

Lucy Mentoring Program 2007

UNSW Student Evaluation Report

Twenty-five students were selected to participate in the Lucy Mentoring Program in Session 2 in 2007 at UNSW. 18 out of the 25 students completed the evaluation questionnaire.

The evaluation questionnaire assessed the following areas of the Program:

1. Participant Outcomes
2. Effectiveness of the Work Based Activities
3. Organisation and Structure of the Program
4. Program Material / Documents

Summary of Results

1. Participant Outcomes

- Overall, students felt that the Lucy Mentoring Program met their objectives and expectations.
- Students have benefited from the Program in the following ways:
 - Gaining insight into the profession/industry and employment opportunities;
 - Gaining practical experience and making professional contacts;
 - Broadening their view on the meaning of “leadership”;
 - Clarifying career directions; and
 - Learning the art of work/life balance.

2. Effectiveness of the Work Based Activities

- The Work Based Activities allowed students the opportunity to develop useful skills e.g. verbal and written communication skills, interpersonal/networking skills, technical skills, research and teamwork skills, as well as self-discipline and attention to detail.
- The most beneficial activities for developing these skills include: induction/training programs, involvement in the workplace, networking events, and spending time with mentors.
- Exposure to a network of senior women was invaluable to students as they served as role models for how women can succeed in the workplace.

3. Organisation and Structure of the Program

- Overall, students were satisfied with the matching of mentors to students, the structure of the Program, and the Student Briefing. In addition, students were generally well prepared for the time and personal commitment required in the Program.
- Networking between students occurred through different processes including: briefing/debriefing sessions and the internet (i.e. email, MSN Messenger, and Facebook).

4. Program Material / Documents

- Overall, students were satisfied with the Participant Manual and the Reflective Learning Journal.

1. Participant Outcomes

1. How well has the Lucy Mentoring Program met your objectives / expectations?

	Very Poor	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Responses			2	10	6
Percentage			11.1%	55.6%	33.3%

Can you identify 3 benefits of the program?

Students have identified the following benefits from participating in the Program.

- Gaining insight into:
 - Employment opportunities in the industry
 - Work environment and personal requirements of the industry
 - Daily responsibilities and challenges faced by female leaders
 - Dynamics of professional relationships
- Opportunity to network and make new contacts with professionals and other students
- Gaining practical experience and training to develop self-confidence
- Gaining support from professionals who can provide advice on both personal and professional issues

2. How well has 'Lucy' raised your awareness of the breadth of job opportunities in the public and private sectors?

	Very Poor	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Responses	1		1	11	5
Percentage	5.6%		5.6%	61.1%	27.8%

What new opportunities are you now aware of?

Overall, students felt that the Program has increased their awareness of the breadth of employment opportunities in their field. In particular, they learned the many pros and cons associated with different specialisations and sectors in the industry. In addition, students realised that a university degree is versatile, and that job opportunities are not restricted to the bounds of the course you are studying.

3. To what extent has ‘Lucy’ motivated you to aspire to senior positions in the public and private sectors?

	Very Poor	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Responses		1	3	8	5
Percentage		5.9%	17.6%	47.1%	29.4%

Has it changed your view about leadership? How?

The Program has broadened students’ view about leadership. In particular, students have learned that:

- Female leaders add value to the workplace
- Leaders should be supportive and encouraging
- Leaders should have commitment, interpersonal/communication skills as well as technical skills
- Leadership requires team work and cooperation from followers
- Senior positions are attainable

“LUCY has shown me that there is a strong commitment within the body of female workers in executive roles to support one another in their professional endeavours. Leadership can be considered a joint and cooperative, rather than coercive concept.”

“Has humanised things for me - the senior associates & partners that I met were more down to earth, friendly, open. They actually took time to get to know you and share a joke. Erased my preconception of seniors being work-absorbed, manipulative, self-serving, placed on pedestal.”

“Yes my view has changed because I used to think that leadership in a law firm was individual activity, filled with reflection, action and making decisions on your own. Now I realise that the practice works as a team and constantly running ideas by other fellow workers.”

4. How would you rate ‘Lucy’ in helping you clarify the career path you might take?

	Very Poor	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Responses		1	4	9	3
Percentage		5.9%	23.5%	52.9%	17.6%

Could the Program have offered more to help with your career decisions? If so, what?

Overall, students appreciated the opportunity to discuss their career directions with their mentors and other professionals. This has not only broadened their insight into the different employment opportunities available, it has also clarified their career direction.

Suggestions for improvement include:

- Further ongoing support
- Being placed in more than one industry or organisation

- A forum for mentors and mentees to facilitate communication and the trading of ideas and perspectives

5. Did you identify any factors which might help or hinder entry or progress through an organisation? What were they?

Students felt that women often need to work harder than their male counterparts, especially in male-dominated fields to achieve the same success. In addition, promotion opportunities may be hindered by women’s commitment to their families because of the common belief that family commitments prevent women from putting in their best efforts. Students also felt that the lack of certain skills (e.g. networking and negotiation, time management and organisational skills, skills in job application and interviews) or certain personal qualities (e.g. outstanding academic results, motivation, assertiveness and self-confidence) may hinder entry or progression through an organisation.

6. Has the experience helped you understand how you can create a balance between career goals and lifestyle?

	No	Yes
Responses	2	16
Percentage	11.1%	88.9%

What have you learned? What aspects of the Program assisted your understanding?

Mentors and other professionals have provided good role models for students on how to balance family and career, as well as providing advice and understanding. Students learned that it is often necessary to sacrifice family time due to work. In particular, students learned that achieving work/life balance requires discipline, good organisation and time management skills, as well as knowing when to seek help and support. It may be easier in some organisations compared to others as some organisations offer various social groups that encourage work/life balance.

“Throughout the Lucy Program, just by interacting with women leaders and gaining insights from their own life experiences have taught me that the balance is there for you to define, and should not be the soul dictation of the organisation of which you work for.”

“I have learnt that it is important to create for yourself a strong support network, whether it be through your professional contacts, or personal friends outside of work. This will enable a healthy balance between work and family/ other commitments. Women need to support one another, particularly at the higher executive levels of employment.”

7. Were you offered paid experience as a result of participating in the Lucy Mentoring Program?

Although most students were not offered paid employment, students were offered the opportunity to extend the volunteer experience and were exposed to possible future employers. One student was offered paid employment as a result of the Program.

2. Effectiveness of the Work Based Activities

8. How useful has the Work-Based Activity been in providing an opportunity to learn new skills?

	Very Poor	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Responses		1	5	7	3
Percentage		6.3%	31.3%	43.8%	18.8%

Please identify 3 useful skills you have developed.

Students identified the following useful skills that they have developed over the duration of the Program:

- Verbal communication skills: negotiation, interview, presentation
- Written communication skills: writing memos, resume and cover letters
- Interpersonal and networking skills: client relationship management
- Technical skills: MYOB, completing individual tax returns
- Research and teamwork skills
- Self-discipline, attention to detail

9. How successful has the Work-Based Activity been in providing you with an opportunity to learn about the organisation?

	Very Poor	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Responses			2	9	6
Percentage			11.8%	52.9%	35.3%

What specific work skill activities were most beneficial?

Students identified the following work skill activities as the most beneficial:

- Induction/training programs
- Observation of professionals in the work environment
- Active involvement in the workplace in general e.g. attending meetings, working with a team of professionals
- Networking events e.g. talks/seminars by professionals about their work
- Spending time and having meaningful discussions with mentors e.g. about self and career development

10. How useful has 'Lucy' been in providing you with exposure to a network of senior women?

	Very Poor	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Responses		1	2	8	6
Percentage		5.9%	11.8%	47.1%	35.3%

Has exposure to senior women helped? How?

Overall, students found the exposure to senior women to be helpful as these women served as role models of how women can succeed in the workplace. Further, this exposure has allowed students to gain insight into:

- Gender dynamics and difficulties that women face in the workplace,
- How the workplace is becoming more flexible for women,
- How senior women manage work/life balance and career progression, and
- How to tackle interviews and how to create a support network in the profession.

“Has taught me that you must be strong, assertive, confident, articulate and intelligent to attain and grow in a senior role. It has also demonstrated that there is no need to pretend to or assume 'male' characteristics in order to stand out and perform as a leader. It's more about assertiveness and personal relations and concentrating on doing the best that you can in your capacity.”

“Definitely helped me to understand what it takes to be a leader and the relationship built will benefit in the longer term as well.”

3. Organisation and Structure of the Program

11. How would you rate the matching of mentors to students?

	Very Poor	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Responses			2	8	7
Percentage			11.8%	47.1%	41.2%

Could the methods of matching be improved? How?

Overall, students were very satisfied with the matching of mentors to students. One student suggested that perhaps more than one opportunity to indicate preferences for mentors would be beneficial.

“Given the obvious constraints in having only a limited number of mentors of a particular background, the Careers and Employment team did a fantastic and really intuitive job of matching mentors and mentees. I was placed with a firm and in an area of practice I would never have thought of working at or in and it turned out to be an excellent opportunity to get involved in something new and gain new insight outside of my comfort zone.”

“Overall, the matching was more than satisfactory. Even some mentees who were not “perfectly matched” to a mentor in their chosen area of career interest, they still professed that value has been gained through this contact.”

12. How would you rate the structure of the Program (i.e. Student Briefing, Sessions 1 & 2 and the Student Debrief) as a framework to support the Work-Based Activity?

	Very Poor	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Responses			3	12	2
Percentage			17.6%	70.6%	11.8%

Is there anything you would add or change? (timing, length or number of sessions, etc)

Many students felt that there was a good level of flexibility in the Program, and that there was good support and communication between the organisers, mentors and mentees. One student commented that Session 1 served as a good introduction and ice-breaker, and Session 2 was a good opportunity to reflect on what she has learned and that it was an appropriate end to the Program.

Suggestions for improvement:

- One student suggested increasing the number of debrief sessions from one to two
- Some students suggested to have the Program earlier in the year or earlier in the semester to avoid the busiest time of the year for both mentors (i.e. summer intern recruitment period) and mentees (i.e. exam period)

- One student suggested that mentees and mentors could set the required number of hours instead of having the number of hours set by the Program, since many mentors are very busy and cannot cater to their mentees for the set amount of time

13. How would you rate the Student Briefing?

	Very Poor	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Responses		1	2	11	3
Percentage		5.9%	11.8%	64.7%	17.6%

Is there other information that should be covered?

Overall, students were satisfied with the information provided in the Student Briefing. Suggestions for improvement include:

- Providing more information on the presentation component of the Program
- Asking more evaluative questions similar to the evaluation questionnaire

14. Did networking between students occur?

	No	Yes
Responses	7	10
Percentage	41.2%	58.8%

If so what process was used and was this useful? If not, would this have been useful and what suggestions do you have?

Useful processes for networking include:

- Briefing and debriefing sessions
- Email and MSN Messenger
- Facebook group for Lucy participants
- Working in the same organisation as other students in the Program

The above processes provided students with the opportunity to meet other students as well as other mentors involved in the Program. These processes also provided the means for students to share their experiences, and seek support and advice from each other.

"I made some wonderful friends who I get on extraordinarily well with on a personal level. The people I met through the program share similar careers aspirations, and are very supportive of me in my endeavours and work – both at uni and in my job."

Suggestions for improvement include:

- Providing students with a list of contact details of all the students involved in the Program
- Establishing an internet forum for all mentees of the Program from all participating universities

15. How well prepared were you for the level of commitment (time and personal) required to meet the demands of the Program?

	Very Poor	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Responses			2	9	6
Percentage			11.8%	52.9%	35.3%

If you had difficulty organising competing time commitments, what suggestions do you have to make participation in the Program easier for students in the future?

Many students felt that they were able to organise their time appropriately to meet with their mentors. Students also felt that the Program had good flexibility and the time frame was appropriate. As a note of advice for future participants, students need to be prepared well in advance for the time commitment required and they should match their availability carefully with their mentors at the beginning.

4. Program Material / Documents

16. How would you rate the 'Participant Manual'?

	Very Poor	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Responses			3	9	5
Percentage			17.6%	52.9%	29.4%

Is there other information which should be included?

Overall, students were satisfied with the level of detail in the Participant Manual. Some suggestions for improvement include:

- More information about the closing and what is required, as well as providing a Program guide
- Personal anecdotes from previous mentees in the program would be useful and interesting to read prior to commencing the program

17. How would you rate the usefulness of the Reflective Learning Journal?

	Very Poor	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Responses		1	8	8	
Percentage		5.9%	47.1%	47.1%	

Can you suggest any improvements?

Some suggestions for improvement include:

- Including all mentoring sessions in one document instead of having separate documents for each session
- Similar headings such as "Personal Reactions" and "Self Evaluation" could be combined

"The reflective learning journal is merely a tool for you to reflect on your own experiences. Some girls may find it an inappropriate tool, others may find it extremely useful. Again, it's up to the mentees to utilise it."

5. Further Comments

18. Please make any further comments or suggestions about the Program.

One student suggested a longer time frame for the Program and another student suggested that perhaps the Program can let students set the number of hours to complete with their mentors. However, overall, students were very satisfied with the program.

“Great program. Definitely recommend it to anyone.”

“The program was well structured - both in terms of matching mentors with mentees, and with respect to the timeframe given for completion of WBA.”

“The Lucy Mentoring Program is a great opportunity for girls to be exposed to the corporate environment (if they have not been already). The contacts and networks established during the program are also useful for future reference.”

“The Lucy program has provided me with an incredible journey, probably the ride of my life.”

“The program was truly enlightening. The work experience challenged me to adapt quickly and apply theory learnt in the classroom. Speaking with senior women opened my eyes to the many opportunities that lie ahead.”