA will host an opening gathering with the mentors, mentees, the Mentorship Coordinator, and representatives from our partner, Shaw Community Center so that everyone has an opportunity to meet one another and discuss the plans for the first year's activities. We plan to invite parents to attend so they are comfortable with the person who will be interacting with their son or daughter. Our goal for our 5-7 scholar/mentees is to create a sense of their sense of being part of a cohort or posse, which research suggests contributes to their overall aspirations as college-bound students. Such a group provides an important positive peer network for the students, most of whom will not attend the same high school or college but can nonetheless offer each other support along their road to college graduation.

***Common Patterns of Interaction:*** Following the orientation to the program, we will expect each mentor to interact by phone or in person with their mentee two times a month from September through August during that first year while the student is in high school. We ask that each mentor aim to see their mentee face to face at least six times during these twice monthly interactions. It will be important to determine with your mentee which means of interaction serves both party best (phone/email/in person) and in what settings. In December and in April, both the mentee and the mentor will be asked to write a short reflection on what as been most useful thus far in the mentoring and what additional things they hope will occur in the coming months.

***While mentee is still in high school:*** Here are some of the kinds of activities that might be part of those initial interactions in the first year but certainly add others and solicit from your mentee any specific areas where they are looking for counsel:

- Talk to the student at length about what college they're interested in and why.

- Be open to reviewing their college application if the mentee wants that kind of feedback.
- Talk to the student about the subjects they are taking at school, which ones they are especially drawn to and why, and what they do if they find themselves stuck on an assignment.
- Explore whether there are DC events—museums, cultural events, plays, musical performances—that they might enjoy seeing with you. Consider whether other mentees might want to join in a group event.
- Be willing as needed to take the student for 1 or 2 visits to colleges in the metropolitan area or an hour beyond.
- Talk about their financial plan for covering the myriad college expenses so they are not surprised at unanticipated costs (travel, books, student fees, clothes) and be prepared to direct them to resources where they can get further information.
- Once the student has decided which college they will attend, become familiar with the college including what student support services/tutoring services and student leadership groups/clubs are offered.
- In order to prepare the student to leave his or her home/community to attend college, consider talking about what to expect in college including what will be involved in living independently (managing money, feeding themselves, doing laundry, managing a balance in their studies and their social life).

***While mentee is in college:*** Here are some of the kinds of subjects that a mentor might address with the mentee over the four years he or she is in college:

- Check-in with the student at least monthly (in the first semester it should probably be more often) to find out how things are going academically and socially. Encourage the student to share both successes and challenges.
- Encourage the student to talk with their professors and seek their counsel since there is a strong correlation between a student’s engagement with faculty and student’s academic success and general satisfaction with college.
- Explore with the student how to develop mentors on the college campus. There might be more than one, but typically faculty serve in this capacity or a student affairs person.

- Encourage the student to get involved in student organizations or local faith communities or community-based service learning programs, all of which correlate with persistence, self-confidence, a sense of belonging, and greater academic success. Talk with your mentee about the activities she or he is participating in.
- If the mentee seems to be struggling, encourage the student to talk to his/her professor or other key support staff, counseling centers, and if needed, to take advantage of on-campus tutoring services.
- After the first semester of freshman year, talk to the student about internship or summer employment opportunities. Offer to write references for the student should they be necessary. Repeat this in the coming years since internships and summer work are valuable items on a student's resume when he or she is applying to their first full time job.
- Check in with the student about the financial support they are receiving overall while in college to be sure that they do not drop out for financial reasons. On most campuses, the financial aid offices are there to help students and answer their questions and sometimes identify new sources of support.

### **What kinds of programming is planned for mentees?**

The Social Justice and Action Board of Westmoreland Congregational United Church of Christ will be planning in cooperation with Shaw Community Center, the Mentorship Coordinator, and other identified partners, including high school counselors, a series of programs for the mentee group of 5-7 students. We expect the mentors to attend these sessions with their mentees.

As part of the planning process, we will be inviting mentors to make suggestions about how to enrich the programs and will also be asking for input from the mentees about the kinds of information they are especially eager to learn more about. Below are some examples of the kinds of programs that have emerged thus far which can be refined, recast, and expanded upon. The programs will allow the mentees to meet a wider group of people both within and beyond the church.

Though tentative, the list below suggests the timing and the issues that are likely to be pertinent for the students and draw upon the rich resource within Westmoreland Congregational, Shaw Community Center, and the larger metropolitan network that both entities can tap.

### **Year One: Mentees' Senior Year in High School**

Fall of 2017 while mentees are first semester seniors in high school:

*What I Learned About Looking for Colleges: Student Perspectives*

An evening, brunch, or lunch discussion with several Westmoreland current or recent college graduates and any former or current Shaw College students.

**Individualized college application consultations.**

**Offered by the non-profit College Consults, these one-on-one meetings are available free to each mentee in the early fall of their senior year in high school and are focused on filling out college applications, writing the essay, and helping the student navigate the application process.**

**Spring of 2018 while mentees are second semester seniors in high school:**

*Lessons I Learned about Making the Most of My First Year in College*

Drawing upon college students from Westmoreland and Shaw and a moderator with strong expertise on this topic, this program will touch upon social issues, academic challenges, and managing the racial and sexual terrain of a college campus.

**Summer of 2018 before they enter college**

*My Pathway to My Career: Not Always the Straight and Narrow*

A program that includes people at various points in their career path--younger, middle, prime--talking about how they got there, what mattered most about their college prep for the job, and what gave them mobility and courage to move in new directions professionally.

*Thinking Ahead: Securing Internships in DC*

This program with a rich group of Westmoreland, Shaw Community Center, and other partner contacts will talk with students about the kind of internships that are available in DC, both paid and unpaid, and how to investigate possible placements. Discussion will also include information interviews, internship resources, and using college offices and academic departments for assistance.

**Year Two: Mentees' First Year in College**

**Summer of 2019 after their first year in college**

*What I Learned in College and Why What You Do in High School Matters*

In this program, the mentees shift into the role of mentors. The cohort of Westmoreland-Shaw Scholars presents a program for Shaw Community Center middle schooler or early high school students talking about what they now understand more clearly mattered in terms of better preparing them for college life.

**Year Three: Mentees' Second Year in College**

**Summer of 2020 after their second year in college**

*Investigating What Daily Life Looks Like in Certain Professions*

The program will set up opportunities for the 5-7 mentees to shadow two different Westmorelanders at their workplaces for a day or two to see what a typical day is like and get a sense of the kind of work that is done.

*How My First (or Second) Job Led to a Career Shift in My Life*

Drawing on several Westmorelanders from different occupations, this program will underscore that people have multiple jobs over their careers and often discover what they want to do only after learning what they love doing at their first job.

**Year Four: Mentees' Third Year in College**

Summer of 2021 after their third year in college

*Using Your Senior Year to Position Yourself for Your First Job*

Both a career counselor and several Westmorelanders will discuss what they are looking for when they read a resume or interview a candidate for a position and what kind of recommendations matter the most.

**Year Five: Mentees' Fourth Year in College**

Summer of 2022 after graduation

Celebratory dinner and event with mentees, mentors, the Mentorship Coordinator, and others who have been part of the Westmoreland/Shaw Scholar and Mentorship Program.

For further information about becoming a mentor, contact either Dick Staufenberger at [dstaufen@savechildren.org](mailto:dstaufen@savechildren.org) and 301-320-3151 or Caryn McTighe Musil at [musil@aacu.org](mailto:musil@aacu.org) and 301-493-4571. Application form is on Westmoreland's Website under Outreach on the Westmoreland/Shaw Scholar and Mentorship Program link.