



# Pair Profile

As a junior in high school 10 years ago, Julia Naomi Blue was a strong, outgoing student. Yet, she had never considered college as an option—that is, until she met her mentor, Debbie DeFord Minerva.

“No one in my family had gone to college,” says Julia. “So there wasn’t really a discussion about what would happen after high school.”

A first-generation college student herself, Debbie signed up to volunteer with iMentor because she understood that young people need guidance as they determine their path to college and a career.

Debbie was a copyeditor at Random House at the time, and she brought a bag of books to give Julia at their first iMentor meeting. The pair quickly bonded over their love of reading. Two years later, after discussing Julia’s options for college over iMentor emails and at monthly meetings, Debbie encouraged Julia to apply to community college. Julia was accepted to Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) and soon set her sights on a four-year university.

Even though their formal iMentor participation was over, the pair stayed in touch as Julia successfully transferred from BMCC to Howard University. After years of hard work—and lots of encouraging emails and calls with Debbie—Julia became the first in her family to earn a college degree.

College provided entry to a rewarding career for Julia, just as it had for Debbie. After graduating, Julia secured a job working on President Barack Obama’s re-election campaign and rose to the position of



Julia (right) with her mentor, Debbie, in 2012.

Deputy Finance Director for the New York Tri-state region. She now works as a fundraiser in the non-profit sector.

“Without Debbie, and without iMentor, I wouldn’t have gone to college or gotten my first job,” says Julia.

This fall, 10 years after she first met Debbie, Julia rejoined the iMentor family as a mentor to a young woman named Fidelia at the International High School at Lafayette in Brooklyn. Julia explains, “I want to be a mentor now because I want to share the one thing that people can’t take away from you—that’s an education. That’s something Debbie, and iMentor, taught me.”

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-Julia Blue, former mentee, current mentor