

The Mentoring Connection: Peer mentoring

Graduate school is designed to challenge and expose students to multiple perspectives. It can represent a paradigm shift for many new students acclimating to new programs, departments, and communities. Achieving work-life balance, developing and maintaining relationships are stressors that can become barriers to academic success.

Having positive mentoring relationships can help you navigate these challenges. In broad national studies, mentoring has been identified as one of the most effective ways of bolstering graduate student success and persistence.

What is peer mentoring?

In peer mentoring, a more experienced student provides guidance and support to a new or less experienced student. While the type of support provided is determined by the mentor and mentee depending on the mentee's needs (and many mentors fill multiple roles), the general role of the mentor is as a resource.

Peer mentors may be more advanced students within an academic discipline or more experienced in a subject area. Peer mentoring is a process-based system in which a mentor passes on knowledge, best practices, or advice. Peer mentoring models lend themselves to supporting several mentoring objectives, including but not limited to:

- Training and orienting
- Role modeling
- Emotional support
- Community-building

Tips for finding a peer mentor:



When possible, mentees should “interview” three to four potential mentors. Both mentor and mentee should determine whether a potential mentoring relationship is a good fit.



Social functions can be a fun way to allow mentors and mentees to meet and chat with potential matches.

Benefits of peer mentoring:

Peer mentoring increases institutional connection, academic performance, and development of interpersonal competencies for all students.

For mentoring to be effective, it is important that it cultivates a strong mentor/mentee relationship, facilitates institutional connection, and allows students to connect meaningfully.

Peer mentoring has been identified as one of the most successful measures of increasing graduate student success and persistence. Among other things, peer mentoring effects:

- Confidence-building
- Skill-building
- Affinity-building

Helpful tips:



The success of peer mentoring depends on the strength of the mentor-mentee relationship. Factors that should be considered in matching mentors and mentees include interests, aptitudes, desired outcomes, and personalities.