

Peer Mentoring for Recruitment

Why should you start a program right now?

Recruitment of next year's cohort of grad students is underway. This is the perfect time to gather volunteers from your department to help welcome students and answer questions. The connections made during recruitment will be continued and extended when the students matriculate, and next year's cohort will be your program's first group of mentees!

What are the benefits to mentees?

- A go-to person to ask questions about the program and department so they will be informed and feel welcomed to our University.
- A person to help coordinate campus visits, if necessary.
- An ongoing professional connection, with countless benefits as the mentoring relationship develops.

What are the benefits to mentors?

- Connection with a colleague that can result in a meaningful professional relationship and even collaboration.
- A great C.V. line demonstrating service to the department and University.

What are the benefits to the department or program?

- Distributed effort in contacting and welcoming prospective students.
- A "personal touch" in recruiting that makes prospective students feel welcome and supported.
- Enhanced department culture through peer mentoring relationships sustained over time.

So how do we get started?

1. Establish a graduate student to coordinate peer mentoring program.
2. Select students or request volunteers to be peer mentors.
3. Pair each mentor with an incoming student. Have the mentor email their mentee for "initial contact." Peer mentors then answer questions, continually reach out as a resource, and coordinate visits, as needed.
4. If the prospective student matriculates to the program, the mentoring relationship continues with regular meetings throughout at least the first year. If the prospective student does not matriculate, the mentor is assigned another incoming student as their mentee.
5. If your department hosts a visitation day or orientation events for new students, peer mentors might be required to attend to support their mentees, and can help with transportation or other needs, as determined by your department.

Adaptations

- You can give the program a clever name, such as the Neurobuddies in Anatomical Sciences.
- Graduate Student, DGS, or staff may coordinate program and assign mentor pairs.
- You can assign mentors to Master's students, PhDs, or both.
- You can assign mentors randomly, based on shared research interest, or based on a number of personal and professional characteristics, like they do in Social Work. (The research supports pairing mentors on shared research interests and demographic similarities.)

... and you can, of course, develop unique and wonderful models of your own!

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Contact Timeline and Template Emails-

**Underlined text may not be applicable, depending on the needs of your program. In particular, references to visitation day that are underlined will not be relevant to all programs.*

Now: Establish a graduate student to be peer mentoring coordinator. Recruit volunteers to be mentors.

Template Email: To Recruit Volunteers from Within Your Department to be Peer Mentors

Dear Graduate Students,

We are initiating a peer mentoring program for graduate students in our department. The first step we are taking is to find mentors for our incoming students, whom we have already begun to accept to the program. To get this program started, we need volunteers to be mentors for the incoming doctoral [or master's] cohort. This is a great opportunity to connect with the new students, represent and advocate for your department and University, establish a potentially lasting professional relationship, and get a valuable c.v. line that demonstrates service in the department.

Peer mentoring responsibilities will start as early as _____, in terms of answering questions from prospective students, and continue on through April. Mentors will be paired up with our visiting students who will come on _____ this year, and mentors are expected to help out a lot on that day. If the prospective/admitted student with whom you are paired comes to U of L, you will remain her/his mentor throughout the first year in the program and, ideally, beyond. If your assigned mentee does not come, you will be paired with a student who is invited later. So, while it is ideal to have a mix of mentors from various stages of the program, people do need to know they will be here at least for next academic year to participate.

If you're interested in being a mentor, please email _____ by _____. We're looking for about _____ people.

Thanks for your interest in our department's new initiative! We are excited about our incoming students, and look forward to showing them the best part of our department: you!

February: Pair mentors/mentees

Template Email: To Assign Mentees to volunteers

Hello Mentors!

First, thanks so much for volunteering. I am excited about this new peer mentoring initiative, and glad to see your interest and dedication as well. I've matched everyone up with a mentee, so please go ahead and email your mentee in the next few days to introduce yourself as a resource. I don't know who exactly will be here on visitation day, so you could maybe ask your mentee about his/her plans (and encourage them to come!).

Also, please see the attached peer mentoring handbook if you are interested in learning more about what is expected/encouraged of you as a peer mentor. We will have a meeting with the mentor-mentee pairs where we will discuss this more in the fall, but you may be interested in getting some ideas about how to connect with your mentee now.

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Thanks for being a peer mentor, and let me know if there is anything else I can do to help!

Mentor Name- Mentee Name, Email, Phone Number, Previous University

February: Reach out for “initial contact”

Template Email: For mentors to make initial contact with incoming students (mentees)

Dear _____,

I wanted to send a quick note of welcome to the U of L _____ graduate program. Though I know you still have the very important decision of which program to attend ahead of you, I have been assigned as your mentor and want to do everything I can to make you knowledgeable, comfortable, and welcome so you will consider joining us at U of L. I will be a resource for you through this process and, should you decide to come to Louisville, will continue to be one among several people who are there to answer questions for you as you make this transition.

[Paragraph about who you are] A little about me: I have been in Louisville for two years now, but like you I moved from Louisville from afar (Pittsburgh in my case). I would love to answer any questions about the transition, about Louisville, about the program, or about anything else you could possibly want to know.

Also, I understand you will be visiting us in February, and I would love to make myself useful to give rides to/from the airport, or help in any way I can. I am excited about our incoming students this year and would love to make Louisville the obvious choice for you :)

I hope to hear from you soon!

Early April: Remind students to send follow-up to mentees, especially those mentees who are undecided.

Template Email: Reminder to Mentors to Follow-up with Mentees

Dear Mentors,

Though you have all contacted your mentees at least once already, please send a follow-up email to them at this time if you have not been in regular contact. If they have not yet accepted our offer, remind your mentee about our department’s interest in them and your willingness to answer questions they might have as they make their decision. If they have already accepted the offer, remind them that you are a resource for them as they prepare to enter the program, move to our city, etc.

Early April: Mentors follow-up with mentees

Template Email: Mentors to Follow-up with Mentees Who Have Not Accepted Offer

Dear _____,

I know you are still deciding whether to enter our doctoral [master’s] program, so I wanted to remind you that I am here to answer any questions you might have about the program, the department, the University, the field, the city—you name it! I may not know everything, but I will find someone who does and give you honest feedback to help you make the decision that’s best for you.

Please let me know if I can be of any help!

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Template Email: Mentors to Follow-up with Mentees Who Have Accepted Offer

Dear _____,

I am so glad that you have decided to attend U of L! I am sure you are excited as well, and probably have a lot going through your mind as you prepare for the transition. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to help you as you select courses, choose a neighborhood to live in, and find an apartment or home that suits you. You might also find our University's Graduate Student Life Handbook helpful, which is at <http://louisville.edu/graduate/files/Graduate%20Student%20Life%20Handbook.pdf> at [download/file](#). As always, though, don't forget that I am here to answer any questions you might have now and throughout your first year of the program—and beyond!

I look forward to working and studying with you at U of L!

What can SIGS do to support you and your program?

- Peer Mentoring Task Force
 - Sharing research and knowledge among peer mentoring leaders—encourage your graduate student peer mentoring coordinator to participate
 - Can provide guidance to beginning programs

- As part of a new and ongoing focus on mentoring at U of L, we will continue with events to promote and support quality peer and faculty mentoring in the coming months and years. More details about workshops and events will be available soon, but in the meantime tell us...

What else can we do? Your suggestions are always welcome, as our program is guided by your needs! What would you be interested in discussing, learning about or doing in relation to peer and faculty mentoring for your department?