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.

GSMP is currently calling for applications for the 2017-2018 academic year.

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and the deadline for initial review is March 1st.

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 Graduate Council to address mentoring issues relevant to graduate and postgraduate training at the university.

Community Service Project

GSMP participants will be participating in the Out of the Darkness Walk to be held on April 22, 2017 on the VCU Campus. The walk promotes suicide awareness and prevention. For more information on the Out of the Darkness Walk, please visit http://afsp.donordrive.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=donorDrive.event&eventID=4416.
Logan is currently pursuing a Master’s degree in Biology.

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

It’s not about you! It’s easy to project your own goals and experiences onto others in your field of study. Especially when you are passionate about what you do. Remember that your mentee may have had very different experiences and interests than you. When beginning a relationship with a mentee, the first step is simply finding out more about their experiences and goals.

**How do you define success and how has this definition helped you in the mentoring process?** I define success as taking actions that will help you reach your goals. My mentee, Emma, will be pursuing a doctoral degree and eventually working as an academic researcher in ecology. My definition of success has allowed me to highlight what skills and experiences are fundamental in the field of ecological research. Emma has been able to develop an independent research project, gain Geographic Information System (GIS) skills, hands on lab experience, and more. One of our upcoming steps for this semester is an applied statistics workshop.

**Do you have a mentor? If so, how has the relationship helped you to be a good mentor?**

Yes, I still keep in touch with my first undergraduate research mentor. He is now a colleague and a friend. This relationship demonstrated what a successful mentor-mentee relationship can look like and why mentors are so important. My mentor exposed me to numerous opportunities and experiences that have been critical to my success. This experience has helped me to encourage my mentee to pursue opportunities that will help her reach her dream career.

**What kind of mentor do you want to be?**

As someone who has been a mentee, I hope to provide support and encouragement without judgment. I hope to open doors simply by informing my mentee. One of the biggest challenges is just knowing about the available opportunities. I also hope to challenge my mentee and demonstrate that I am confident in her abilities to achieve her goals.

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

Time! Although, this is expected when you pair up overachievers. We have managed this by maintaining flexibility in our weekly meeting times and open lines of communication.

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

Find out what your mentee wants to do. Then, find out why. This is fundamental. Make them reflect on what motivates them and what they hope to achieve. You can’t write a solid personal statement or articulate what sets you apart without being able to articulate the why. Once your mentee has established this, everything else becomes more manageable.

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

Pursuing a career in research ecology rarely involves a conventional career track and it can be difficult to navigate the paths available. I attribute much of my current success to the numerous mentors that have supported me in both my personal and academic life and provided career guidance. Their influence and encouragement has made me the scientist that I am today. I seek to provide the same support to up and coming scientists and to promote teaching, training, and learning. For I believe it is by cultivating the next generation of scientists and scientifically literate citizens that we truly expand scientific knowledge.
Matthew Miera is currently pursuing an undergraduate degree in Psychology.

**What are your plans after college? Are you applying to graduate school? What programs are you applying for and for what type of degree?**

I’d like to transition immediately into graduate school after I graduate. I’m applying to several Ph.D. programs in cognitive neuroscience, and social and experimental psychology to pursue my research interests in judgment and decision-making. I’m also applying to a few Master’s programs in the same areas so that I will hopefully have some options.

**What goals did you set with your mentor? How have you progressed with your goals?**

Initially our goals were research oriented, focusing on flushing out and refining my research interests during our weekly meetings. After we had a good idea of what I wanted to study we started looking for compatible graduate programs and professors with similar research interests. Next, we started working on my personal statement and how we could tailor it to the specific programs and professors that I was applying to work with; this was the largest chunk of time. We talked about any general questions or concerns about the applications as they came up, but after we finished the personal statement the applications were pretty much ready to be sent off. With the help of my mentor, I have met all of these goals and successfully completed several graduate school applications.

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

This biggest challenge I’ve encountered in this program is the significantly increased work load that comes with applying to graduate school. Entering the program, I had no idea just how much time and energy it would take to figure out the specifics of what I want to study, find programs that are a good fit, and then gather and submit all the materials needed for each application. Although I thought I had a good idea of my research interests, there was still an immense amount of literature that I needed to become familiar with before I could write and talk about it intelligibly. Psychology graduate programs are a dime a dozen, but finding specific professors with matching research interests is where the real work comes in: this often requires reading through the personal bio of each professor in the department, which adds up when considering dozens of different schools. Finally, preparing for and taking the GRE, coordinating test scores, transcripts, and references to be sent, finding appropriate writing samples, and crafting a personal statement are all significant time commitments. All of this while school and other responsibilities never pause.

**What is the most important thing every mentor and mentee should know?**

I think the best thing a mentor and mentee can do is make specific, achievable, short term goals that each contribute towards a clear end goal. It’s important that these goals can be seen so that it’s obvious when they’ve been achieved.

**If you could tell your mentor one thing, what would it be?**

I would tell my mentor that having her in my life as a mentor, and as a friend, has been one of the most valuable experiences I’ve had throughout college. I have grown so much as a student, a researcher, and a person as a result of our relationship. I tell her all the time how much I appreciate her time, advice, and encouragement, and that I wouldn’t have made it this far without her, but I hope she knows that I say it with absolute sincerity every time. There is no one else that I would have rather gone through this program with than her.
GSMP Spring Event Calendar

March 13-27, 2017
GSMP Mid-Semester Check-ins at the Graduate School

April 22, 2017
8:00-12:00 PM