Asian-American students receive mentors

By Rob Gibson
Lantern staff writer

What started out as one student's idea to help Asian-American freshmen get accustomed with Ohio State is now the Asian American Brothers and Sisters Program.

Po Chu, a graduating senior in business, said that she started the organization three years ago with the help of Rebecca Nelson, AABS coordinator and assistant director of the Office of Minority Affairs-Retention Services.

"In my first year at OSU, I wanted to meet other Asian-American students, but I felt like I wanted to have more one-on-one interaction with upperclassmen," Chu said.

"I think it is difficult for freshmen students, especially minority students, to make the transition from high school to college. This program is designed to bridge that gap," Chu said.

The AABS program matches incoming freshmen, called little sibs, with big sib upperclassmen. The idea is that the big sibs can help their little sibs cope with the problems of coming to college.

"In the first year it was a developing concept with about 50 students participating," according to Nelson. "Last year we had 164 students participating in the program and we expect about the same number this year."

While many big sibs and little sibs use this program as a social outlet, Nelson said that the ultimate focus is academic success and graduation. Each participant is given a list of possible activities to do together. Big sibs are encouraged to show their little sibs their favorite places to study and hang out.

"The earlier that you get involved the easier it will be to make new friends," said Warren Den, a sophomore economics student and big sib.

Den said that he decided to become a big sib this year so he could give back to the program that helped him last year.

Little sibs and big sibs are linked up in equal groups of between two to four little sibs with two to four big sibs. While there are no formal rules as to how often little sibs and big sibs should get together, it is recommended that students try to meet every couple of weeks, according to Viet Nguyen, a junior zoology student and AABS co-coordinator.

"We have one program a quarter where we get all of the big sibs and little sibs together. The rest of the time the big sibs and little sibs meet in their own groups whenever they can," Nguyen said.

Nguyen also said that the AABS activity for Spring Quarter will coincide with the Asian American Professional Mentoring Roundtable.

The roundtable is a chance for students to meet with Asian-American professionals in their area of study to learn about the careers, socialize and develop leads to possible internships and future employment.

While the get together for this quarter has passed, Nelson said that it is not too late for Asian-American students who are interested to join AABS.

"We will be accepting new members until the end of Autumn Quarter," Nelson said. "Anyone who is interested in joining can call the Office of Minority Affairs Office-Retention Services."