

QUEER MENTORING PROGRAM

2019 PROGRAM OUTLINE

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The SULLS Queer Mentoring Program (*Program*) aims to promote the professional and academic development of LGBTQIA+-identifying law students. The aim of the Program is to foster a supportive network that encourages LGBTQIA+ people to enter into the legal profession. This year is the first year of the Program, which we have decided to run due to interest from the student body.

According to BeyondBlue, LGBTQIA+ people are more likely to suffer depression and anxiety and experience higher rates of suicide and self harm than the rest of the population. This is linked to the discrimination, prejudice, abuse and exclusion that LGBTQIA+ people often experience.

As part of SULLS' efforts to combat this exclusion before entering the legal profession, the aim of the Program is to facilitate an environment where mentors can provide mentees with ways to overcome the hurdles facing LGBTQIA+ people in the profession and provide mentees with role models who can assist them with professional and academic development.

BENEFITS & EXPECTATIONS

The expectation of participants is to enter into the spirit of mentoring. Whilst there are no rigid expectations as to how and when the mentoring relationship is to progress, SULLS expects all participants to exhibit a genuine willingness to engage with one's partner. This means, as much as possible, making yourself available for your mentee or mentor.

The Program is a forum for mentors to lend advice about their career choices and learn about the interests, goals and concerns of their mentees. The Program is aimed at building a relationship based on the sharing of common interests, encouragement and assistance. While mentors will provide practical career advice, guidance and insight into legal practice, the role of the mentor is not to secure jobs or internships. The mentor-mentee relationship espouses, as its primary aim, the sharing of general insight into life choices, advice on how to develop networks in the legal profession and provides an opportunity for mentors and mentees alike to reflect on their own goals and experiences.

EFFECTIVE MENTORING

RESPONSIBILITIES

Mentors and mentees are equally responsible for the mentoring relationship. An effective relationship is based on mutual respect, trust and engagement. The more communication between the parties, the more valuable the interactions will be.

BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP

Building rapport at the beginning of the mentor-mentee relationship will allow each pair to establish common ground and allow for the discovery of the interests and goals of their partner. Mentors and mentees should discuss the mentee's current thoughts on their career, however general or specific they may be. It is suggested that each pair comes back to this discussion at the end of the Program and reflects on the progress that the mentee has made in developing their career path.

SUGGESTED STARTING POINTS

Below are some suggested questions for mentees and mentors to ask each other at the beginning of the process. This will allow the mentor and mentee to ascertain what each person would like to gain from the Program or from their career more broadly.

Questions for mentors to ask:

- What subjects have interested you?
- What area of law broadly interests you?
- Where do you think your skills lie?
- If you had the skills, knowledge and resources to do anything, what would it be?
- What steps have you taken towards your desired career?
- What concerns do you have about your career choices?
- What alternatives do you have in mind?

Questions for mentees to ask:

- What interests you about your field of practice and your current role?
- Would you choose the same career again?
- What does a typical day or week at work entail?
- How is this different to other jobs you have had?
- How do you overcome the barriers that LGBTQIA+ people in the legal profession experience?

POINT OF CONTACT

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Queer Officer (Tom Manousaridis) at queer@suls.org.au. As this is the first year of this Program, we understand that there will be issues to work through as they arise. Feedback is always appreciated and will be particularly useful if this Program is to continue in the future.