The Role of a Peer Mentor

Peer Mentor Description

Each new Research Rookie will be assigned to a small group, led by a peer mentor, who has been through the program before. Peer mentors are meant to serve as guides and resources for first-year Research Rookies.

What Do Peer Mentors Do?

Peer mentors are responsible for:

- Assisting with questions or concerns from small-group members
- Obtaining progress reports from small-group members
- Coordinating one group activity per month with small-group members
- Notifying the Office of Student Engagement & Experiential Learning (OSEEL) staff of any issues with small-group members
- Following up with students via phone calls, text messages, and/or emails
- Assisting with documenting group activities (cameras & video cameras), as well as sharing documentation with OSEEL
- Helping first-year Research Rookies become familiar with university resources

Role Requirements

Students must meet the following qualifications:

- Have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher
- Have completed one year of Research Rookies
- Demonstrate an ability to communicate effectively with first-year Research Rookies
- Be able to serve as a positive role model for other students in the program
- Maintain ongoing communication with faculty mentor, OSEEL staff, and small-group members

Role Expectations

Peer mentors are expected to nurture an unbiased, unprejudiced and open environment that will strengthen the social and professional support system and knowledge base of first-year Research Rookies. Peer mentors should enable participants to converse freely, ask questions and voice their opinions and concerns.

Peer mentors are also expected to act as a liaison between the first-year Research Rookies and the OSEEL staff, as well as campus and department resources. To do so effectively, peer mentors are required to attend a monthly meeting with the OSEEL staff and other peer mentors. The meeting times, dates, and locations are as follows:
**Professionalism**

Peer mentors are expected to maintain a professional manner whenever representing the program. Professionalism should extend into sending emails to faculty, students, staff, etc. Language is expected to be appropriate when discussing class activities, assignments, and test preparation with students. Relationships between peer mentors and first-year Research Rookies are to remain strictly professional. No inappropriate behavior will be tolerated.

**Time Commitment**

All peer mentors should dedicate 5-7 hours per month to this position, in addition to the other Research Rookies obligations (i.e. 5-10 hours per week for projects, monthly cohort meetings, etc.).

**Compensation**

Peer mentors will receive an additional $250 at the completion of the fall semester and $500 at the completion of the spring semester for a total of $750. However, peer mentors are not exempt from stipend deductions implemented: 10% for unexcused absences at monthly meetings.

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<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Peer Mentor Meeting</td>
<td>Monday, August 31</td>
<td>6-7 pm</td>
<td>Altgeld Hall 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monthly Peer Mentor Meeting</td>
<td>Monday, September 21</td>
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<td>Monthly Peer Mentor Meeting</td>
<td>Monday, October 19</td>
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<td>Monday, November 9</td>
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<td>Monday, February 22</td>
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<td>Monthly Peer Mentor Meeting</td>
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<td>6-7 pm</td>
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Tools for Peer Mentors

**First-Year Challenges**

**Academic Involvement:** First-year students may experience challenges regarding over/under-involvement in academic activities. Students may feel that school and/or studying does not take a time commitment, leading students to underestimate the need for work outside of class. Peer mentors can assist students with involvement in class, study sessions, academic organizations, etc.

**Social Involvement:** First-year students may struggle with social involvement on campus, whether around Research Rookies or other students. Social involvement may include student organizations, intramural sports, Greek Life, or simply spending time with friends. Some first-year students underestimate the time commitment to classes; therefore, leading to academic struggle and/or failure. Peer mentors can assist students with social involvement by monitoring students’ well-being and/or stress-levels. Peer mentors should feel free to meet individually with students to assist with social involvement, suggesting possible ways to handle this aspect of life as a college student.

**Academic Transition:** The transition from high-school to college is a change in lifestyle, adding many responsibilities for students inside and outside of the classroom. Peer mentors can assist students with academic involvement by hosting study sessions, test preparation, developing study habits, editing papers, etc. Peer mentors may also be asked to follow-up with students who are struggling, according to the MAP-Works Survey that will be administered twice throughout the semester.

**Health and Wellness:** First-year students may develop challenges regarding their health and well-being due to the lifestyle change experienced. Each student may experience a different problem, but peer mentors should be vigilant and help students with health issues by suggesting appropriate resources on campus.

**Living with a Roommate:** As a first-year student, individuals may experience roommate trouble throughout the semester. Peer mentors should encourage students to talk with their CA and/or appropriate staff to take care of any roommate issues.

**Homesickness:** The first year away from home may present homesickness issues for students. Peer mentors should support students, suggest resources, etc. for students who are experiencing this adjustment problem. Peer mentors should follow-up with students who seem to be stressed/struggling with homesickness, and suggest campus resources or activities to become involved in to help.

**Facilitating Study Sessions**

If you decide that your monthly group activity will be to host a study session, here are some resources:

- **Be Flexible:** Peer mentors should work with students to accommodate their schedules. This may involve setting up private meetings with students and contacting students via telephone or email to follow-up after a study session.
• **Scheduling:** When picking times to schedule study sessions, etc., peer mentors must choose times of the day that work for the students. If needed, peer mentors should host more than one study session per week so all students can attend.

• **Encouraging:** Peer mentors will need to encourage students to attend study sessions, test preparation sessions, campus activities, etc. First-year students may be hesitant, but peer mentors need to put themselves out there to demonstrate that students have assistance inside and outside of the classroom.

• **Incentives:** First-year students may lack incentive to attend class, study sessions, etc. so peer mentors may need to provide an incentive to encourage students to attend events.

• **Location:** The location of study sessions and outside-of-class activities should be logical, e.g. residence halls, the Holmes Student Center. Meeting places should be in a location that is central for all students attending. Peer mentors are responsible for locating and reserving locations to host sessions.

• **Communication:** Peer mentors need to communicate with students via telephone, email, and/or social media. Peer mentors can consider creating a Facebook group. If needed, peer mentors should reach out to students on an individual basis. If peer mentors are comfortable giving out their personal phone number, it is acceptable but remember to stay professional. It is very important for peer mentors to respond quickly to all multimedia communication, e.g., Facebook, email, etc. so students can be confident they will receive an answer.

Other tips for hosting study sessions include:

- Encourage students to ask questions
- Answer students’ questions to the best of ability
- Arrive early to the location chosen for session
- Suggest other resources on campus for help if needed beyond the study session
- Maintain an engaging environment
- Report to faculty and staff members after the session to update them on who is attending, etc.

**Additional Support from OSEEL**

Additional support is always available to peer mentors through the Office of Student Engagement & Experiential Learning. The peer mentor position is meant to be rewarding for Research Rookies participants, the Research Rookies Administration, and the peer mentors as well. We want students to be successful in their role as a peer mentor but also in their academics and personal endeavors. If you have any questions, concerns, or need to talk, OSEEL can be reached at:

Altgeld Hall 100  
Northern Illinois University  
DeKalb, IL 60115  
**Phone:** 815-753-8154  
**Email:** ResearchRookies@niu.edu  
**Web:** [www.niu.edu/researchrookies](http://www.niu.edu/researchrookies)