

September 13, 2016

Dear University of Illinois College of LAS Alumnus,

My name is **Rich Berkowitz** ('79 B.S., '83 M.D.) and, like you, an alumnus of the University of Illinois in Urbana. In 2010, I was asked by the College of LAS, School of Molecular and Cellular Biology (just plain biology to us old alumni!) to do a presentation for the MCB majors on my career path...but also a presentation on the diversity of professions that are available to each of the MCB students... that there are career alternatives. This initial program was directed at pre-meds and was actually a segue into a trial mentoring program where alumni work with undergraduates and guide them into professional school or careers following graduation.

We are now entering the **seventh** year of the **MCB Pathway to Health Careers Mentorship Program** and we are planning our eighth **seminar for this October**. Each year with the help of the MCB advising office, Tina Knox, specifically, and the College of LAS, attendance at our seminar grows significantly. There are approximately 1,000 MCB students, with a majority of these in the pre-health (pre-med, pre-dent, pre-pharmacy, allied health) professions focus of concentration. Our numbers of mentors involved in the program has grown steadily, but we need to continually expand the program so that we can provide mentors to as many students as possible that want to be involved in the program. **There is no question that mentoring programs benefit the large majority of students. With an alumni base as large and as experienced as ours from the UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, we should be able to attain our expansion goal.**

I have personally mentored nine students over the past 7 years and based on the response of these students that I and others are working with, I believe this program is a success. **While the students' advisors can help them select courses for their various majors that will help them navigate their curricula and take them to the next step, the students are hungry for professional guidance from those of us in various health professions/allied health professions/ administration/ research/ business/and academics that have lived through the process.** All my students have visited my hospital where they have spent time with physicians, nurses, allied health professionals, technicians and have been exposed to the administrative side of medicine.

**The overall minimum time commitment is small**, but can be as great as your job allows. The expectation is that the students will be able to shadow their mentors once or twice /year and facilitate contacts (e-mail, phone calls, etc.) another couple of times during the year when the students feel they may need a little more input. Mentors typically work with one or two mentees (certainly no more than three) at a time. The overall course of time mentoring a particular student will depend on the student's academic year of study when entering the program. **Even if your professional environment may prohibit or limit actual on-site visitation of your work place, it does not preclude you from being a mentor to a student.**

This program is for me, and can be for you, an incredible and exciting experience. In addition to being an outstanding way for you to become a role model for and positively impact the next generation of healthcare professionals and scientists, it is unequivocally a great way for you to become re-connected with your Alma Mater!

**We need you to become a mentor in this very worthwhile program.**

**If you are interested in becoming a mentor to one or two of these wonderful and motivated students in the School of Molecular Cellular Biology, please contact Tina Knox and me by phone or e-mail (below). Please provide your preferred contact information and specialty (medicine, dentistry, allied health professions, academic research, corporate research, etc.) so we can match you with students with similar career aspirations.**

**Please, also let us know if you would like to be a participant in future programs.**

**GO ILLINI!!!**

Sincerely,

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