

Meet mentor Georgeanna Mehr, a leader to bank on

If experience is one of our greatest teachers, then EB211 mentor Georgeanna Mehr has a story worthy of sharing in the biggest lecture hall on campus. Her personal Ted Talk has enough material that could fill an entire bank vault and inspire generations to come.

Georgeanna could talk about her journey from starting out as a teller to becoming a bank president. Or how she went from dropping out of college to later heading a college foundation. Or how she joined the college ranks with her 18-year-old son and now invests her resources to help others get started on their educational journeys.

“I have always realized the importance of education and try to give back in any way I can,” says Georgeanna, who joined the EB211 mentor ranks and is working with UIUC junior Leticia Hernandez, who is majoring in accounting. While Leticia is Mehr’s first EB211 mentee, Georgeanna has a lot of experience helping students navigate their way through college. In addition to helping run the Harper College Educational Foundation as president and trustee, she has mentored five Harper students through One Million Degrees and the Hope Giving Circle. When she was president of the Hoffman Estates Community Bank and its three branch offices, Mehr convinced her parent company, Barrington Bank and Trust (a Wintrust Bank headed by Brad Stetson) to join the ranks of EB211’s community supporters. Now retired after 47 years in the industry, Georgeanna enjoys working with her mentee. “Leticia is a leader in her college community and understands the benefits of volunteering and mentoring other students. Oh, the places she will go! ... I always enjoy our Zoom meetings and getting together in person when Leticia is home.”

Leticia says Georgeanna has been a “great resource” throughout her college journey. “It is never a dull conversation with her, whether it is about academics, career, or life in general,” Leticia says. “I appreciate all her insight and support. I am fortunate to have Georgeanna as a mentor.”

As a high school grad, Georgeanna’s resources took a major jolt when she lost a four-year Illinois State Scholarship because of her married status (she was 18½ at the time). “My plan was to attend Northern University and I couldn’t afford tuition without the scholarship,” she explained. After realizing she couldn’t balance college and a full-time job, she focused on her family and her career. Her college dreams were shelved until she and her oldest son took classes at the College of Lake County when they lived in Wauconda. She eventually completed her Finance Degree at Elmhurst College (now Elmhurst University). With that degree in hand, she was hired as President of Hoffman Estates Community Bank, a position she held for 18 years. Her community involvement included many years of leadership with the Barrington Area United Way and the Hoffman Estates Chamber of Commerce. Since retiring in 2019, she now serves as a director on the Barrington Bank and Trust Board. In addition to her mentor duties, Mehr is proud to support a named scholarship through EB211 to help others reach their educational goals.

While it is helpful to connect mentees with professionals in their chosen field, Georgeanna says the job of a mentor goes beyond introductions. “Be a good listener and have conversations with the mentee that will lead them to the direction that they are looking for,” she explained. “Share your life experiences that mirror their experiences so they know that they are not alone.”

That approach, insists this longtime banking executive, will help them earn a good return on their investment in education.