

Summary of Peer Mentor Program 2019-2020

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Peer Mentors & Other Members:

- Jocsa Cortes (returning)
- Rosemary Bayless
- Laura Minnema
- Josh Wheeler
- Annie Wang
- Dr. April Kedrowicz (CVM Leader)
- Katie Sapko

Peer Mentees:

- Total of 22 incoming 1st year CBS students, combination of both MS and PhD students
- All 1st year students assigned to one of 5 peer mentors based on research interest and stated mentorship needs. Each peer mentor was assigned 3-5 mentees.

Goals/Objectives

Our overall goal for 2019-2020 was to improve graduate student wellness and considered several facets of wellness when planning our peer mentor events:

- Mental/emotional health:
 - Help incoming graduate students transition smoothly into the program. Uncertainty in expectations (the students' own expectations of the program and the expectations of students from their advisors, professors, peers, etc) can be a source of anxiety that can be ameliorated by advice/guidance from peers who are going through/have gone through the same processes.
 - Foster community among graduate students and between graduate students and others at the CVM. The sense of community at the CVM is considered a strength by others at NCSU, and we want to support this.
 - Familiarize incoming graduate students with the Raleigh area and the opportunities for nonacademic activities (restaurants, hobbies, etc).
- Physical health:
 - Highlight the importance of physical activity in maintaining work/school/life balance.

Summary of Peer Mentor/Mentee Activities

- CVM peer mentors and two leaders met bi-weekly to discuss peer mentor events (recap past events/give feedback and plan future events)
- Peer mentors reached out to assigned mentees with a welcome email before the fall semester began and periodically corresponded (in person or via email) with mentees during the semester to check in, answer questions, and encourage participation in peer mentor events

- Peer mentors were responsible for coming up with ideas, planning and executing Peer Mentor associated events.

Summary of Events in Fall 2019

- **New Student Orientation** (Aug. 2019) - Gave an overview of the program, peer mentors introduced themselves and met with their assigned mentees. *[Mental/emotional health]*
- **CALS Hosted All Colleges Meeting** (Sept.2019) - Held at J.C. Raulston Arboretum, focused on peer mentor professional development
- **Bug Fest 2019** (Sept.2019) - cancelled due to communication mishaps and low interest. *[Mental/emotional health]*
- **Umstead Park Hike** (Oct.2019) - total of 3 people in attendance, 2 peer mentors and 1 1st year mentee; good opportunity to informally get to know mentee. *[Physical health]*
- **CHASS Hosted All Colleges Meeting** (Oct. 2019) - Met in Caldwell Lounge, meeting focused on strategies for problem solving with peers. Specific strategies included 1) “road to there”, 2) “start-stop-continue-change”, and 3) “sad-mad-glad”.
- **Bagels and Coffee Q&A session** (Nov. 2019) - Peer mentors were available for informal discussion/question answering on a drop-in basis during a monthly CVM GSA Bagel Breakfast. No mentees participated. *[Mental/emotional health]*
- **CVM Hosted All Colleges Meeting** (Nov. 2019) - We set up a scavenger hunt in the CVM Main Building. Mentors were divided into groups and tasked with discussing how to best mentor someone given a scenario. The scenarios were related dyads: one group of the pair was the mentee's perspective and the other group of the pair had the mentor's perspective. This was well received and would make a good option for future groups. The materials can be found here.
- **End of Semester/Pre-Holiday(s) hangout** (Dec. 2019) - Met at one of the Peer Mentor's house and made dinner, played games, made play doh, and socialized. *[Mental/emotional health]*

Summary of Events in Spring 2020*

- **CALS Hosted All Colleges Meeting** (Feb. 2020) - invited speaker Dr. Bart Craig, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, NCSU presenting on "Personality and Personal Effectiveness".
- **Donuts and Coffee meetup** (Feb. 2020) - Met at Port City Java with mentees on a drop-in basis to address any questions they had. *[Mental/emotional health]*
- **Lab Techniques** (Feb. 2020-May. 2020)* - Planned to do some one-on-one training and shadowing to learn the basics of common lab techniques for the mentees.
- **Planning your Committee & Preliminary Exam “Lunch & Learn”** (April. 2020)* - Held over Zoom. Started with a short presentation on what the committee makeup should be and then consisted of a Q&A between the attendees and Peer Mentors. Was originally planned as an in-person Lunch & Learn and was adapted to Zoom. *[Mental/emotional health]*
- **CHASS Hosted All Colleges Meeting** (April.2020)* - Held over Zoom. Peer mentors and leaders gave updates on their recent activities/accomplishments, discussed the

value of the Grad Peer Mentor program for mentors and mentees alike, and wrapped up the peer mentoring program for 2019-2020.

*Unfortunately, Covid-19 derailed our Spring 2020 Efforts. The Lab Techniques training was most affected by the pandemic.

Summary of Spending:

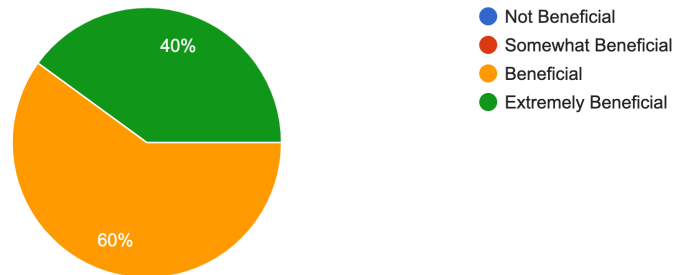
- The only event for which money was reimbursed for the Peer Mentors program was money covering the play-doh making materials used in the Dec 2019 social event (amounted to about \$20).
- All other events involving food were either paired with and therefore paid by GSA (e.g. bagel breakfast), or were paired with other events concurrently offering free food.

Summary of Mentee Feedback:

- Mentees were invited to complete online surveys to provide feedback about peer mentor events and make suggestions for the peer mentoring program.
- Summary of End of Year Questionnaire (total 5 responses)

5. Did you find the activities provided by the LEAD mentors beneficial?

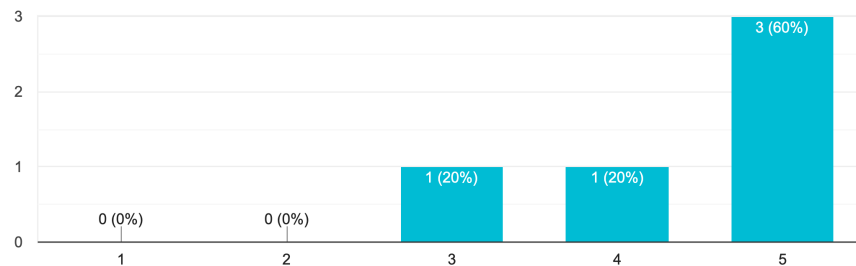
5 responses



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10. Has the LEAD Peer Mentoring Project positively impacted the peer mentoring culture within the CBS program?

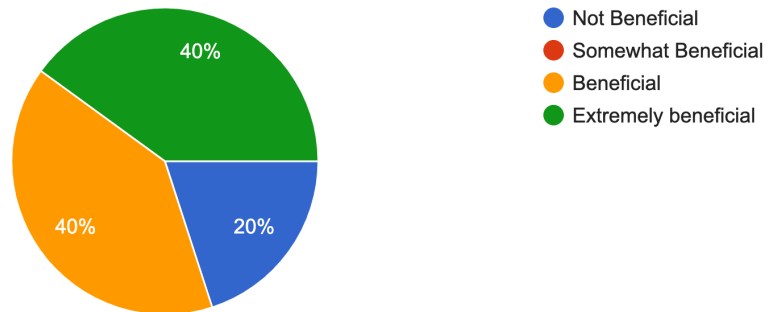
5 responses



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8. Did you find your peer mentor helpful and beneficial?

5 responses



- Explanation of “Not Beneficial”: My specific peer mentor did not help me much but other peer mentors did. I don't think it was anything personal but just we didn't seem to be the best match and I gravitated more towards other peer mentors, which is okay! My peer mentor still reached out to check on me throughout my 1st year which I so appreciated!
- Other comments about experiences w/ Peer Mentor
 - I felt genuinely supported by my peer mentor through check ins (either stopping by my office or texting me).
 - They had a lot of useful information to share drawing on their experience of first-year coursework and rotations.
 - My peer mentor was easy to reach out to and always available to answer questions.
- Comments re: what would you add to the Peer Mentor experience (i.e. activities, mentorship needs, etc)
 - I would add more fitness / activity events! Also, I really enjoyed the game night / get together at Annie's. That was my favorite peer mentor event of the year.
 - I would add more social activities and small 1-on-1 sessions at more frequency.
 - More social activities please!
 - I would add a few more guiding activities for 1st years - how to decide on the right fit of a mentor, interacting with others within CVM - things to know?. I, also, liked the meeting that invited Laura Castro to talk with us about some mental health issues that affect graduate students, maybe imposter syndrome?

- More informal social activities.
- I think it is perfect as is.
- I would add more rotation-focussed sessions that allow students to ask questions about what things should be covered at the beginning and end of rotations with your PI, how to discuss joining or passing on a lab effectively, etc.
- More socials -- within the smaller peer mentor group. For instance, activities with just 4-5 students and our lead peer mentor.