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CYSE 368

Lenora Thorbjornsen

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While signing up to be a mentor for cybersecurity students, I was nervous at first but I knew that a lot of challenges would come my way and that I would have to be flexible for the students. My advisor, Lenora Thorbjornsen, first held a "Peer Mentor Review/Training" meeting on January 20 for all of the mentors to familiarize and inform us with what we'd be expecting as mentors and what is to be expected of us. We covered topics such as academic advising, the characteristics of effective teaching and advising skills and the link between the two, available tools for the students (like degreeworks, student success services, and LeoOnline), Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) which discussed the privacy rights of students, the different majors and programs within the department, and lastly what we'd be expecting as mentors. I went into this meeting with questions like: "what if they absolutely hate cybersecurity?" or "what options can I offer them in this major?" But this meeting helped me come back down to reality and that to overthink the situation would only make it worse.

After the meeting I felt a lot more confident in what I should expect and the options that are available to the students. I recognized a lot of the topics covering how to be a good mentor and advisor through my experience in ROTC. In Army ROTC (AROTC), they test your leadership skills by putting you in positions that would bring these qualities out. They also give multiple classes on what to do as a leader and what not to do. Once I saw the parallels between the peer mentor internship and ROTC, I knew that this experience would not only benefit the students I will advise with but also it will benefit the development of my soft skills and how to be a better mentor.

A few days after the meeting, Lenora sent out the initial list of mentees to the mentors. She informed me to try and just do a first “get to know you” session with them and to ask them about their courses and goals they have for this semester whether it be academic or not. She then advised me to set goals with them regarding their courses and to periodically send out a quick message to them to stay connected. I then started drafting my email which mainly just included an introduction of myself to the students and letting them know that I'm here for them.

A few days after I sent the email out one of the students got back to me and we scheduled an in person meeting to discuss classes and the upcoming semester. We first talked about the classes that she's currently taking and the professors that she has this semester. She then mentioned that she is in Navy ROTC (NROTC) here at ODU but she wasn't 100% about the idea of doing ROTC which led to her asking how it worked out for me and how I balanced my schedule. I gave her all the advice I could about balancing my schedule with ROTC, club activities, and cybersecurity classes. I told her how it worked out for me and why I chose to go with the Army. We then started talking about why she wanted to do NROTC and what route would be best for her. I didn't want to outright give her directions that she should join certain programs or clubs as this was obviously something that she needed to decide for herself if it will be good for her or not. We then ended off with me giving her advice on how to structure her schedule if she were to do certain clubs/NROTC and also about what to expect with certain cybersecurity classes.