Mentors must be in at least their second year of graduate study. 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.

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]

Melissa Tyler is the new Program Director. She is the Director of Graduate Student Funding and Financial Operations for the Graduate School and a past participant in the Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute. She has been at VCU for 23 years. Please welcome her to the program.

Community Service

Are you considering donating some of your time to a worthy cause? Did you know that HandsOn Greater Richmond lists many different volunteer opportunities at various locations and time commitments on their website? GSMP mentors and mentees are participating in a community service event of their choosing from HandsOn Greater Richmond. Some of the activities the mentors and mentees have chosen include: participating in an Alzheimer’s awareness walk, transcribing historical records at the Library of Virginia, assisting with garden maintenance at Maymont, and assisting with a career exploration event for 8th graders from the Richmond and surrounding areas. To find an event that interests you, please be sure to visit https://www.handsonrva.org/!
Kevin Ball is currently a master’s student in the Public Health-MPH program.

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

While individually we approach our lives and work differently, feeling passion for a research topic, a subject, or theory, is a universal human ability. Guiding and inspiring a mentee to find their passion is thus the most important role of a mentor.

**How do you define success, and how has this definition helped you in the mentoring process?**

Success is a grey area, but I define it as a positive trend towards achieving one's goals or pursuing one's passions. Success can include failure, however one must extract lessons and wisdom from failure.

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

I have had many mentors since high school and each has contributed meaningfully to my development as a student and person. I work well in a mental space between being constrained and being free from constraints and I have flourished when my mentor has provided such a space for me. These relationships have taught me to tailor my mentoring to my mentee's personality, work habits, and passions. Creating a comfortable space where someone can be inspired to pursue their passion is pivotal to being a good mentor. Engaging your mentee on a personal level but with professional level expectations and conduct provides both mentor and mentee with a great environment to grow together.

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

A mentor who is not the director of a mentee's future, but rather one who inspires and is the catalyst for a mentee to find their passion, field of interest, or future career. I wholeheartedly believe that telling someone what to do is never as effective as guiding and teaching someone according to where they are in their life or career.

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

The major challenge I have come across is effective communication. I sympathize with my mentee greatly and not too long ago I was in a similar situation as her. Therefore my goal is to extract from my similar experiences important lessons and wisdom that can be applied to her situation. Sometimes these lessons can be difficult to word because of the complexity and uniqueness of each of our lives. Additionally, as mentioned in prior questions, I work hard to find ways to guide my mentee to pursue her passions rather than telling her what to do. This takes patience and creative lessons and tasks to really find out what she wants to achieve and what success means to her.

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

The most important thing is to be yourself. You bring your own experiences and wisdom to the table and this can be transformed into useful information for a mentee. Finding ways to sympathize and connect with your mentee is important to truly understanding their situation and what they would like to achieve. Additionally, finding out what type of mentor you would like to be is pivotal to being effective at guiding a mentee to their goals.

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

I hope that my current mentee is my first of many as someone desiring to be an academic professor. A lot of positive emotion and sense of purpose comes from seeing my mentee flourish and find her passions. I think these personal level connections are the greatest reward from mentoring, even above the training and practice received. Seeing someone flourish and weave their way through life given my guidance and inspiration helps me feel worthy that my advice is valuable.
Brian Jones is currently a sophomore in the Biochemistry program.

**What are your plans for after college? Are you applying to graduate school?**

I am hoping to be involved with drug research in the search of alternative medications that have a lower potential for substance abuse. I am interested in a dual-degree program that would allow me to achieve both a PharmD and PhD in Pharmacology.

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

I hoped to establish networking opportunities and be able to better understand the field of drug research. My mentor has introduced me to many people within her department which has been an amazing opportunity. She also hopes to help me develop a project that I can work on during the upcoming semester which would give me hands-on lab experience.

**How will you know when you’ve achieved your goals? What will success look like to you?**

Success will be confidence. I hope to see that I have the confidence that the lab experience and networking opportunities I may receive will be significantly beneficial in my career path, whether that be job opportunities, publications, or relationships.

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

The largest challenge has been time management. I try to meet with my mentor for several hours a week, but my schedule does not allow me all the time I would love. My mentor has helped me better manage my time and prioritize school. Her helping me is ensuring that during the Spring semester, I will have access to better opportunities because my schedule is more organized.

**What do you like about having a mentor?**

The best part about having a mentor, is that I have a new friend that I am sure will last for years to come. I can go to my mentor for help with anything, and she will try her best.

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

Don't feel that your time is limited. Even if this program is only for a year, the mentor/mentee relationship will like last for much longer.

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

Thank you for helping me, encouraging me, and inspiring me.

**How has this program helped you? What has been a benefit of being in the program?**

This program has exceeded my expectations significantly. It has given me a truer vision and understanding of graduate school as well as access to opportunities to better myself in preparation for applying to graduate school. The networking and experience that I have already received is certainly a great sign for what is to come.

"I can go to my mentor for help with anything, and she will try her best".
GSMP 2017-2018 Important Dates

December 8, 2017
Final day to hand in Fall Community Service Volunteer Forms

January 27, 2018
10:00am-12:30pm
GSMP Mid-Program Meeting
Location TBD