

Illinois Administrative Professionals Mentoring Program

Analysis of Organizational Needs

Illinois Administrative Professionals (IAP) is a 70-year old organization comprised of administrative support professionals in certain Civil Service classifications on the University of Illinois, Urbana- Champaign campus. Members pay dues to belong to the organization.

Primary objectives for the organization include:

- Establish a fellowship and create a high standard of ethics among members;
- Assist in the professional development of members;
- Serve as a forum for the discussion of issues affecting support staff of the University of Illinois; and,
- Further knowledge about the University of Illinois and uphold its honor and dignity.

The IAP's established objectives are a clear path towards a successful mentoring program. Member profiles range from those who have had careers at the University for decades to those who have been employed at the institution for less than a year. The organization is diverse in age, race, and gender. Every member has something that they can provide to one another, regardless of working years of experience.

The University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign is a large, complex institution with many different operating systems, employee classifications, and policies. Learning and supporting these ever-changing areas can be overwhelming, not only to new employees, but to established employees as well. Establishing a mentoring program can help guide employees over various hurdles in these areas. IAP has a large knowledge base that can provide insight to help

navigate these complex systems, improve administrative support skills, grow leadership skills, and provide guidance and support amongst members.

The result of these mentoring objectives will not only help the members, but improve organizational effectiveness for all departments whose employees are IAP members taking advantage of a mentoring program. By building these skills, IAP members will gain an edge to advance their careers within the University system. A mentoring program will also develop leadership skills necessary to keep IAP relevant and functioning in today's culture and workforce. Finally, a mentoring relationship can last a lifetime.

Plan

With full support of the IAP Executive Board, a Mentoring Committee will be established. The committee will be comprised of current members at all levels of experience. They will be responsible for managing, coordinating, and overseeing the mentoring program. This includes: setting objectives and goals, creating a survey to match mentors/mentees, marketing the program, providing resources to program participants, collect progress reports, and modify program objectives and goals as needed.

All IAP members who are current on their dues are eligible to participate in the program as either a mentor or a mentee. Solicitation for participation will go out in September, and matches will be made in October. The committee should promote the following benefits:

Benefits to Mentors

- Networking opportunities
- Creation of lasting relationships
- Improved already established administrative skills
- Gain additional knowledge of various University policies
- Access to mentoring resources/training materials

Benefits to Mentees

- Networking opportunities
- Creation of lasting relationships
- Improve/develop communication skills
- Improve/develop leadership skills
- Access to mentoring resources/training materials

Benefits to IAP

- Creating future leaders for the organization
- Enhanced reputation of organization on campus
- Stronger campus leadership support
- Increase/retention of membership

Benefits to the Illinois Campus

- Improved organizational effectiveness
- Improved employee morale
- Developed administrative support leaders
- No cost for program support while building future leaders

Matches should be determined based on identified needs and skill levels in specific areas, such as, finance, HR, University policies, general administrative support functions, communication skill development, or leadership development.

The Mentoring Committee will schedule a luncheon meet-and-greet for all program participants. At this same time, introductory training resources and handouts will be made available introducing the concept of a formal mentoring program. Handouts will be provided describing the expectations from the participants. Expectations will include: communication between mentor and mentee at least once a month, and progress reports.

The Mentoring Committee will schedule various training sessions that both the mentors and mentees can attend. These training sessions will be applicable to the total work environment at the University, as well as, professional growth development sessions. These sessions can include items such as resume building, social media training, and wellness seminars.

The mentoring relationships will be in agreement until June 30 of the following year, at which time, a year end get-together will be scheduled for all participants. This time will be used to describe the relationships and how they progressed, what was gained/what was learned, and how the Mentoring Committee can improve the program. It should be noted that while the official agreement between mentor and mentee may end through the program, the relationships do not have to end. In fact, if both parties believe the relationship is successful, it will be encouraged that they continue growing and learning together.

Evaluation

The Mentoring Committee will distribute a survey to the mentors and mentees at the end of the formal relationship seeking feedback on the program overall. The survey will ask for feedback on the quality of the mentor/mentee matches, the quality of the resources provided to the participants, should more/less or different resources be provided, will the relationships continue past June 30, would the participants refer their colleagues to this program, how was the overall experience, did you or others notice a change in job behavior, and what were the organizational results within the home department.

Once the survey has been collected, the Mentoring Committee should use it as a tool to assess where improvements can be made to the program to better serve the participants, IAP, and the university. A final report will be submitted for the IAP Annual Report.

Critical Thinking

The mentee should set goals for himself/herself as part of the mentoring relationship. The mentor should ask the appropriate questions to seek out what the mentee would like to

accomplish. The mentor should listen carefully and reflect on what the mentee is saying. What are their short-term and long-term career goals? Do they have personal goals? The mentee should also ask himself/herself what they would like to get out of the mentoring relationship. Why are they participating?

Not only should the mentee ask the appropriate questions related to goal-setting, but the mentee should recognize the appropriate questions to ask during all interactions. Do not simply assume or reach conclusions without practicing good listening and reflection skills. Should a mentor sense negativity from the mentee due to frustration or confusion, the mentor should use positive reinforcement to help the mentee adjust to the situation in a positive manner.

As the mentor receives information from the mentee, they should start to determine what methods they will use to support the mentee. For example, if the mentor seeks assistance using software programs, do they learn better with a hands-on approach? Would they benefit by communicating more in person instead of electronically? Every person learns and grows in different ways. It will be up to the mentor, with good communication with the mentee, to determine the most valuable method to be available to the mentee.

Finally, throughout the relationship, it is important for the mentee, as well as the mentor, to recognize the varying backgrounds that each bring to the relationship. While the committee should do their best to ensure good matches for the relationships, it is also valuable to learn not only skills from one another, but learn the backgrounds and values of one another as well. Understanding values and backgrounds can help with the learning process on both sides. This is beneficial not only from the relationship perspective, but also contributes towards IAP thriving in a diverse environment on the Illinois campus, and contributes towards the Guiding Values of

the University, which includes, “Be inclusive, treat each other with dignity and respect, and promote citizenship.” (<https://www.uillinois.edu/about/mission>)

