

What is the mission of your organization?

Our mission as Capital Region Sponsor-A-Scholar is to inspire and empower promising, underserved students to succeed in high school, college and life. We do this through a variety of programs and services including but not limited to: one-on-one mentoring; required weekly afterschool sessions; tutoring; college campus visits; career awareness activities and trips; SAT prep courses; and, individualized college counseling.

What made you want to pursue the work that your organization does?

As an alum of the program and a first-generation college student myself, I felt it was important to give back to the organization for what it has provided for me. Throughout my academic experience I have learned about the importance of education in one's personal and professional lives. College may not be the right path for everyone, but it opens doors for progress, new opportunities and more.

Why should high school students have mentors?

Mentors offer many opportunities for discussion, development and exploration. Our mentors often bring our students to different cultural and educational community events, different college campuses and more. Outside of the academic development, our mentors also offer our students opportunities to engage in deep, intellectual conversations without judgement or criticism.

What do you find your students struggle with the most?

One of the biggest items that some of our students struggle with the most is access. Whether it is access to resources, experiences, information, etc. The great thing about our program and our mentors, is that we can provide some access to these different opportunities.

What do you believe are possible causes of these struggles?

Being that each of our students has different life experiences and home lives, it is difficult to answer this question without generalizing or offending those involved. Some reasons why people may struggle with access- generally speaking- are education or awareness, finance, and opportunity.

Have you found that students nowadays spend more time with technology and less time doing other activities?

Not necessarily, while some students prefer spending their time with technology, many of our students participate in afterschool sports, clubs and work.

Have you found social media to be an issue for your mentees?

No, social media has been a tool for us to connect with students we have not been able to reach through normal mediums. During this time, we plan on using social media even more to connect with our students, identify their needs and how we can help.

Do many of your students face either self-pressure or pressure from their parents to succeed?

Of course, some of our students feel great pressure from their families to succeed. Some of this pressure can be for our students to go to a specific school, do a specific major, get their degree, etc. Some of our other students may even take this pressure and internalize it themselves.

How does mentorship address these struggles that your students face?

Again, mentoring allows our students to get access to new opportunities and new experiences. One of our favorite quotes is, “you don’t know what you don’t know.” With mentoring, we can learn about what our students enjoy, learn what they would like to pursue as a career or as an interest, and provide an opportunity for the student to learn more or get a valuable experience.

How do you decide who needs mentorship?

Our program requires that each of our students is matched with a mentor.

Do you think your mentorship framework could work in a school setting?

In a large school, our mentorship framework may be difficult. We connect our students and mentors for a one-to-one, person-to-person connection. It may be difficult then to monitor those relationships and ensure our students safety.

How different is working with a younger student than a senior in high school?

Different age groups need different help or attention at a given time. With our Sophomores we may focus more on personal/professional development. With our Juniors and Seniors, we focus on their college search or college application. What’s most important is that you know that you can’t apply the same advice to all groups- you need to adapt accordingly to each group.

How do you match mentors and mentees?

We match our mentors and mentees through an extensive onboarding process. We do this to ensure our students safety and wellness throughout their mentoring experience. We start with an online application, move to an interview and group training before we run a background check on our mentors. We take this time to learn about our mentor’s and mentee’s interests, their hobbies, their formative experiences and more. We look at our mentors and mentees holistically in every match.

What mentor-mentee activities have been most successful for your organization?

Some of our most successful mentoring activities have been a mentoring bowling party, a group viewing of a Park Playhouse Play and a Halloween themed mentoring party.

Do you focus more on social interaction or academics in your mentor-mentee relationships?

Mentoring Questions: Bhupati Meghana

This changes based on the stage of the mentoring relationship, the student's need and their academic year. With Sophomores, we focus on building the relationship meaning social interactions may be more appropriate. With our Juniors and Seniors, we shift our attention towards college, so the interaction is mostly academic. Each mentor-mentee relationship is different but we do focus our outreach based on needs and academics.