The Seita Scholars Volunteer Career Mentor Program has experienced tremendous growth and change during the first half of the 2012-13 school year. This program, which pairs Seita Scholars with working professionals, assists Scholars with building their support network here at WMU. It also helps Scholars prepare to successfully transition from college life into the working world when they graduate.

In late spring, as an effort to grow this program, requests for new mentors went out across the WMU campus and Kalamazoo community—and the response was astounding. As a result of this recruitment effort, the over thirty new mentors were added this year, bringing the number of active mentors to over seventy!

As the overall goal of the Career Mentor Program is to match all 160 Seita Scholars with a career mentor, these recruitment efforts for are still underway! Students need mentors in all fields, but areas of particular interest for the Seita Scholars include:

- Business
- Law/Criminal Justice
- Medical fields
- Social Work
- Education

Newly recruited career mentors were trained over the summer and given the opportunity to meet with Scholars beginning in July, when the Program hosted the first ever Career Mentor and Scholar Dinner. This event successfully paired nearly half of the incoming class of Scholars with career mentors!

The second of these events, which was hosted in November, was open to both new and returning mentors and Scholars. By hosting these dinners, the Seita Scholars Program brings together available mentors and Scholars. By utilizing a “speed dating” technique, these mentors and mentees have the opportunity to meet one another prior to being officially matched—and they have increased input on who they are matched with.

This new approach to matching mentors and mentees has proved to be very successful! This year, thirty-seven Scholars have been newly matched with mentors as a result of many of these efforts. This brings the total number of Seita Scholars with mentors to sixty!

Mentors and mentees are doing wonderful things together—from sharing meals, to engaging in job shadowing events, to helping Scholars find internships and volunteer experiences—and they are having a great time together doing these things! As one Scholar noted “Having a mentor has been helpful because my mentor gives me good advice about jobs and how to connect with people.”

For more information, or to become a career mentor, email fyit-info@wmich.edu or visit: http://www.wmich.edu/fyit/Giving/volunteering.php
For three weeks every year, Western Michigan University closes its residence halls as students head home for the holidays. Many Seita Scholars stay on campus during this time, as one residence hall remains open to accommodate Scholars and other students who need to remain on campus during this time.

With the closing of the residence halls comes the closing of the dining halls, as WMU Dining Services is also on vacation during this three week period. This creates a gap for students staying on campus over the Winter Closure—where do they get food?

The Seita Scholars Program volunteers fill that gap for Scholars by donating hot or frozen meals. The request for these meals typically goes out several months in advance of the Winter Closure, to ensure that there are enough meals provided for Scholars.

When the request for meal donations for the 2012-13 Winter Closure went out in October this year, the response from the Seita Scholars volunteers was overwhelming! Within a matter of weeks, the entire twenty-two day period was covered, and requests to help were still coming in!

As we work through the Winter Closure, we are confident that the Seita Scholars will be well fed during this time, and we want to take a moment and thank all of those individuals and groups who reached out to help during this time.

Thank you for your support!

The holiday season is a time to gather with friends and family, celebrate and give thanks. This time of year is, therefore, characterized by an increase in travel across the country, as people travel near and far to see their loved ones. Because this is also a time of giving, as this holiday season approached staff at the Seita Scholars Program began to receive requests about what Scholars most need over the holiday season.

A gap that has been identified for many Scholars is the need for resources to enable them to travel over the holiday season to see family and friends outside of the Kalamazoo area. Many Scholars would love the opportunity to travel for a day or longer to visit family and friends, but do not have the funds to do so.

This need is not limited to the holiday season for many students. In fact, a lack of travel funds can also be a barrier to students throughout the school year who would like to travel to see friends and family for special occasions or emergencies.

Responding to this need, the Seita Scholars Program is starting a Student Travel Fund for Scholars in need of travel assistance throughout the year. It is the hope of the Program to have gas gift cards and travel vouchers on hand throughout the year to enable students to travel home when they need to, but do not have the financial resources to do so easily.

Volunteers who would like to contribute to this fund can do so in a variety of ways. The simplest is to purchase a gas gift card or travel voucher for a train or bus trip and send it to:

Attn: Student Travel Fund
Seita Scholars Program
1903 W. Michigan Avenue
Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5302

These gift cards and vouchers will be given to students as the need arises throughout the year. Questions, concerns or comments? Please feel free to email info-fyit@wmich.edu or call (269) 387-8357.
Question: My mentee is not looking for a career yet. What sorts of activities should I engage in with them?

This is a very common question that many career mentors have as they engage in a mentoring relationship. What do I do with my mentee that will be meaningful and develop the skills that s/he needs to be successful?

The fact of the matter is that your mentee might not currently be seeking professional employment, but there are still “soft skills” that you can help your mentee develop during his or her time at WMU that will benefit him or her long after s/he has left the university.

Honing Planning Skills
The ability to plan is vital to success; as a mentor, you can help your mentee hone his or her planning skills.

Over a meal, an email or a phone call, discuss what your mentee’s plans are for the coming weekend with regard to his or her homework and class assignments. Help him or her understand the importance of knowing what they have coming up, and how they are going to accomplish all that they need to get done.

Remember, gaining the skills to be a successful student—which is really your mentee’s career right now—will help him or her be a successful professional some day!

To get your mentee thinking even further into the future, have him or her think about what s/he plans to do after graduation. How about five years from now? Ten years?

While the answers to these questions may change, getting your mentee to start thinking about where s/he wants to be in the future will help him or her begin to set goals to get there. As a mentor, you can help your mentee set and reach those goals!

Volunteer Involvement: A Holiday Reflection and Thank You

From the moment that Seita Scholars arrive on Western Michigan University’s campus in the fall, the Seita Scholars volunteers and mentors are involved in their lives. From donating supplies for Welcome Packs to helping students move into their residence halls and apartments, the program’s volunteers are an immediate and important part of the lives of all of our students.

Throughout the semester, this generosity continues. Volunteers make blankets, knit hats and scarves, provide meals, donate gift cards, help students with transportation needs, act as tutors and mentors, help host dinners and other gatherings and much, much more. So much of what happens through this program is generously supported and made possible by our volunteers.

This holiday season, we want to make sure that all of the Seita Scholars Program volunteers and mentors know how very much all that they do throughout the year matters. Your impact makes our students feel valued and welcomed by the Kalamazoo and WMU community—and we hope that you all know how much we appreciate that throughout the year!

Donor’s Corner

Throughout the year, despite extensive budget planning, Scholars may have gaps in their budgets that the Program tries to help them fill. One of the most frequent gaps is the grocery gap. To help fill this gap, the Program attempts to keep gift cards on hand to provide to students in need of groceries.

Gift cards to grocery stores (Walmart, Meijer, etc.) are very helpful for students needing to make a quick shopping trip to fill the cupboards until their next paycheck comes in. Suggested denominations for gift card donations are no more than $25.

For questions or to inquire about other Program needs, please email fyit-info@wmich.edu.
December 2012
Saturday, Dec. 1: Deadline to apply for April graduation
*Sunday, Dec. 9: Finals Celebration**
*Dec. 10-14: Final Exam Week
Saturday, Dec. 15: Semester Ends (Commencement)
*Dec. 15–Jan. 6: Winter Closure and Events**

January 2013
Monday, Jan. 7: Classes begin at 8 a.m.
Friday, Jan. 18: Seita Town Hall Meeting
Monday, Jan. 21: MLK Day (No Classes)
MLK Event (TBD)

February 2013
Friday, Feb. 1: SALP Gender and Leadership Summit
Friday, Feb. 8—Sunday, Feb. 10: LGBT Student Conference
Friday, Feb. 15—Saturday, Feb. 16: SALP Spring Leadership Retreat

March 2013
Friday, March 1: Spirit Day (No Classes), FAFSA Due
Monday, March 4—Friday, March 8: Spring Break
Monday, March 11: Classes resume at 8 a.m.

April 2013
Saturday, April 6: SALP Spring Into the Streets
Friday, April 19: End of the Year Awards Ceremony**
Finals Week Picnic (TBD)**
Monday, April 22—Friday, April 26: Final Exam Week
Saturday, April 27: Semester Ends (Commencement)
Tuesday, April 30: Spring Final Grades Posted
*Begin thinking about Welcome Packs (TBD)

* Indicates a time when volunteer support is utilized for events.
** Indicates an event that would be a good event for mentors/mentees to attend together.