About GSMP

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 2019-2020 academic year.

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

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. Students selected as mentors will be expected to attend and participate in all program activities including:

- Program Orientation – Early September
- GSMP Meeting – November
- GSMP Meeting – Late January
- GSMP Meeting - April
- Community Service Project- Each semester the mentors and mentees will volunteer as a group at a community service event (date and location TBD).
- Meet in person for one to three hours each week
- Complete all program surveys and check-ins
- Attend two special program events (TBD)
- Provide shadowing/networking opportunities for their undergraduate students

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.

Mentoring...

“One of the greatest values of mentors is the ability to see ahead what others cannot see and to help them navigate a course to their destination.” ~ John C. Maxwell

“A mentor is someone who sees more talent and ability within you, than you see in yourself, and helps bring it out of you.” ~Isaac Newton

“Show me a successful individual and I’ll show you someone who had real positive influences in his or her life. I don’t care what you do for a living—if you do it well I’m sure there was someone cheering you on or showing the way. A mentor.” ~Denzel Washington

“We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.” ~ Winston Churchill
Mentor Spotlight: Sydney Israel

Sydney Israel is currently a PhD student in the School of Pharmacy.

What is the most important thing a mentor needs to know at the start of their relationship with a mentee?
Starting a new relationship with someone you haven’t met before can be scary. Try not to place any expectations on the mentee and your relationship too soon. Finding something you have in common from the very beginning is a great way to start a dialogue.

How do you define success, and how has this definition helped you in the mentoring process?
I define success as accomplishing personal goals. In the mentoring process, I believe it is important to have a balance of goal-setting and time to communicate freely. A balance between the two will ensure a fun, but productive, mentor-mentee relationship.

Do you have a mentor? If so, how has the relationship impacted you as a mentor?
Yes, I have been lucky to have multiple mentors during my time as a pharmacy student, and even before. As a mentor, I try to take the characteristics that I have learned to appreciate to help develop my relationship with my mentee. On the other hand, I also consider weaknesses in my relationships with my mentors and use that to improve my behavior.

What do you believe are the most important qualities in a mentor?
The most important qualities are adaptability and communication skills. Being able to communicate to a mentee in a way that will benefit them is essential. Adaptability and being able to identify personal shortcomings are also useful in developing a strong relationship with a mentee.

What advice would you give to someone who is considering being a mentor?
I would certainly encourage them to be a mentor! One piece of advice that I would give is that a mentor-mentee relationship is not only about the mentee. The potential mentor should remain open-minded and reflect on how the relationship will better them too.

What have you gained from mentoring?
I have gained an important sense of self-awareness through the mentoring program. Sometimes you realize you haven’t fully considered things until a person asks and you’re sitting there thinking “that’s a really good question!” My current mentee is very self-motivated, and she arrives to our meetings prepared with questions. As a result, she has helped me in my process of further considering and identifying factors that are important to me and my future career.

"Being able to communicate to a mentee in a way that will benefit them is essential."
Mentee Spotlight: James Vance

James Vance is currently a senior in the School of Engineering.

Tell us a little about your plans once you graduate...

I’m headed to grad school, but I’m not sure where yet. I’m going to work towards a PhD in biomedical engineering with a focus on tissue engineering and regenerative medicine.

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

The main goal was to submit some good letters of recommendations and personal statements. I’m pretty bad at writing about myself, but we worked together to figure out the best way to present myself and my experiences. I’d say we progressed really well since the letters weren’t terrible!

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

Personally I didn’t feel like there were any major problems with the program.

What types of activities did you do with your mentor?

The most memorable activity was definitely volunteering with the GRTC to tear down all recycle the old bus stop signage collected from around Richmond. It was a cold day that involved a lot of nuts and bolts.

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

Keep an open mind and always be willing to learn something new. Sometimes it’s the small things that make all the difference in writing or interviews. Mentors are a huge source of great information and if you don’t pay attention then you’ll miss out.

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

Thank you! I know with our busy schedules, some days it’s hard to meet and I appreciate all the time you took out of your day to be my mentor.

“Mentors are a huge source of great information and if you don’t pay attention, then you’ll miss out.”
April 15, 2019
End of semester surveys will be sent to all mentors and mentees

May 1, 2019
Last day to hand in spring semester volunteer forms