



# Mentoring Law Students

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## Objective

We aim to assess the effectiveness of formal and informal mentoring of law students in the University of Ottawa, paying particular attention to the needs of female students from a working-class or working poor background, and female minority students. The final goal is to give recommendations on how to improve the mentoring process for these groups.



Figure 1. Mentoring is crucial to law students' long term success.

## Rationale

Mentoring improves rates of success. Marginalized law students have a more difficult time accessing suitable mentors. They also have a higher dropout rate in law schools and tend to have lower grades. They generally remain lower on the professional ladder than non-marginalized lawyers. It is important to bridge the gap in their mentoring needs so that they may succeed both academically and professionally.



Figure 2. Female minority law students often feel isolated.



Figure 3. Law students from a background of poverty have a more difficult time connecting meaningfully with mentors who have not faced similar challenges.

## Methods

Ms Clarke and Ms Sleightholm will circulate a qualitative questionnaire among law students studying in the University of Ottawa. The questionnaire will be anonymous, and made available electronically. Professor Bouclin applied for Ethics approval. The study is ongoing. Results have not yet been assessed.



Figure 4. The online questionnaire allows for more anonymity.

## Results of Literary Research

Marginalized law students required mentors who were from a similar socioeconomic background, or have otherwise faced similar struggles, in order to be able to confide in them. It was not important whether the mentoring was formal or informal, as long as they connected regularly. Mentors filled various roles, depending on what the student required. Successful mentoring was beneficial in many ways.



Figure 5. Successful mentoring leads to long term success.

## Discussion

It is vital that Universities develop formal and informal mentoring programs to address the needs of their increasingly diverse student population. If marginalized law students fall through the cracks, the entire profession will suffer. It is our responsibility to ensure student success.

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