



Mommy Grads Update

I am pleased to announce that Mommy Grads has been operational for about two months now. Please read below for an update on the progress of the program.

The students

Mommy Grads' eight students include 1 freshman, 2 sophomores, 4 juniors, and 2 seniors whose academic majors include public relations, biology, journalism, psychology, and business. The students' children range in age from 2 months to 7 years old.

In their applications, the Mommy Grads gave different reasons for wanting to be involved in the program- some want to learn about resources for flexible daycare, some want to learn strategies for time management, some want help in accessing higher paid jobs and some just wanted access to a supportive network. The group overall though, is made up of extremely driven, positive women, who are eager to create a good life for themselves and their children. As a result of their active engagement in the program, each Mommy Grads student has been given a portion of their \$800 stipend to help out with the many financial responsibilities associated with being a single mother.

The mentors

In addition to the students, Mommy Grads also includes six mentors, to date. Each mentor has been assigned with a Mommy Grads student with the expectation that the mentors, who are professional working mothers, will guide the student parent, and provide them with advice gleaned through their own experiences. The mentors' professional experiences range from banking to nursing to finance. In addition to being professional, working mothers, there is one common thread that weaves across all the Mommy Grads mentors- they all have very personal reasons for wanting to give their time to the program and are extremely committed to their mentees.

The mentoring component of Mommy Grads kicked off on Tuesday, October 20th. The mentors and mentees initially met over hors d'oeuvres and refreshments, and then participated in an exercise where they signed mentoring agreements and identified goals for their mentoring relationships.

The workshops

To date, Mommy Grads has had two workshops. The first workshop, held on November 3rd, focused on Time Management and was led by Mia Farrell of Leave it 2 Mia events. Mia is a successful wedding and event planner, who is also a task master and master organizer. During the workshop, she shared tips on getting and staying organized and juggling multiple projects and responsibilities. As a takeaway, each student left with a brand new Franklin Covey planner

that they were encouraged to try using for at least thirty days. The second Mommy Grads workshop, held on November 24th, was led by me, Jamie Gauthier, and focused on study skills. Topics of discussion included identifying blocks of time for studying, prioritizing and planning assignments, and how to take effective notes.

In addition to our discussion around study skills, at the November 24th meeting, we had a visit from Yolanda McCleary, the Community Outreach Coordinator from LIFT Philadelphia. LIFT is a national nonprofit that uses college-level student volunteers to work with community members on a range of issues, from employment to housing to public benefits screenings and enrollment. Yolanda talked with the students about accessing LIFT's services at their North Broad Street office, which is near to Temple's campus. Yolanda also offered to have additional staff come to a future Mommy Grads meeting, where they would prepare the student's taxes and FASFA forms onsite.

Both of the Mommy Grads workshops mentioned above involved not only the delivering of information from the instructors, but also engagement and free flowing conversation between the students on challenges and successes that they have experienced in the topic areas.

What's next

The next Mommy Grads workshop will be held on Tuesday, December 1st, and will focus on financial management. The workshop will be led by Karen Bailey, Vice President of Workplace Banking, PNC Bank. Topics of discussion will include creating and sticking to a budget, and managing a checking account. There will also be a mentor meeting held on December 17th, where I will check in with the mentors to assess how things are going, and offer tips about achieving success in the mentoring relationships.

On December 22nd, Mommy Grads will end the semester with a holiday party for students, mentors, volunteer workshop instructors, and supporters of the program. We will come back ready for the spring semester in mid- January, and will look forward to an exciting lineup of workshops on topics including resume writing, networking, careers, as well as a panel including dynamic mothers with careers in a variety of fields. Thanks for reading about us-- I will continue to keep you updated on our progress.

Jamie Gauthier
Director