Guidelines for the Mentee

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What’s the Purpose of the Mentor Program?

A report by the Goodman Research Group, Inc. indicated that women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) fields who find community will persist to complete their academic degree programs. Community allows students to build networks and create critical mass across disciplines that are, in some cases, underrepresented by women. Networking provides information, support, and the knowledge that students are not alone in the challenges they face.

The typical Rensselaer student enjoys working hard and playing hard, and when Rensselaer students collaborate as a team, they’re unstoppable! Although female undergraduates represent approximately 30% of the undergraduate population at Rensselaer, they earn higher grade point averages and their graduation rates are higher than their male peers and they hold the majority of leadership positions across student organizations.

The role of the peer mentor is to help a first-year student make a smooth transition to Rensselaer and to provide information and guidance to support the mentee in meeting her first-year academic and personal goals. When mentors and mentees gather together for monthly activities, they create a supportive community that enables all Rensselaer women to succeed.

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**WHAT IS MENTORING?**

Mentoring is a power-free, two-way, mutually beneficial learning situation in which the mentor provides advice, shares knowledge and experiences, and teaches using a low pressure, self-discovery approach. (Starcevich, Matt, 1999, “Coach, Mentor: Is there a Difference?” www.coachingandmentoring.com)

**WHAT IS THE ROLE OF MY MENTOR?**

**What do mentors do?**

- Coach… by providing examples of how to perform a task
- Facilitate… by creating opportunities for learners to use new skills
- Counsel… by helping the learner to explore the consequences of potential decisions
- Network… by referring the learner to others when the mentor’s experience is insufficient

**What a mentor is…**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coach</th>
<th>Savior</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Therapist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listener</td>
<td>Servant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>Omniscient being</td>
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<td>Guide</td>
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**WHAT IS MY ROLE AS MENTEE?**

To make the most of your mentoring relationship, you’ll want to know what you’d like to accomplish in your first year at Rensselaer, and you’ll want to share those goals with your mentor so she has an idea of how she can assist you. If you want to find out the best way to meet people, you’ll want to discuss the kinds of activities you enjoy and describe characteristics of your best friends. This information will help your mentor to suggest clubs, organizations, and activities on campus that might interest you.

We’ve also provided a list of Questions and Answers (see page 5-7) and a list of Suggested Activities (see page 8) that will enable you to explore possible scenarios for interacting with your mentor. Your mentor has volunteered her time to be there for you and, like you, she’s hoping to learn and grow from the partnership that the two of you will develop together.
Building a Sustainable Mentoring Partnership

Getting Started

To build a solid mentoring partnership, you and your mentor will want to get to know each other, appreciate your similarities, accept your differences, and most importantly, discuss your goals and figure out a plan for helping you to meet those goals. This doesn’t have to be a complicated plan, but rather a roadmap that will help you to figure out how to successfully balance your academics and your social life. Determining what’s important to you and identifying the steps to take to successfully reach the goals that you’ve set for yourself are important life skills that will help you during college and in the years following graduation.

Building a Framework for Success

Mentors can help you to develop a weekly schedule that allows sufficient time for studying and homework, and also includes adequate time for exercise, sleeping, eating, socializing, and all of the other things that are important to meeting your individual goals. You’ll be able to discuss options and evaluate choices, but ultimately, you are the decision-maker. Mistakes are a part of learning and help us to grow by providing a mechanism for us to analyze what we did and could have done differently. Don’t beat yourself up over a mistake you’ve made. Rather, seek help from your mentor and your network, and stay focused on your goals! You will be successful if you believe in yourself and your dreams and ask for help whenever you need it!

Seeking Support from Your Network

In addition to receiving support from your mentor, there are many other women in the Mentor Program who can offer their sage advice and support! Monthly, the Mentor Program offers a program or event at which you will be invited to join other first-year women and their mentors. Although you and your mentor may not be able to make it to every scheduled event, we hope that you will come with each other, by yourselves, or with a friend so that you can meet other women and benefit from their knowledge and experience. Networking within our community is a great way to explore minors, find out what kind of undergraduate research others are doing that may interest you, ask about companies where students interned, find out about Study Abroad opportunities, and ask how others are preparing for professional careers as researchers, entrepreneurs, doctors, dentists, lawyers, etc. Find out how you can take advantage of your undergraduate education to prepare for Graduate School. Learn what resources are available on campus and how they’re equipped to provide information and/or respond to questions you may have.

Sustaining a mentoring relationship is easy! For the first six weeks of the fall semester, figure out a day and time that’s convenient for you to send a short text message or email to your mentor. Let her know how you’re doing, or ask for face time to discuss an issue.
Your First Three Weeks at RPI

If you’re having an issue with a roommate or a course, text or email your mentor...something like, “Having Roommate Issue,” or “Struggling with Chem 1. Can we chat for 10-15 minutes?” When your mentor replies to you, work with her to identify a mutually convenient time to discuss the issue as soon as possible. If you or your mentor have conflicting schedules and you cannot find time to get together, send an email to program assistant, Chelsea Wilson, at chelseawilsonrpi@gmail.com, or program director, Barbara Ruel, at ruelb@rpi.edu and one of them will match you with a new mentor and/or assist you to resolve an immediate issue.

Mentor Compatibility

Although we try our best to match you with someone who looks good “on paper,” we cannot guarantee that your personalities will match perfectly. Part of the college experience is to listen to the perspectives of others without judging them. You and your mentor will not have had exactly the same experiences and may have different ideas about how to resolve an issue. However, if you can look past your differences and listen closely to the advice that’s being offered, then you can determine whether the advice has merit or value. Thank your mentor for her contribution, whether you found her advice beneficial or not. If her advice was helpful, let her know. If the advice wasn’t what you were looking for, clarify your question, or seek advice from another student. Your feedback is a necessary element to ensuring that the partnership is headed in a positive direction. A mutually beneficial partnership is possible when mentor and mentee are sharing authentically and both are learning and growing from their interactions.

Please read through this booklet carefully and if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Barbara by telephone at 518-276-2618 or email and Chelsea by email.
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What can I expect from my mentor? Your mentor is someone....

- who is respectful, resourceful, supportive, and patient
- who will be a good listener
- who’s agreed to make the initial contact with you. However, you may contact her first, if you prefer not to wait.
- who will stay in touch with you throughout your first year
- who shares her knowledge and experience about student life, Rensselaer resources, and the Troy community
- who acts as guide and coach to help you reach your academic and personal goals
- who will provide friendship
- who can suggest avenues for meeting people and making new friends
- who can help you to quickly acclimate to your new environment
- who can offer advice when requested

What is expected of me as the mentee?

- Discuss your expectations of your mentoring relationship with your mentor.
- Share your first-year goals and interests. What do you want to accomplish?
  - Interact with your mentor on a regular basis. If your schedules don’t mesh, write to program assistant, Chelsea Wilson, at chelseawilsonrpi@gmail.com, and she’ll identify a new mentor!
- Schedule mutually agreeable times and modes of communication with your mentor and respond promptly to each other.
- Ask questions, so your mentor understands how she can best support you.
- If you would like to change your mentor or discontinue your participation in the program at any time, please write to Chelsea Wilson.

What can I expect from the Mentor Program Office? We will...

- Assist you and your mentor in getting “connected”.
- Answer any questions or concerns you may have regarding the Mentor Program and its activities or about Rensselaer’s resources and offices.
- Assist you with registration to events or connect you with someone who will be attending an upcoming event.
- Provide timely responses to your questions. Please send email to Chelsea at chelseawilsonrpi@gmail.com, or to Barbara Ruel, program director, at ruelb@rpi.edu, or call 276-6203.
What kinds of things should I discuss with my mentor?

- How is college different from high school?
- What adjustments will I need to make?
- Why you and she decided to enroll at Rensselaer
- Academic major; career goals (yours and hers)
- Classes, teaching assistants, and professors
- Social life: What can you do in Troy?
- Where can you shop close to campus?
- Balancing classes and extracurricular activities
- Clubs/activities
- Fraternities/sororities
- Athletics
- Home life
- Vacations
- Undergraduate research opportunities

What kinds of things can I expect to do with my mentor?

- Walk the campus & find out where your classes will be
- Go to the UPAC movies
- Go to a club or organizational meeting together
- Attend monthly Mentor Program activities
- Go to an RPI athletic event or join an intramural team
- Go the Mueller Center, walk, play tennis, or some other mode of exercise
- Go to Downtown Troy or shopping via the CDTA bus (which is free to students)
- Participate in activities in which you have common interests
- Have conversation over lunch/dinner/snack
- Tell her how you did on your first test
- Ask for her opinion on how to address any concerns about a roommate, how to stay on top of class work, or how to deal with a classroom situation

How do I communicate with my mentor?

- Text
- Email
- Phone
- In person
- Letters (over the summer)
What can I do to ensure a good relationship with my mentor?

- Be yourself.
- Acknowledge that your mentor's personal experiences, perspectives, and opinions may not match yours 100% of the time.
- Be open to hearing what your mentor has to offer and listen for any pearls of wisdom that may be useful.
- Find out more about your mentor's interests, career goals, etc.
- Let your mentor know the best times to reach you and find out the best time to reach her.
- Stay in regular contact with your mentor. Take the initiative to connect with her!
- Ask questions! There are no stupid questions!
- Be a good listener.
- Follow through on scheduled commitments you've made with your mentor.
- If you miss a scheduled appointment with your mentor, apologize, explain what happened and schedule a new day/time to get together.
- If your mentor misses an appointment with you, don’t rush to judge her. Find out if she’s “ok,” and if you can reschedule with her.
- Be honest.
- Be realistic about your expectations for your mentoring relationship.
- Most importantly, HAVE FUN!
## Suggested Activities and Timeline

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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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<tr>
<td>Introduce yourself – telephone or correspond with your mentor</td>
<td>July through early August</td>
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<tr>
<td>Go to Navigating Rensselaer &amp; Beyond Reception</td>
<td>August 24 or 25</td>
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<td>Get familiar with the campus computing system</td>
<td>August 27 to 31</td>
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<td>Go to the Bookstore with your mentor</td>
<td>August 27 to 31</td>
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<td>Go to the Activities Fair at the Armory</td>
<td>August 30, 6 to 9 PM</td>
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<td>Invite her to the Mentor Program Ice Cream Social</td>
<td>September 6, 7 to 9 PM</td>
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<td>Discuss adding or dropping courses</td>
<td>Month of September</td>
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<td>Call or text your mentor after your first test to let her know how you did.</td>
<td>Evening of first test</td>
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<td>Go with her to “Registering for Classes,” Union, 3202</td>
<td>October 10, 7 to 9 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invite her to Oktoberfest, RSDH, 2nd floor</td>
<td>October 30, 8:00 to 9:30 PM</td>
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<td>Invite her to the Mentor Program Thanksgiving Dinner and Panel of Professionals, RSDH, 2nd floor</td>
<td>November 9, 5:00 to 8:00 PM</td>
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<td>Invite her to Destressing, Health Care Event, Warren Hall Lounge</td>
<td>December 4, 7:30 to 9 PM</td>
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<td>Schedule Finals Week study breaks together</td>
<td>December 12-18</td>
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<td>Invite her to Big Red Freakout! <strong>(Buy tix early)</strong></td>
<td>February ? ($5 with your ID)</td>
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<td>Invite her to Valentine’s Day Mentor Event, RSDH, 2nd floor</td>
<td>February 13, 8 to 9:30 PM</td>
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<td>Ask her about being a mentor to a first-year student</td>
<td>April 2 or 3: mentor training</td>
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<td>Invite her to help out with <strong>Design Your Future Day</strong></td>
<td>April 20, 9 AM to 3 PM</td>
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<td>Schedule Finals Week study breaks</td>
<td>May 13-17</td>
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<td>Invite her to join you for a meal in the dining hall</td>
<td>Any time</td>
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<td>Ask her to attend a club meeting or to work out at the Mueller Center</td>
<td>Any time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have a movie or t.v. night (can do with other mentor/mentee pairs)</td>
<td>Any time</td>
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