

## **Graduate Student Peer Mentor Guidelines**

### **Department of Communication**

1. A call will go out in Fall semester from the Grad Director requesting current grad students to serve as peer mentors for new students who will be admitted during that academic year. Any graduate student is invited to volunteer.
2. An initial meeting of all peer mentors will be held in Fall semester and coordinated by the Graduate Director. At that meeting, this document will be presented to all volunteers, and any questions will be addressed.
3. The Grad Director will assign peer mentors to new students upon their admission to the graduate program. The Grad Director usually tries to do this in an equitable fashion (so one person does not end up having too many mentees). When you receive an email from the Grad Director indicating that s/he has assigned you as a peer mentor to a newly admitted graduate student, please email the new student as soon as possible, introduce yourself as their peer mentor, welcome them to the MA program, and offer to be of help with any questions or challenges that the new student might face. I will include the new student's email address in the message that I send you, so it shouldn't be difficult for you to send a quick message.
4. During the course of the year, periodically "check back" via email or phone with your mentee to see how they are doing in making their decision. If you can help them make a positive decision for us in any way, please do so. If they ask questions that you cannot answer, please forward their email to the Graduate Director, or check with the Graduate Director yourself and get back to the student as soon as you can.
5. If the student comes for a visit to UWM, the peer mentor should play a role in helping them with travel plans (if needed), and if possible, spending time with the new student while they are here at UWM. Helping with travel plans may include finding a "free" place for them to stay for a night, picking them up from the airport (or finding someone who can do this), taking them out to lunch or dinner (you do not need to pay for this yourself), among other friendly gestures. Graduate students play a very valuable role in new students' perception of our program, so whatever you can do as a peer mentor to put a positive face on our program is most appreciated.
6. Once the student has decided to come to UWM, then the peer mentor can help the student with questions that might arise about available housing, MA courses, registration, campus culture, etc. Much of this can be done via email or phone.
7. Commit to attending the New Graduate Student Welcome Orientation that is always held at the beginning of the Fall semester. If you CANNOT attend this event, then be sure to find another graduate student who can cover for you for this event. It appears very "unwelcoming" for a new student to attend this event and not be able to meet their peer mentor.
8. The peer mentor should be available, as much as possible, to help the new student make the transition to UWM by meeting with them shortly after they arrive on campus, perhaps giving them a tour of campus (if s/he is not from UWM), and giving them information about grad school life in general. If you are a peer

- mentor, and are not on campus during the summer months, you should ask another peer mentor to “take over” for you in these duties so that all new students feel welcomed to the department.
9. Before school starts, make sure you mentee knows how to access their email, and understands the importance of our “comgrad” listserv.
  10. Be sure your mentee knows where the UWM Bookstore and Panther Bookstore are, and show them how to purchase their books. This is especially useful for International Students (who may not be familiar with our processes of acquiring course books).
  11. A tour of the library would be very helpful, especially how to access Reserve readings for their classes. There is currently a “how to” session for the library that is conducted in Proseminar, so you don’t need to provide explicit details. But a general tour would be most helpful.
  12. Showing them where the computer labs are on campus, and how to access the computers facilities would be most helpful.
  13. Helping them get their UWM student ID is useful.
  14. Do whatever else you can to make them comfortable (a) choosing UWM for their MA program, and (b) arriving on campus. Each student will be different. International students often need more help. Students who have attended UWM for their UG degree need less help. Returning students can often use information about navigating the campus and the course registration process. If you keep in touch with your mentee from the beginning, you can ask them often what is most needed, and how you can be most helpful. Then do whatever you can to help them out.
  15. Help them out when needed during their first year here. Contact them periodically (if you do not see them regularly in your classes) to see how they are doing. Spend time with them socially if that seems appropriate.
  16. Peer mentors should encourage their peer mentee to attend the spring awards ceremony with them so that the first-year grad students feel a part of this event.
  17. At the end of the year, the Grad Director will ask peer mentors for their feedback on this document (as to its completeness), and the peer mentor process as a whole. Revisions will be made to this document and the process as appropriate.