



RUTGERS-NEW BRUNSWICK  
School of Arts and Sciences

Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences

# First Together Mentorship Program

*Mentee Guide, 2025-26*



# Student Mentee Guide:

## SAS First Together Mentorship Program

### Program Overview

First-generation students face unique challenges as they navigate college, enter the workforce, and advance in leadership positions. **The School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) First Together Mentorship Program at Rutgers University-New Brunswick** is leveraging the power of first-generation alumni – those who were the first in their families to go to college – to provide first-generation undergraduate students with unique leadership learning experiences coupled with mentorship.

**Duration of program:** One academic year (September – May)

**Selection of Mentees and Mentors:** Students are selected through a competitive application process, while mentors are invited to join the program based on the alignment of their careers with the academic and career interests of the students. The cornerstone of SAS First Together is the mentorship circles, which consist of 2-3 first-generation undergraduates and 1-2 SAS first-generation alumni mentors.

### Student Eligibility Criteria:

- Be in good academic and judicial standing with the university
- Full-time enrolled SAS student (fall 2025-spring 2026)
- Will be a sophomore or above (at least 30 credits) in fall 2025
- Be the first person in your family to graduate from a college or university

**Program Goals and Expected Outcomes:** This year, students will earn academic credit by participating in an online course to help them document and reflect on their mentorship experiences. Students will set clear goals, which will serve to guide circle activities and expected outcomes. By the end of the program, with help from mentors, all students will be expected to:

- identify resources and strategies for first-generation college student success;
- develop or refine a resume tailored to an area of work (industry or job area) and apply for at least one internship, job, or graduate program;
- create a map of their professional network; identify and use strategies to improve connections;
- identify, research, and connect with others to explore at least three career ideas;
- create a portfolio of relevant projects and documents that can help them demonstrate their interests and competencies to employers;
- develop and start a project idea related to an area of academic or career interest; and

- document personal interests, values, goals, and next steps.

**Program Activities:** Mentors and mentees will engage in the following activities:

*Kickoff Meeting (In-Person):* This event, held near the end of September, will bring together all mentors and mentees for an evening of community-building, program orientation, and goal setting. Students will attend an orientation before the kickoff to clarify their goals and expectations.

*Monthly Online Meetings:* Mentorship circles will meet monthly at a regular time set at the start of the program, with optional smaller group or one-on-one meetings in between.

*Brief Program Check-ins:* Each month, mentors and mentees will complete a very short 3-question survey to confirm students' attendance, note progress on goals, and report any issues or concerns.

*Wrap-up Meeting (in-person):* In late April/early May, the mentors and mentees will convene to discuss the insights and lessons learned from the program and to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of the mentees.

## Student Mentee Requirements and Expectations

Student mentees play a crucial role in helping to shape the group's experience. This section outlines mentee responsibilities.

**Approximate Time Commitment:** 2-4 hours per month from September to May (9 months)

### **Mentee requirements overview:**

- Enroll in the First Together course 01:090:209, a 1-credit, pass/no credit, elective.)
- Attend required in-person meetings at the start and end of the program (Student Orientation, Kickoff, and Closing meetings)
- Attend monthly online meetings with your mentor circle
- Maintain contact with mentors and fellow mentees between meetings.
- Complete short 3-question online check-in's once per month, along with short, asynchronous assignments for the course designed to help you track your progress on your goals.

## **Program Timeline and Commitment**

All participants commit to the program from September to May. Mentees will receive information to register for the required course at the start of the semester. All students should plan to attend in-person orientation and kickoff meetings in September and a wrap-up meeting in May, plus a required one-hour online meeting per month with your mentor circle. Between meetings, plan to spend 1–2 hours a month following-up on mentor suggestions, communicating with your group, meeting one-on-one with mentors, sharing resources or connections, and completing brief, 3-question program check-ins. Take initiative!

### *September*

#### **Student-Only Orientation Meeting (In-Person)**

Held in mid-September, the orientation offers a chance for student mentees to get to know one another. Mentees will also discuss their expectations and develop goals so they can confidently talk with mentors and track their own progress in the program.

#### **Kickoff Meeting (In-Person)**

This event, held near the end of September, will bring together all mentors and mentees for an evening of community-building, program orientation, and goal setting. Students will attend an orientation before the kickoff to clarify their goals and expectations.

### *October-May*

#### **Monthly Online Meetings**

Mentorship circles will meet monthly at a regular time set at the start of the program, with optional smaller group or one-on-one meetings in between. Staff will provide agendas and shared goals to guide discussions, while students will set personalized goals during orientation and through their online course. Meetings, primarily virtual but flexible for in-person meetups, should focus on relationship-building and progress toward student goals. Circles may adapt agendas as needed, and mentors can use any preferred virtual platform, with Webex available through Rutgers, if needed. If you would like to arrange in-person meetings with your group or individual students, please contact MacKenzie Evans, Program Coordinator, at [mce43@sas.rutgers.edu](mailto:mce43@sas.rutgers.edu) for help finding space and parking on campus.

#### **Communication between meetings**

Mentors are encouraged to offer one-on-one meetings with individual mentees using an online meeting platform of your choice. A group email will be established for each mentor circle to communicate official program messages. Members of the circle may also use this method to communicate with one another, share documents, etc. Groups may also elect to use other platforms of their choosing to stay in touch (e.g. Google Group Me, phone/text).

### **Brief Program Check-in's**

Each month, mentees (and mentors) will complete a very short 3-question survey to confirm students' attendance, note progress on goals, and report any issues or concerns.

### *May*

#### **Wrap-up Meeting (in-person)**

In late April/early May, the mentors and mentees will convene to discuss the insights and lessons learned from the program and to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of the mentees.

## How to Be a Great Mentee

### ***Do's:***

1. Take a proactive role in shaping the relationship.
2. Understand and communicate your goals and aspirations to your mentor circle.
3. Set aside time for the mentoring process and keep all scheduled appointments.
4. Display professional behavior and come prepared to discuss planned topics.
5. Respond promptly to feedback and emails from mentors or other members of your circle.
6. Be open and honest about your challenges and weaknesses, as well as your strengths.
7. Engage in discussions and activities suggested by your mentor and report back to them about your experience.
8. Utilize campus resources and seek additional support as needed.
9. Be open to new ideas and take initiative in your personal and professional development.

### ***Don'ts:***

1. Don't expect your mentor to find you a job or internship.
2. Don't blame your mentor if their advice doesn't work out.
3. Don't commit to obligations you cannot keep.
4. Don't cancel meetings with your mentor at the last minute.
5. Don't neglect to review and adjust your goals regularly.
6. Don't miss out on opportunities provided by the program.

## Program Administrator

- Have questions or need assistance? Contact Jennifer Lenahan, Director of Career Explorations in Arts and Sciences Initiatives. Email: [jlenahan@sas.rutgers.edu](mailto:jlenahan@sas.rutgers.edu)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **How can participating in a mentor circle help me?**

Students can benefit from participating in a mentor circle by connecting with multiple alumni with different perspectives to help them explore career paths, build a professional network, and receive feedback on resumes and cover letters.

Mentors and peers also help in unique ways. Mentors can help with interview preparation, professional development, and setting and achieving academic and career goals. Additionally, they can often provide personal support, recommend extracurricular activities, and offer guidance on graduate school applications. Peers in your mentor circle can also offer support in these areas and share their experiences of navigating currently available programs at Rutgers.

### **When should I join SAS First Together?**

We recommend that sophomores and juniors apply to the SAS First Together program when they feel comfortable in their major and career aspirations. Students do not need to know the exact area or position they want to work in, but they should know what major they are pursuing and have some general goals.

### **How do I sign up?**

The School of Arts and Sciences will send an email invitation to incoming sophomores, juniors, and seniors to invite applications near the start of each semester for enrollment the following fall semester. Students can apply to SAS First Together by accessing the application sent to them during recruitment. Not everyone who receives an invitation to apply will be eligible. Please review eligibility requirements before applying. The application also requires a virtual interview.

### **Can transfer students join SAS First Together?**

Yes.

### **Do I get to choose my mentor?**

No. We match you with experienced alumni and peers who align broadly with your interests.

### **How do I get matched with a mentor circle?**

Staff at the School of Arts and Sciences will select mentors and peers who share some of your interests and who can offer you a range of advice relevant to building a professional career after graduation. You will have the opportunity to learn from several mentors and peers.

**How will online meetings be scheduled?** Staff will reach out to mentors to identify their availability in August. We will then contact students and ask them to enroll in a course to reserve a time in their course schedules that works for everyone in the group. Groups will decide at the Kickoff meeting which week of the month to meet, as well as discuss other communication logistics and expectations. Those who cannot attend the Kickoff meeting will be provided with a survey to collect their input for the decision-making at the meeting.

**How do I get started with my first online meeting?** Groups (mentorship circles) will decide at the Kickoff meeting on a video platform, host, and meeting facilitator, as well as select a week each month to meet through December.

**Where/how should I meet with my mentor circle in between required in-person events?**

Groups will decide how and when to meet between meetings. If your team prefers to meet in-person for these meetings, you may do so. There are various places mentees and mentor can meet. It is advised that mentors and mentees meet in a public location in which they are both comfortable and is of their choosing. Some recommended locations include Rutgers Campus, coffee shops, restaurants, libraries, and the mentor's workplace.

**What can I do if the mentoring relationships in my circle are not going well?**

While we hope that every mentoring circle works well and is helpful, we understand that sometimes challenges emerge. If there is an issue in your mentoring relationship with one or more members of your circle (e.g. mentor(s) not responsive, mentor(s) cannot offer guidance that is helpful, etc.), please reach out to the program administrator, Jennifer Lenahan, with your concern. Her email is: [jlenahan@sas.rutgers.edu](mailto:jlenahan@sas.rutgers.edu). We approach each situation on a case-by-case basis and work with you to determine the best solution.

**How long or how many times can a mentor or mentee stay connected?**

While each mentoring relationship only lasts one semester in a formal capacity, mentors and mentees are welcome to continue their mentoring relationship outside of the program for as long as they would like. The decision must be mutual, so make sure to have this discussion with your mentor if this is something of interest.

**I'm not sure how to use a mentoring relationship. Will I receive guidance on this?**

Yes. The Kick-off meeting offers an overview of the program, including advice on mentoring relationships such as: what to discuss, goal setting, and mentoring etiquette.

**Will this program help me get an internship and/or job?**

Students should not expect or ask their mentors to help them get an internship/job. While the mentoring relationship may help students gain the skills and knowledge to receive an internship or job, it is not appropriate for students to expect or ask for this.

**What if I am no longer able to participate in the program?**

It is important that you do your best to honor your commitment to the program throughout the semester. Mentors are taking time to provide you with their time and expertise and your peers benefit from your involvement, too. If you encounter an emergency or illness that prevents you

from participating further, please notify the program administrator as early as possible at [jlenahan@sas.rutgers.edu](mailto:jlenahan@sas.rutgers.edu).

**Who do I contact if I have questions?**

If there are any questions, contact the Program Administrator.