

November 2015



Mentors Help Students Trace a Path to Success

Jennie Dee Janssen, '99, has always been fascinated by sharks. When she was a little girl, she dreamt of having a job that would enable her to swim with the majestic predators every day. But, of course, that was unrealistic.

"Only people on TV do that," she told herself. There was no point in trying. So while the child's love for sharks lived on, her dream quickly died.

When Janssen came to Southern as a general studies major, she had no idea what she wanted to do. Then she met Bill Hayes, PhD, a biology professor with a similar interest in sharks. Impressed with her enthusiasm, Hayes introduced Janssen to a colleague who specialized in shark parasitology at Tennessee Aquarium. To her surprise, she was offered a research internship on the spot.

Janssen switched her major to biology so she could have Hayes as an adviser, and he suggested several courses that might interest her. She then spent the rest of her time at Southern conducting shark parasitology research at Tennessee Aquarium and presenting her findings at various confer-

ences alongside professionals and graduate students.

Janssen's experience eventually led her to a senior aquarist position at Georgia Aquarium for eight years, where—at just 26 years old—she was finally able to swim with the sharks. Through all her successes, Janssen has never forgotten the enormous impact Hayes and many other professors had on her career.

"Southern's professors never made me feel like there was something I couldn't do because I was an undergrad," Janssen said. "Without the mentors I had, I absolutely would not be in the public aquarium industry. Period. Nor would I be the same person I am today."

Working with Advisers

An adviser can make all the difference in a student's college experience. Advisers are willing to point students down the right career path, assist them with their classes, provide networking opportunities, and even help out during a personal crisis. As willing as advisers are, however, they cannot do it alone. Student-adviser rela-

tionships are only beneficial if students are willing to put in the work. Here are some tips to help your student get the most out of his or her adviser:

Start early. Students should take time to meet with their advisers within the first two weeks of their arrival on campus. It's a great time for the student to locate their adviser's office and begin developing the student-adviser relationship.

Be honest. It's helpful if the student is open and honest with their adviser about how things are going not only with academics, but also with campus life and friends. Advisers can provide insight that may be beneficial to students as they navigate their college experience.

Be consistent. Most, if not all, professors have an open-door policy. Students should try to meet with their adviser a minimum of one time a semester to touch base.

"Reach out to your professors," Janssen said. "Talk to them. Be open to them. Explain to them what you're looking for. Seek advice. This is your future. It's more than just classes."

~Myron Madden



Jennie Dee Janssen (middle) and her coworkers at the Georgia Aquarium draw a blood sample from a blacktip reef shark during a routine health exam.

Timeless Teachings

"Give instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning."

Proverbs 9:9

QA Ask the Mentor Mike Wyckoff

Last year, Mike Wyckoff mentored MacKenzie Ogan as part of the LEAP program (see right).

What did you enjoy the most about the experience?

It sounds funny, she's all of 20 years old now, but it was fun watching her grow up. Being that age, there are a lot of natural changes. Take transitioning into a profession, for example. That's pretty hard, but she did very well.

Did you feel like you were back in college again?

[Laughs] Don't tempt me. I've already got plenty of degrees!

How do you feel you made a difference in your mentee's college experience?

I would always provide a different viewpoint so that she could make more informed professional and personal decisions. She would talk a lot about issues and situations that she may not have felt comfortable talking to her parents about. I was just always available so that if she ever felt like she needed someone to talk to, she could talk to me.

Would you encourage other alumni and parents to get involved in the LEAP mentor program? Why?

Absolutely. It's exposure to what's going on in these students' lives now. Parents think they're in touch, but once they leave home, it's a whole different world. This way, they could stay in touch and get a more realistic understanding of what's going on now.

Would you consider mentoring another student this year?

I'm already lined up to mentor again!

A LEAP Toward Success

Southern's alumni mentor program prepares students for life after college.

Like many great partnerships, the one between MacKenzie Ogan, senior nursing major, and Mike Wyckoff, '83 and '84, began on a golf course.

Ogan, a freshman at the time, was helping out at the annual alumni golf tournament, and Wyckoff was assisting as a Southern Lights volunteer. The two formed a friendship, which grew as they occasionally bumped into each other on campus and had discussions on careers and finances.

During her sophomore year, Ogan learned about the Southern's new mentorship program.

"I asked if I could be part of the program and requested that Mike become my official mentor," Ogan said.

The partnership was approved, and Wyckoff stepped into the new role of mentor.

Leadership Education through Alumni Partnerships (LEAP) is a program at Southern that connects juniors and seniors with alumni mentors based on similar

"I was worried about the test and felt unprepared. When Mike realized how stressed about it I was, he came to campus and studied with me in the library for three hours."

career paths. Mentors then work to guide students through the final years of college and as they prepare for future endeavors. Interaction is done through monthly connections such as meetings or phone calls.

"We would love to see hundreds of alumni involved," said Evonne Crook, director of Alumni Relations.

For Ogan, having a mentor meant local support for the journey to her diploma. Ogan remembers a stressful test at the beginning of the nursing program that Wyckoff helped her prepare for.



MacKenzie Ogan sits next to her LEAP mentor, Mike Wyckoff. The two have built a partnership and friendship from the mentorship program.

"I was worried about the test and felt unprepared," Ogan said. "When Mike realized how stressed about it I was, he came to campus and studied with me in the library for three hours."

The test went well and Wyckoff helped Ogan study for every major test after.

"Until Mike became my mentor and friend, I didn't truly understand how much of a positive difference a mentor can make in a student's educational success and life after college," Ogan said.

To become a mentor or mentee, visit the LEAP mentoring page at southern.edu/alumni or call 423.236.2830.

~Julia Bonney

Staff Profile:

DANIEL OLSON, CAREER COUNSELOR

Southern's newest career counselor understands how much of a difference a little counseling can make.

Daniel Olson, '02 and '10, first arrived at Southern in 1998 with high hopes of taking over the radio industry with his melodic voice and charming personality. A year later, work with the student newspaper shifted his interests to writing and print journalism. After graduation, Olson's interests continued to evolve as he worked in newspaper design.

Olson traveled down many career paths before acquiring his master's from Southern in clinical mental health counseling, and this circuitous path serves him well today.

"It's one of the things that helps me relate better to students because I feel like I've been in their shoes," Olson said. "Students who visit me are unsure. I can definitely identify with that because I carried that same uncertainty for a long time."

This year, Olson hopes to make students aware of the resources available to them at Career Services so they can choose the major and career path that best fits them. One such resource is a career assessment that combines values, interests, skills, and



Daniel Olson, career counselor, talks with a student about job options. Olson draws from his past experience as a student at Southern to help those seeking advice today.

personality to help each student find the best career match. Olson also encourages students who are confident about their chosen major to schedule an appointment with Career Services to ensure their field is a good fit and to discover which career is the best fit.

"Students can choose the right major within that field but end up in the wrong workplace," Olson said. "Learning about how they might work best in the workplace and what makes a good match for them would definitely be beneficial."

Career Services offers several other

resources, such as resumé help and listening ears, but Olson's ultimate goal is to get students thinking about what comes next.

"I graduated twice on a Sunday, and both times on a Monday, I didn't know what my next step was," Olson said. "I want to help students take advantage of Southern's resources and be better prepared before they get to that step."

Meeting with a career counselor can have a huge impact on a student's future. Encourage your student to schedule a free meeting by calling 423.236.2069.

~Myron Madden

Student Life:

STUDENT MENTORS

For new students, the first semester of college can be filled with uncertainty, but the right student mentor can change that. These mentors are provided to students as part of their Southern Connections class, which prepares freshmen to enter their field of study while helping them adapt to life at Southern.

Student mentors, upperclassmen who study in the same field as their mentees, plan social gatherings and worships, offer advice, and attend their group's Southern Connections class. In the process, many of them form bonds that extend beyond Southern Connections.

"Allison was more than just my mentor—she became a friend!" said Chandler Bozarth, sophomore health science major, of his mentor, Allison Cool, '15. "Her positive attitude helped me to know there was a bright light at the end of the 'tunnel,' also known as General Biology."

Mentors help students know they are noticed and cared for. Cool, a mentor during her junior and senior years, remembers a student who seemed to have no interest



Molly Sherman (front), sophomore allied health major and student mentor, bonds with mentees through team building activities at the Outdoor Education Center.

in interacting with other students. She intentionally got to know him, and over the course of the semester, the student opened up and told Cool that he was closed off because he had previously been bullied and abused.

"He asked a professor and me if we would be able to help him get the counseling he needed," Cool said. "It was a beautiful process to see this student transform into someone who walked with confidence, laughing with friends as he made his way down the promenade."

Student mentors take their job seriously. They want new students to be successful and to learn to love Southern with as much passion as they do.

"If I can help a few students have as an amazing of a college career at Southern as I did, then every second of the process is worth it," Cool said.

~Cassie Matchim

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WANTED: PARENT FEEDBACK!

I hope you have enjoyed this issue of Panorama. To help ensure the content we provide aligns with your expectations and needs as parent of a Southern student, please take a few minutes to answer the following questions and email your response to southernparents@southern.edu.

Participants are entered in a drawing to win a free Village Market gift basket (\$25 value) for their Southern student.

Do you read about parenting topics in books, magazines, websites? If so, where?

Did anything about sending your student off to college make you nervous? If so, what?

Which do you value more in a parent newsletter: learning about opportunities on campus that you can then talk about with your students, or reading advice about parenting college students?

Is there a particular topic you would like to see covered in Panorama?

Please list any email addresses where you would like us to send ePanorama, our electronic newsletter with additional content that comes out four times per year. Thank you!



Myron Madden
Panorama student editor

UPCOMING EVENTS

NOVEMBER

- 1 12th Annual Antique/Classic Car Show**
Collectors and restorers of classic vehicles show off their rides and talk with other car owners.
- 1 Student Association Fall Festival**
Students enjoy an evening of fall activities and games run by various clubs and campus organizations.
- 6 SOAP Sand Rock Climbing**
- 6 Missions Expo**
Former student missionaries and field directors talk to students interested in serving abroad.
- 7 Extreme Dodgeball**
- 9 RAD – Women's Self Defense Class (11/9-11)**
A free self-defense program provided by Campus Safety that helps participants increase their safety awareness.
- 15 Symphony Orchestra Concert**
Concert features Southern's string, wind, brass, and percussion ensembles. View online at southern.edu/streaming.
- 19 SOAP Adventure Movie Night**
- 22 Cowboy Jubilee**
A free Western music event put on by WSMC.
- 23 Thanksgiving Break (11/23-27)**