



# VCU

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

Graduate School | Graduate School  
Mentorship Program

## Learn More About Us

The Graduate School's Mentorship Program matches undergraduate students with mentors who are graduate students as they make decisions about post-baccalaureate study and transition from undergraduate to graduate student status.

The program provides graduate students with the opportunity to develop mentoring skills as they share personal experiences with undergraduate participants in the program.

Program applications are available below: [Graduate student mentor application \[DOC\]](#)

[Undergraduate student mentee application \[DOC\]](#)

Mentors must be in at least their second year of graduate study and will receive a stipend upon completion of the program.

Students selected as mentors will be expected to participate in a combination of formal and informal activities, including:

- An orientation at the beginning of the program
- Weekly interactions of one to three hours with undergraduate participants
- One-on-one meetings with program staff to discuss progress
- Participation in a program evaluation at the end of the semester
- Providing shadowing opportunities for their undergraduate partners

Mentors and faculty members are encouraged to review resources such as the [Mentoring at VCU Handbook \[PDF\]](#), a manual developed by the University



**Meeting your mentee or mentor at Orientation**

## Community Service Project

Thanks to all who came out to the East End Cemetery on Saturday October 1st for the Community Service event! If you were unable to attend, here is some information about the East End Cemetery...

East End Cemetery is an abandoned African-American cemetery located in the East End of Richmond, VA. Its size is estimated to be about 15 acres. East End Cemetery was established in 1897 from what was originally Greenwood Cemetery. East End is currently part of a four-cemetery complex, about 100 acres in size, known as the Four Cemeteries of Evergreen. In its time, East End was the place to be buried for African-American Richmonders including the notable Rosa Bower. In more recent years, the cemetery has become engulfed in ivy and brush. The cemetery has also been used as an illegal dump, resulting in an abundance of litter, especially along the roads. What the cemetery needs most is volunteers; Due to the delicate nature of the gravestones, heavy equipment cannot be brought in, therefore clearing the plots is mostly done manually.

## 2015-2016 Mentor Spotlight: Rachel Boutte

Rachel Boutte is currently a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology program.

### **What is the most important thing a mentor needs to know when beginning their relationship with his or her mentee?**

The most important thing that a mentor should consider to begin the relationship is who their mentee is as a person and what experiences the mentee has had prior to the current relationship. Just like the mentor, the mentee is going to be at a particular place in his or her journey, both academically and personally. It is crucial for the mentor to spend some time understanding where the mentee is in relation to his/her goals for the future, as well as previous experiences of success and failure. It will be important information that the mentor can draw upon later to encourage the mentee and remind him/her of their experience, reasons for pursuing the current path, and dreams for the future.

**From your surveys and mid semester check-in, you seem to have really made a connection with your mentee.**

**Have you had a mentor? How has that helped you to be a good mentor?**

I have had several mentors over the course of my academic career. The one relationship that influenced me most with regard to the current program was a graduate student in clinical psychology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He really mentored me by way of example. While he certainly offered advice and helped me in specific instrumental ways throughout my process of applying to graduate school, what most helped was that he shared his life and he shared his experience. I was afforded the



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opportunity to really understand what life would be like as a graduate student, including both the hardships as well as the victories.

### **What are some of the challenges you have faced in this program?**

Some challenges I faced within the program were time management, staying focused, and finding resources. Time management is the ongoing struggle of graduate school I believe. Adding in time to spend with my mentee as well as read and give feedback on things she was working on added to an already full load. Staying focused was another challenge at times, because my mentee had long term goals we were working on in addition to weekly things that would come up related to coursework. The challenge in that was using our time well to meet her needs. Lastly, sometimes my mentee needed help with things I had no knowledge of, which of course led me to seek out additional resources. Several times I was dismayed at what was not readily available.

### **What advice would you give to a mentor starting the program?**

The best advice I could give to a new mentor starting the program is simply to be open to the

experience. There is a lot that you can learn as a mentor if you allow yourself to be present with your mentee and really consider the gravity of the important work you are doing.

### **What do you hope to gain from mentoring?**

I am always hoping to gain new knowledge and new experiences that enable me to be a more well-rounded person. I think that something magical happens in the interpersonal space between two people. In that space there is a type of learning and growth that can never be obtained through books. Through mentorship I am seeking those moments of sharing and the possibility of having a mutually positive and beneficial relationship.

## 2015-2016 Mentee Spotlight: Belicia Debose

Belicia Debose is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Health Physical and Education Science with a concentration in Exercise Science. She is currently working on graduate school applications for Public Health programs. Belicia would like to work for the US Public Health Corps, or become an Air Force Medical Service International Health Specialist.

### **What is the most important thing a mentee needs to know when starting this program?**

I feel the most important thing a mentee needs to know when starting this program is that this is a great and invaluable opportunity to learn and make connections, so don't let it go to waste.

### **What accomplishments are you most proud of in the GSMP?**

The accomplishment I am most proud of would have to be the bond I made with my mentor. We went from barely knowing each other at the start of this past fall semester, to going out to eat, attending various events, and being study buddies by the end of the semester. The tight relationship we formed was something I was not expecting, but definitely glad that happened.

### **You seemed to have really made a connection with your mentor last year.**

### **What advice would you give a mentee in establishing a connection with their mentor?**

The advice I would give as far as establishing a connection is to just be open and let it happen naturally. My mentor and I started off by just meeting for at least 15-30 minutes when we got our schedules together and let it build from there, and things worked great! After the first 2-3 times we were meeting for at least an hour almost twice per week, and then would hang out together outside of those times. At first I was nervous because I was shy about meeting new people, but I pushed my-

self to be open and get past my shyness and I'm really glad I did.

### **What are some of the challenges that you faced during this program?**

The main challenge during this program was just timing. Our schedules during the week conflicted a lot due to class and work commitments, and so we really had to push ourselves to find a time and make it work/stick to it.

### **What did you hope to gain or learn from GSMP?**

What I gained/learned from GSMP was the importance of prioritizing, especially when it comes to graduate school applications and deadlines. In addition, just from talking to my mentor and the other wonderful people in the program, I learned that grad school isn't as daunting and scary as it first seems, and that there are always people along the way willing to help you out.



**“The tight relationship we formed was something I was not expecting, but definitely glad that happened”.**



## **GSMP Orientation 2016-2017**



## **GSMP Schedule for 2016-2017**

October 17-31, 2016

Mid-semester Mentor and Mentee Check-ins at the Graduate School

November 5, 2016

12:30-3:30pm

GSMP Mentor-Mentee Workshop at Larrick Student Center

January 21, 2017

12:30-3:30pm

GSMP Mid-Program Meeting at Larrick Student Center

