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 2018-2019 academic year.

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and the deadline for initial review is April 15th.

Program applications are available below: Graduate student mentor application [DOC]
Undergraduate student mentee application [DOC]

Learn More About Us

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

GSMP is Community-Minded...

Mentors and mentees in the program volunteered at the following locations/events:
The Teacher Store (Richmond Public Schools) Richmond National Battlefield Park
Walk to End Alzheimer’s Math & Science Innovation Center
Shalom Farms Maymont Foundation
Mission Tomorrow Girls on the Run
Red Door Ministry Autism Society Lego Night
Carver Elementary James River Reedy Creek Clean-up
Library of Virginia Chemo Care Kits
Bellevue ES backpack food distribution Westover Hills ES backpack food distribution
To find a volunteer opportunity that aligns with your interests, be sure to visit https://www.handsonrva.org/!
2017-2018 Mentor Spotlight: Ashley Purdy

Ashley Purdy is currently a PhD student in the Integrative Life Sciences program.

What is the most important thing a mentor needs to know at the start of their relationship with a mentee?
The most important thing a mentor needs to know at the start of their relationship with a mentee are the mentee’s goals and what the mentee needs from you in order to achieve these goals. Also, knowing what stage your mentee is at in their career or life journey really helps to put things into perspective.

How do you define success, and how has this definition helped you in the mentoring process?
I define success in a mentor-mentee relationship by helping each other hit those milestones or goals that you set out to accomplish at thebeginning. Also, along the way it is important to celebrate the little successes as well. Being able to reassess and redefine goals along the way is important, so that if in the off chance you don’t reach that goal you can pivot and seize another opportunity.

Do you have a mentor? If so, how has the relationship impacted you as a mentor?
I have been fortunate to have a wonderful mentor, Dr. Greg Walsh. He has helped me to mentor others by exemplifying a strong work ethic and by encouraging his students to reach their individual goals. His mentorship style is adaptable to his students needs and he has an open door policy and tries to make himself available to his students as much as possible. One of the important things I have learned from his mentoring style is to never underestimate the power of a good mentor and to never discount someone due to lack of experience. It is amazing how much mentoring and instilling confidence in mentees can help mentees achieve their goals. Dr. Walsh was recently nominated for a mentoring award in our department!

What do you believe are the most important qualities in a mentor?
Being a good communicator is essential in being a mentor and being a good listener as well. Also, being able to give someone direction and counsel really helps. Overall, being a caring person and caring about the success of your mentee is important!

What advice would you give to someone who is considering being a mentor?
Some advice I would give to someone considering becoming a mentor is to ask yourself why you are doing it. You have to be doing it for the right reasons. Mentoring is not always glamorous and you have to be willing to share in the successes as well as the failures of your mentee. Also, you have to be willing to be there for your mentee when they are really stressed or maybe going through a rough time in life or in school. These are things that should be considered prior to becoming a mentor.

What have you gained from mentoring?
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 have you gained from mentoring?
I have gained so much from mentoring. I would say one thing mentoring has taught me is that so much of my success has been due to having great mentors and support systems in my life which really highlights how essential mentoring is. Also, I have a gained an appreciation for training and counseling others and sharing and celebrating in my mentee’s successes. I have gained the ability to successfully mentor others, which will be useful in my career.

“Never underestimate the power of a good mentor and never discount someone due to lack of experience”.
Binal Patel is currently a junior Chemistry major. **Though you still have some time before you graduate, do you have an idea of your plans once you complete your undergraduate degree?**

Upon graduation, I would like to attend a graduate program in the United States. I wish to conduct research in either biology or chemistry as they are my majors in undergrad. I hope to complete my Ph.D. and obtain a job in the biochemistry field. Later on, I would like to become a professor and teach while also conducting research.

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

In the beginning of the program, my mentor and I came up with a list of goals that I would like to work on as the year progressed. We would talk about my growth each time we met. One of my main goals I had was to conduct research. Thankfully, I was able to get into a class that conducts research within my career interest. I was also able to do an independent research study within my major. I would not be conducting research if it weren’t for my mentor’s support and guidance. Another goal that I had was to prepare for my graduate school application. My mentor advised me what I needed to do in order to be a competitive applicant for several programs.

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

To be completely honest, I did not face many challenges within this program. The only challenge that I faced was dealing with time. Since my mentor and I have busy schedules, it was sometimes difficult to set up a time to meet for a one-on-one meeting.

**What types of activities did you do with your mentor?**

My mentor and I participated in many volunteer activities. One activity we did was helping out at the MathScience Innovation Center for a “Girl’s Math Day” event. We conducted a series of chemistry related experiments for a group of middle school girls. We taught them about the importance of math/science and how those subjects play a role in our lives as college students. Another activity that we participated in was “ChemoKits” at the Larrick Student Center. We helped make blankets for cancer patients. Overall, my mentor and I have had a wonderful time getting to know each other by participating in volunteer based activities.

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

The most important thing that every mentor and mentee should know is to be AWARE of their time and needs. Communication is key in an effective relationship. Each of the mentor/mentee’s time is valuable and should be used wisely. Goals are always a great way to set up a successful meeting. If both the mentor and mentee value each other’s time, needs, and communicate, then both the mentor and mentee will benefit from one another.

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

If I could tell my mentor one thing, it would be that I am thankful for how much she has been there for me. I am appreciative of her advice and her ability to support me throughout the past year. Thank you, Nicole, for everything you have done and for the opportunity to be your mentee.
April 16, 2018
End of semester surveys will be sent to all mentors and mentees

May 7, 2018
Last day to hand in spring semester volunteer forms