Jefferson Powell had an idea for a program that would complement existing resources available to Price College students that help them navigate through their academic careers. Powell, president of the Student Business Association, wanted to create a student-to-student mentoring program. In September 2010, he presented the concept to a very receptive Dean Ken Evans. Powell got to work, and at the beginning of the spring 2011 semester launched the Price College Student Mentor program. “My brother benefitted as both a mentee and mentor in the College of Engineering’s student mentoring program. I thought a similar program could be implemented in Price College,” Powell explains. “My main motivation is to give students who might be more willing to approach people closer to their own age another resource to make their Price College experience more productive and positive.”

Through the program, freshmen and sophomores are matched with upperclass students who have completed an orientation process and can provide information and guidance on...
topics ranging from how to apply to Price College to opportunities to participate in Study Abroad, student clubs and other extracurricular activities. Mentors and mentees are matched at a ratio of no more than one to five. After the initial match, mentors are encouraged to maintain contact with their mentees throughout the semester, if for no other reason than to let them know their mentors are available.

Students of all class levels are responding enthusiastically. “We had 28 mentees sign up. This was absolutely perfect because we had 27 mentors sign up, allowing us an almost perfect 1:1 mentor/mentee ratio. We also were able to match most mentees with mentors of the same major,” states Powell. “We had our first group-wide meeting on Feb. 11 where mentees received valuable information on student organizations and then split up for some time with their mentors.”

“I think crossing the gap a little bit between older and younger students is a valuable experience for both groups. It’s interesting to hear about people who come to OU for four years and spend three of them in Price not realizing how many things are going on. This program would be another avenue to reach them,” Powell says. “And the greater your network, the more poised you are to succeed, both in school and after graduation.”

Nim Razook, associate dean of Undergraduate Programs and David Ross Boyd Professor of Legal Studies, and Robert Harper, director of Undergraduate Professional Development and SBA advisor, are Powell’s mentors in getting the program started. “It’s not an especially profound observation, but student-initiated programs often are better received by students,” says Razook. “When we see students come forward with good ideas, one of the best things we can do is get out of the way. This idea caught on really fast. My role is to facilitate, but also to let the students do what they propose.”

“The Student Mentor program shows the college’s continued confidence in students to come up with ideas to lead,” adds Harper, who will provide a degree of continuity for the program when Powell graduates this year. Responsibility for operating the program will continue to reside in SBA.

“Giving students more involvement not only in Price College’s long-term future but also in its day-to-day operations will make this a better place,” Razook says. “The more student involvement the better.”