Growing Entrepreneurs by Mentoring Students (GEMS)
2015-2016 Program Guidelines

OVERVIEW

The Growing Entrepreneurs by Mentoring Students (GEMS) program is an exclusive, high profile program that is open to college students in Greensboro. Through a competitive application process, top entrepreneurial students will be selected to be matched one-on-one with experienced entrepreneurs who would serve as mentors. The program will run throughout the 2015-2016 academic year with a class being comprised of up to twenty students and twenty mentors. In addition to monthly one-on-one mentoring sessions, the program will also include dinners, receptions and other meetings/workshops to encourage networking and information sharing among mentors and students. GEMS will be managed by the North Carolina Entrepreneurship Center (NCEC). There is no cost for students to participate in this program.

PROGRAM BENEFITS

This program will benefit multiple parties including students, mentors, schools, and the Triad community:

Students will receive a personal coach to explore business opportunities, evaluate career options and develop professional skills. In addition, they will join an exclusive network of experienced entrepreneurs and peers.

Mentors will experience meaningful engagement with the some of the brightest entrepreneurial college students in Greensboro and gain access to future talent.

Schools will realize deeper engagement with business leaders through participation in a highly visible and valuable program.

The Triad will benefit from having a new talent pool that can create new businesses and help existing businesses grow.

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

The ultimate goal of the program is to create a new generation of entrepreneurial leaders for the Triad. With a minimum of twenty new students participating each year, within just a few years we will have enhanced the abilities of dozens of young entrepreneurs with the talent, education, energy and connections to make a difference. Some program participants will create new companies that will serve as economic engines for the community. Others will quickly become valuable players in other entrepreneurial organizations, helping them pursue new growth opportunities. In both cases, the results will be more jobs generated for the Triad. Perhaps just as important will be the visibility of the program and the enthusiasm and interest it will ignite among entrepreneurs and community leaders to create broader opportunities for engaging the thousands of other regional college students who are seeking entrepreneurial careers.
ELIGIBILITY

Any student between the ages of 18 and 30 currently enrolled in a full-time undergraduate or graduate program in Greensboro and in good academic standing is eligible to apply. Participating schools include the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, North Carolina A&T State University, Guilford College, Greensboro College, Elon University, Bennett College, High Point University and Guilford Technical Community College. Preference will be given to rising juniors and above, but rising sophomores with exceptional qualities and motivation may apply. Students should show some evidence of their entrepreneurial drive through their personal experience, campus leadership roles and/or career interests. Participants should consider it an honor to be accepted into the GEMS program.

To apply, eligible students should submit a resume, a current photograph and a three page essay describing why they would like to participate in GEMS including particular fields of interest for current or future entrepreneurial endeavors. A letter of recommendation from a faculty member is also required. Applications should be submitted by email to ncec@uncg.edu and are due by May 1, 2015. Student finalists for the program may also be interviewed in person or by phone.

Participating mentors must have at least ten years of business experience with at least one year as a business owner and/or non-profit executive director. More importantly, mentors must have a proven commitment to helping young people.

PROGRAM DETAILS

After students are accepted into GEMS, they will be matched with mentors based on similar interests and backgrounds. Once each match is made, the NCEC will provide both student and mentor with information about each other, in order for both to become familiar with each other’s interests, goals, and backgrounds. It will be the responsibility of the student to make the first initial contact with their mentor before the start of the fall semester.

Toward the beginning of the fall semester, students and mentors will be invited to a dinner where they can meet each other and network with the entire GEMS group.

During the 2015-2016 academic year, we ask that students and mentors spend 3 to 5 hours per month on GEMS activities. That can include gatherings of the entire GEMS group, one-on-one meetings, phone calls, emails, company visits and any other meaningful exchanges.

Both mentors and students will sign a one year agreement with specific expectations and responsibilities as outlined below.

Students:

- Provide monthly updates to mentor via e-mail or more frequently if desired.
- Meet face to face at least once per month during the school year (sometimes in conjunction with GEMS or other entrepreneurship related events such as the monthly Entrepreneurial Journeys speaker series).
- Communicate by phone or email at least three additional times a semester.
- Attend the GEMS kick-off dinner in early September with all of the mentors and students, two other meetings/receptions during the year and a final dinner in late April.
- Attend one meeting per semester of all the GEMS participating students to share experiences and how they are working with their mentors.
- Participate in at least two other activities during the academic year including but not limited to:
- Trade shows or conferences with mentor
- Business social functions with mentor (e.g. NC Entrepreneurship Center events, Greensboro Chamber events, Rotary club meetings)
- Mentor company’s staff meeting (or other business oriented meeting)
- Job shadowing

- Maintain regular, timely and responsive contact with their mentor.
- Keep a regular journal or diary of GEMS experiences.
- Submit an end of year paper based on the diary and what they learned during the year.
- Participate in other entrepreneurship activities on their campus or other Greensboro campuses.

Mentors

- Maintain regular, timely, responsive and engaged contact with the student (see above).
- Attend the GEMS kick-off dinner in early September with all of the mentors and students, two other meetings/receptions during the year and a final dinner in late April.
- Be available for one-on-one interaction with student on campus and off.
- Help provide other valuable experiences for students (see examples above)

The North Carolina Entrepreneurship Center (NCEC)

The NCEC will coordinate all of the activities of the GEMS program. Center personnel, working with colleagues at other Greensboro colleges and universities will:

- Recruit potential student candidates
- Recruit mentors
- Match mentors with students
- Organize group events
- Monitor relationships to ensure each party is satisfied and that the student is engaging in a valuable experience
- Encourage GEMS participants to participate in other entrepreneurship activities and initiatives offered throughout the community.