RUTGERS–NEW BRUNSWICK
School of Arts and Sciences

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First Together Mentorship Program

Mentor Guide

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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 (October -April)

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.

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;
- Share challenges and successes of your first-generation experience;
- 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 at the start of the program, 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. If you would like to arrange in-person meetings with your group or individual students, please contact MacKenzie Evans, Program Coordinator at firsttogether@sas.rutgers.edu for help finding space and parking on campus.

Mentor Check-in Meetings (optional): Once each semester, the director will host a voluntary meeting on Zoom for mentors to ask questions or voice concerns. The director will also be available for one-on-one meetings, as needed.

Award Nominations: In February, mentors and mentees can nominate one another for a recognition award based on their accomplishments. Awards will be presented at the Closing Celebration.

Closing Celebration (in-person): In April, 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.

Mentor Requirements and Expectations

Mentors play a crucial role in helping to shape students' experiences in the program. This section outlines mentor responsibilities.

Approximate Time Commitment: 2-4 hours per month from October to April

Mentor requirements overview:

- Attend required in-person meetings at the start and end of the program (See above)
- Set up and attend monthly online meetings with your mentor circle
- Maintain contact with student mentees and fellow mentors 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).

Guidelines for effective mentorship

A mentor's role is to inspire, encourage, and empower student mentees to achieve their career, academic, and personal goals. These tips will help you build rich and rewarding relationships with your mentees.

• Commit to being accessible and engaged for the duration of the mentoring relationship
• Be willing to share personal and professional experiences, insights, successes and failures when appropriate
• Provide opportunities for mentees to explore career and life choices
• Assist mentees in cultivating skills for working with people of diverse backgrounds and opinions
• Promote the self-esteem and confidence of the mentees, providing encouragement when needed
• Empower the mentees as leaders and professionals
• Maintain focus on the mentees' goals, but encourage them to explore careers broadly
• Initiate contact and build relationships with the mentees
• Communicate regularly, even if just to say "hello"
• Give and receive feedback, as needed
• Contribute to an environment of mutual learning, trust, and respect

Program Administrators

Jennifer Lenahan, Director of Career Explorations in Arts and Sciences Initiatives
jlenahan@sas.rutgers.edu

MacKenzie Evans, Program Coordinator, Career Explorations in Arts and Sciences Initiatives
Mce43@sas.rutgers.edu

You can also reach program administrators through our program email address,
firsttogether@sas.rutgers.edu

Frequently Asked Questions:

How will online meetings be scheduled?

Staff will reach out to mentors to identify their availability. 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.

How do I get started with my first online meeting?
Where possible, program staff will host group meetings on Zoom. Staff will assign groups to breakout rooms to meet. Where this is not possible, groups (mentorship circles) will decide at the Kickoff meeting on a video platform, host, and meeting facilitator. Those who cannot attend the Kickoff meeting will be provided with a survey to collect their input.

How do I get matched with mentees and other mentors?
Students apply to the program and tell us about their career and academic interests, as well as what they are looking for from a mentor. Mentors are hand-selected by staff and paired with mentees and mentors based on shared interests, as well as their ability to help students expand their thinking about different careers. There is no application for mentors to complete. Participation is by invitation.

How can I refer another potential mentor to the program?
If you are interested in referring a possible mentor, please contact Maxine Sowinski, Senior Administrative Assistant at msowinski@sas.rutgers.edu.

What should I do if my mentees or fellow mentor(s) are not responding to me or I have other concerns?
If you have any challenges with communication or other concerns, please contact program administrator Jennifer Lenahan at firsttogether@sas.rutgers.edu. We will also host mid-semester Zoom meetings for mentors to discuss progress and concerns. Attendance is voluntary.

Can we invite mentees to our office and professional events?
Mentees are often curious about what jobs are like day-to-day. If this is convenient for you, feel free to invite members of your circle to join you at an event or to shadow you, either virtually or in-person. Recording a video of yourself at work to discuss problems and task you are working on can also be a way to expose your mentees to the work you do. This is not a required part of the program. Mentors may also invite a mentee to professional association meetings, networking events, or other professional gatherings that will enhance a mentee's understanding of the field.

Are there any potential risks to me or my company?
No. It is not appropriate for mentors to engage in any business transactions with their mentees; instead, the relationship should only involve the flow of general information and advice.

What if I am no longer able to be a mentor?
Send us an email at firsttogether@sas.rutgers.edu to notify us if you are no longer able to be a mentor. If possible, we ask that you continue to meet as many commitments as you can in the current semester. You can ask not to be considered for future semesters, if needed.

How long or how many times can a mentor or mentee stay connected?
While each mentoring relationship only lasts one academic year 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.

Where/how should I meet with my mentor circle in between required in-person events?
Each circle is expected to meet at least monthly online between the Kick-off and Closing meetings. Mentors are free to use their personal Zoom accounts or other meeting platforms they prefer. Mentors should coordinate with one another to select an appropriate platform and to decide who will initiate and host the meeting. Contact Jennifer Lenahan at firsttogether@sas.rutgers.edu if you have difficulty selecting a platform for your group to use.

If you would like to set up in-person meetings for your team, or one-on-one sessions, you may do so if others involved agree. It is advised that mentors and mentees meet in a public location in which they are both comfortable and that is of their choosing. Some recommended locations include Rutgers Campus, coffee shops, restaurants, libraries, and the mentor's workplace. Contact MacKenzie Evans, Program Coordinator, at firsttogether@sas.rutgers.edu for help finding space and parking on campus.

Where do I park if I decide to meet my mentee on campus?
MacKenzie Evans, Program Coordinator, at firsttogether@sas.rutgers.edu for help finding space and parking on campus.

Who do I contact if I have questions?
If there are any questions, contact Jennifer Lenahan at firsttogether@sas.rutgers.edu.

Tips & Tricks

This section offers tips and advice for getting the most out of your mentoring experience.

Before you begin

Reflect on your own experiences
The most important aspects of a strong mentorship relationship are clear, efficient communication and the establishment of shared expectations and goals. By communicating

your expectations and listening to and responding to your mentees' expectations, you will lay the groundwork for a productive and rewarding relationship.

Before you get started, it is helpful to reflect on your experiences with mentorship:

- What kind of mentorship have you received?
- If you have not had a mentor before, what aspects of your professional development have been difficult? How did you cope? What would you have found more productive or satisfying if you had a great mentor?
- What did you like or dislike about mentoring you received? What could your mentor(s) have done differently to be more effective?
- How well did your mentor(s) prepare you for your career?
- Are you still in contact with any former mentors?

Begin to define your mentoring philosophy

Establishing a mentorship philosophy takes time. Mentoring involves a balance of guidance and authority and requires listening to and addressing the academic, professional and, sometimes, non-academic issues that mentees may face.

- What sort of mentor do you want to be?
- What are your expectations of your mentees?
- What are your communication preferences (email, phone, etc.)?
- What days of the week or month are busy for you personally and professionally?
- What do your mentees need to know to succeed in your field?
- What are some of the key areas you struggled with when getting started in your field?
- What are the national and international organizations in your field that students would benefit from knowing about?

Access the program directory to read more about your circle members

Define Your Expectations

Setting realistic expectations is a crucial step in developing a mentorship relationship. Consider the following questions as you form your expectations of the members of your mentorship circle:

- What values do you want to carry over to this experience?
- What does confidentiality mean to you? What topics are most in need of protection?
- How will you be accountable to the others in your circle? How do you want to hold others accountable?
- What does consistent and reliable communication look like? What does timely communication look like for you, given your personal and professional commitments?
- What boundaries need to be established?

Getting Started

Introduce yourself Online and Set Up Virtual Meetings

All mentors and mentees will be connected via a group email with members of their circle.

Within one week after the Kick-off meeting: mentors should connect with one another and reach out to their circles via email to introduce themselves and to finalize the agenda and timing for their first online meeting. Encourage mentees to use a calendar app to remind them about the meetings.

If you are looking for ways to connect online before your first virtual meeting, the following are a few suggestions for conversation starters:

- Jobs, hobbies, and extracurricular activities
- Research, projects, or career-related accomplishments
- Your favorite class in college, favorite book, television show, foods, etc.

Establish Preferred Means of Communication

SAS is providing access to a group email, but discuss with your group what platforms they prefer to use for between-meeting communication and sharing documents. This may include chat platforms, email, text, phone calls, or meeting in-person.

Set goals and agenda for the first online meeting

Program staff will provide sample agenda's for each online meeting, but the final agenda is up to each group to determine. We encourage the mentees to set the pace and direction for what they hope to accomplish through mentoring. However, mentors often provide students with new career ideas and options for their future, so we encourage mentors to provide input, too.

Additionally, we encourage you to take a moment to reflect on any personal goals you wish to set. Ask yourself specific questions related to your own growth as a mentor:

Is there anything you wish to develop?
Are you interested in improving your communication, listening, or leadership skills, etc.?
Are you seeking greater self-awareness and fresh perspectives through mentoring?

Start an email discussion before your first meeting and ask all members to share some things they would like to get out of the mentorship experience and some things they would like to contribute. Possible student contributions may include offering mentors a different perspective on various topics, their current knowledge about Rutgers and SAS, etc.

Review the sample agendas staff provide, then finalize topics for the first meeting with your group. Agenda items for the first meeting should include, at a minimum:

- **Introductions:** depending on how well you have gotten to know one another so far, consider how in-dept to make this part of the meeting.
- **Expectations:** See - Set Clear Expectations with your Mentor Circle below.
- **Goals:** What do you each hope to gain and share while in the program?

Effective Online Communication

Communication is a two-way process. The following etiquette tips are critical to a mentor-mentee relationship:

- Meaningful Subject Line
- Clear and Concise Messages
- Investigating Assumptions

Ideal Traits for Mentors

- *Inspire* - challenge your mentee to find importance in what he/she aspires to do. Help create future visions for themselves.
- *Be an Active Listener* - Allow your mentee to feel that they have been clearly heard, understood, and accepted.
- *Be a good coach*: Pose questions to the mentee to help them find solutions that align with their unique circumstances.
- *Share Similar Experiences* - Share similar situations to empower your mentee to deal with challenges.
- *Provide Corrective Feedback in an Encouraging Manner* - Allow mentee to accept and apply readily.
- *Speak of Your Mentee in Positive or Neutral Ways* - Discussions are confidential

Keep Goals in Mind

There might be periods during the semester when it is difficult to see progress or momentum wanes. Re-invigorating the partnership can get the mentor circle back on track to success.

- Revisit the goals that you have set for your mentoring partner and for yourself. Are you on the right track to achieve what you had set out to do?
- Could you have done something better? Being enthusiastic can help you and your partner move forward.
- Do you think you need to extend the mentoring period? Learning, as they say, never stops.

Help during Periods of Transition

As your mentoring relationship draws to a close, you might be wondering if your mentee's takeaways from the mentoring relationship will smooth their transition into future opportunities. We encourage you to discuss with mentees what you hope they will take away from the experience as well as what, if anything, you can offer them in the future.

Need for a Good Closure

The key to a successful closure is being prepared with an exit strategy. A good strategy has five components:

- A learning conclusion
- A process for integrating what was learned A meaningful celebration of success
- A conversation redefining the relationship

Provide Regular Feedback

It is important to provide regular feedback on your mentoring experience and your mentoring relationship to the program administrators. If you have questions or concerns, please reach out to the program administrators right away. We also ask that you complete the mentor program surveys we will send to you at the mid-point and end of the program. Feedback will allow us to address concerns and improve the program for mentors and mentees. Constructive feedback to your mentee is also important as it will help her or him learn more effectively and improve your mentoring relationship.

References and Additional Resources

This handbook was adapted from the following sources:

Alexander, Jessica (Year Unknown) CLAS First Generation Mentorship Program Mentorship Agendas. College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Connecticut. Storrs, CT.

Rutgers Business School (Year Unknown) Transforming Undergraduates into Professionals TeamUP Mentor Guide. Rutgers Business School, Rutgers University- New Brunswick. Piscataway, NJ