

PEER MENTORING

Welcome to the SD Mines Peer Mentoring Program:

At SD Mines, it is an honor and a privilege to serve as a Peer Mentor. Peer Mentors are among the very best and brightest students on campus and are deemed to be important cogs in the process of ensuring that first time students are adjusting well to the campus. Peer Mentors are sought by faculty and departments because they work hard keeping a pulse on the first-year student experience. Not only do they pave the way for first-year students to be successful but they become friends and confidants to those students at greatest risk of leaving the school prematurely.

The Peer Mentor Program brings together upper-class students selected from each academic departments to help freshmen navigate their first year of college. The program goal is to ease the adjustment to college life for new students by allowing them to take advantage of the knowledge and experience of the upper-level students.

Requirements

Peer Mentors must:

- Hold a 3.0 minimum GPA
- Have at least a sophomore standing (32 credit hours completed)
- Be enrolled as a student on the SD Mines campus
- NOT be on Academic or Social Probation

Human Resources Release and Waiver Form

For student workers who wish to have their SD Mines supervisor (past or present) give a reference, Human Resources (HR) requires that the student complete a Release and Waiver: Written request for Reference. Once completed, forward it to Human Resources with a notation at the top of the form indicating which supervisors you wish HR to contact when using SDSM&T employees as a reference on job applications. This form is available through the HR web pages. Include the names of SD Mines references at the top of the form and submit or deliver a completed hardcopy to the HR office (O'Harra Building—basement). HR will then email the references to let them know that the Peer Mentor applicant has given permission for them to give out designated information. It is a good idea to ask their permission to use them as references before sending your application out.

Payment

Peer Mentors will be paid \$500 for the semester. This amount will be paid in equal amounts each month of the semester through the state payroll system.

Payment will be delivered by direct deposit to a bank account(s). Peer Mentors will need to fill out the appropriate direct deposit forms at the Human Resources Office located in the basement level of the O’Harra Building. Peer Mentors will need to provide a voided check or savings deposit slip when they hand in this information.

Since Peer Mentoring is a paid position, it is required that the appropriate paperwork with the Human Resources Office, located in the basement level of the O’Harra Building, is filled out.

Peer Mentor Expectations

General

Peer Mentors are considered an employee and representative of SD Mines. As such they will be expected to act as professionals. Peer Mentors are expected to conduct themselves in a mature, responsible and competent manner at all times. Whether they are on-campus or off-campus, a Peer Mentor is observed as representing the institution. Peer Mentors are to set an example for freshmen students as to what is considered acceptable academic and social behavior. Values that reflect Peer Mentor qualities include:

1. **Prepared:** Peer Mentors are prepared to be a friend to a new student and demonstrate consistent, dependable, trustworthy, accepting, honest and respectful behaviors.
2. **Ethical:** Peer Mentors consistently act in ways that are ethical, earning the respect and trust of their mentees and supporting community.
3. **Committed:** Peer Mentors are steadfast in their commitment to the policies and procedures of the school and their position.
4. **Knowledgeable:** Peer Mentors actively seek out shared opportunities that enhance the knowledge, skills, and abilities of their mentees.
5. **Inclusive:** Peer Mentors value the diverse racial, economic, cultural, and religious traits of their mentees and communicate an acceptance of student in spite of differences.
6. **Confidential:** Peer Mentors act in the best interest of the school and ensure confidentiality, taking care to protect against inadvertent disclosure.
7. **Accountable:** Peer Mentors make regular contact with their supervisor to ensure effective mentoring practices.
8. **Mature:** Peer Mentors refrain from profanity, criticism of school faculty or staff, inappropriate physical contact, violations of law or school codes of conduct.

How can a Peer Mentor help Faculty?

A Peer Mentor wears many hats in their attempts to meet the needs of first time students. This is how a Peer Mentor can contribute to a freshman orientation class:

Participate in orientation sessions and department “Adventure Weekend”

- Attend and assist with class presentations, panel discussions and activities

- Act as an ad hoc tutor for mentees
- Pass on concerns/observations to faculty (while being sensitive to confidential issues)
- Support socializing activities with students
- Plan a socializing activity with mentees in month of September
- Provide WebAdvisor assistance and other registration issues for assigned mentees
- Provide “Peer Mentor on Duty” hours by dedicating one hour a week in the Student Success Center to meet with students to help them
- Provide regular email, phone and mail contact with assigned mentees
- Attend, assist and present at training seminars and all-campus meetings (campus and off campus opportunities)
- Assist with Go To Mines days

Peer Mentors are asked to provide out of class assistance to first year students, such as

- Explaining and helping mentees with registration procedures. (WebAdvisor)
- Referring mentees to appropriate university services for additional help and information.
- Hosting small group discussions with mentees on academic issues.
- Sharing study tips and suggestions.
- Helping mentees navigate the Rapid City area
- Checking in regularly with mentees and getting them involved in department organizations
- Talking with mentees about issues that they may not feel comfortable talking about with faculty or other university staff
- Help mentees build confidence, motivation and self-efficacy

Fall Semester Assignments

SD Mines gains approximately 400+ incoming (freshmen) students every new academic year. Students are broken down into groups of 20 to 30 students depending upon assigned advisors, mentors or majors. Preferably each group is paired with a Mentor from that specific major department but staffing issues may make this difficult. Peer Mentors are chosen from upper-class students that have been on campus at least one year and have demonstrated successful experience at SD Mines. Applicants are chosen based on academic conduct, referrals and interviews.

Mentors are expected to maintain consistent contact with assigned mentees, informing them of important dates and opportunities.

Being an effective Mentor

Every student is different, and therefore requires a unique approach. As such Peer Mentors will require a certain amount of information about the student and their situation before they can attempt to help them. The following Communication “Keys to Success”

are referenced in the *Iowa State Peer Mentor Handbook*
<http://www.lc.iastate.edu/pmhandbook.pdf> .

Communication Keys to Success:

1. Listen
2. Ask open-ended questions
3. Attend and respond to both content and feeling
4. Let the student solve the problem
5. Refer to/use your resources

Communication Suggestions:

- ***Ask open-ended questions:*** Any question that elicits a “yes/no” answer won’t be as helpful as a “what, when, how, who” question. “Why” questions seem like they would get more information, but keep in mind that they can sometimes imply criticism and cause defensiveness (i.e., “Well, why didn’t you go to all the study sessions?”).
- ***Attend and respond to both content and feeling:*** Often there are two things going on at once – the issue itself, and the individual that has some kind of feeling or reaction to that issue. The Peer Mentor needs to attend and respond to both. Consider this: “I’m so mad about my Chem test!” What is the content (performance on the Chem test)? What is the feeling (anger)? It’s important to attend to both. Remember that issues presented could have some underlying themes and might even be symptoms of a larger problem.
- ***Let the mentee solve the problem:*** It’s easy to want to try to solve things for people, but that’s not really as helpful as it might seem. Usually, the mentee knows the answer or knows how to solve the problem but just needs someone to ask the right questions and encourage their processing. Help mentees discover for themselves the right solutions to their problems.
- ***Refer to/use your resources:*** Peer Mentors are not trained counselors so they should not expect themselves to be one. A knowledge of resources (Student Success Center personnel, campus counselors, ADA coordinator, Dean of Students and Residence Life staff) will be very helpful to new mentees. It’s okay to say, “I don’t know” as long as an attempt is made to get the information for the person.
- ***Self-disclosure:*** Use it as long as it’s helpful to the person and not just a story. “I was in a similar situation and I did this which helped,” vs. “I was in that situation, too, and it sucked and no one helped me and blah, blah, blah.” How helpful was that? Not at all!

Communication skills include:

- **Listening** – Fully participate in a conversation by being an active listener and utilizing some simple counseling skills such as reflecting, encouraging and asking questions. Be aware of how body language can affect a conversation.
- **Observing** – Be aware of how the mentee is presenting the message or ideas through body language and unspoken words.
- **Communicating** – Be very clear in the presentation of facts and opinions.
- **Decentering** – Try to understand what the mentee is saying, not by what is heard, but in how they are approaching and thinking about what they are saying. Communicate with them in ways they will understand.

Personal skills include:

- **Availability** – Even if a mentee does not need to seek out their Peer Mentor, they see their Peer Mentor as being a sage mentor when Peer Mentors are present and available to them.
- **Seeking** – Seek mentees out, especially at the beginning of the year. Mentees are less likely to seek a Peer Mentor out initially, so waiting for them to come is usually wasted time.
- **Being an example** – Mentees observe Peer Mentors, especially if they are first-year mentees who are new to the campus environment. The Peer Mentors’ role is one of responsibility so make good decisions in what is said and how to act when interacting with them. Remember that Peer Mentors are role models.

Adjustment Issues

Every mentee will face some challenges adjusting to life on campus. While each mentee will transition differently, it is important to be aware of the possible issues that may arise.

The following are in reference to the ***Iowa State Peer Mentor Handbook***



<http://www.lc.iastate.edu/pmhandbook.pdf>

Personal challenges:

- Moving to a new environment
- Leaving family

- Living with a roommate
- Meeting new people
- Making personal decisions everyday
- Facing new peer pressures (sex, drugs, alcohol, etc.)
- Conforming to behaviors that conflict with personal beliefs

Intellectual/Academic challenges:

- Speaking up in class
- Communicating with professors
- Managing course demands and schedules
- Developing semester course schedules
- Seeking academic assistance when problems arise
- Balancing academics and social life

Physical challenges:

- Coping with weight gain/loss
- Competing athletically
- Forming positive health habits and breaking problem habits
- Becoming self-reliant in managing health/stress
- Finding lifetime hobbies and activities
- Sleep problems

Interpersonal challenges:

- Connecting with a new friendship group
- Starting and managing romantic relationships
- Learning how to show emotions in appropriate ways
- Managing conflict situations
- Recognizing/deciding to act on sexual orientation

Career/Lifestyle challenges:

- Choosing an academic major
- Changing a major
- Deciding on participation in internships and other work experiences
- Deciding to leave school/change schools
- Making decisions related to future issues (marriage, income needs, etc.)

Moral, Ethical and Legal Obligations

As a representative of SD Mines, Peer Mentors will be held to the same moral, ethical and legal obligations of an SD Mines employee.

- A Peer Mentor recognizes the limits of their training, expertise and competence. Refer mentees in need of further expertise to persons possessing the appropriate qualifications. Please do not make any guesses or assumptions.

- **Maintain Confidentiality.** Respect the privacy of the student, especially with other students. Some students may approach a Peer Mentor with sensitive information about their academic progress, personal life or adjustment on campus. This is to be considered privileged information and is not to be shared openly. Assure the students of this confidentiality.
 - If a Peer Mentor feels it is necessary to share information, it may be shared with
 - The Director of Student Success or Peer Mentor Supervisor
 - Campus staff that should be informed in the event that the mentee may be of harm to him/herself or others (counselor, Dean of Students, etc.)
 - Peer Mentors cannot share personal information with
 - A mentee's parents
 - Other Peer Mentors or a mentee's significant other
 - A Peer Mentor's friends or the mentee's friends
 - A Peer Mentor's roommates or the roommates of the mentee
- Treat students equitably and do not play favorites or create special privileges. This does not mean to treat every student the same. Differences in individual students may require that a Peer Mentor spend more or less time with specific students.

Do not participate in any form of sexual harassment and do not tolerate any form of sexual harassment.

- *Sexual harassment is harassment or unwelcome attention of a sexual nature. It includes a range of behavior from mild transgressions and annoyances to serious abuses, which can even involve forced sexual activity. (Dziech et al 1990, Boland 2002) Sexual harassment is considered a form of illegal discrimination in many countries, and is a form of abuse (sexual and psychological) and bullying.*