

Mentoring Program for First-Year Graduate Students in the Homer L. Dodge Department of Physics and Astronomy

Last updated August 11, 2021

Purpose:

- Improve the graduate student experience, promote well-being, and increase retention. More specifically, the “mentoring network” will contribute to:
 - Supporting, encouraging, and guiding first-year graduate students.
 - Establishing a departmental “safety net” (peer-mentor and faculty-mentor).
 - Integrating first-year graduate students into the department.
 - Addressing the feeling of being overwhelmed among first-year graduate students.
 - Getting to know other department members.
 - Giving first-year graduate students “formal” permission to talk to more senior graduate students and faculty.
 - Connecting incoming students with graduate student and faculty role models.
 - Having an avenue for first-year students through which to discuss challenges and concerns.
 - Creating a supportive departmental community for the first-year graduate students and more senior graduate students.

Implementation and timeline:

- Each incoming first-year student (mentee) will be matched with a faculty-mentor and with a more senior graduate student (peer-mentor).
- Faculty-mentors are expected to meet with each of their mentees about three times during the fall 2022 semester (each faculty-mentor will mentor 1-2 incoming graduate students).
- Incoming graduate students and peer-mentors will be invited to fill out a brief questionnaire that will be used to help match mentees with mentors. The graduate students among the mentoring program coordinators will have access to the responses of the questionnaire and will compile a list of mentee—peer-mentor pairs and mentee—faculty-mentor pairs. The graduate students among the mentoring program coordinators will provide the list to one of the faculty members among the mentoring program coordinators and that person will inform the incoming first-year students, peer-mentors, and faculty-mentors (one email per first-year student).
- Peer-mentors are expected to meet with each of their mentees roughly every other week (each peer-mentor will mentor 1-2 incoming graduate students).

- Faculty- and peer-mentors will meet for a mentoring orientation (for the first year, i.e., 2021, this is scheduled for Tuesday, August 24, 2021 at 3.45pm). Faculty- and peer-mentors will be provided with a Mentoring Handbook.
- Mentees and peer-mentors will attend a PHYS 5000 class early in the semester (for the first year, i.e., 2021, this is scheduled for Tuesday, August 31, 2021). During this meeting, the mentee—peer-mentor relationship will be discussed and the mentee and peer-mentor will fill out a mentoring agreement after this meeting that outlines expectations.
- The mentee will give a copy of the mentee—peer-mentor mentoring agreement to one of the mentoring program coordinators.
- The mentee and faculty-mentor will fill out a mentoring agreement during their first meeting. The mentee will give a copy of the mentee—faculty-mentor mentoring agreement to one of the mentoring program coordinators.
- Regular “check-ins:” The mentee, peer-mentor, and faculty-mentor will receive a link to a web form about once a month. The web form will ask three questions: (i) When did you meet? (ii) What topics did you cover in the meetings? (iii) Are you encountering or observing any problems? The mentoring program coordinators will have access to the responses: the goal is to identify potential problems early on and to look for possible inconsistencies between mentee and mentor responses (this can serve as a check whether mentees and mentors are on the same page).
- There will be about three to four PHYS 5000 meetings that will be attended by mentees and peer-mentors. The programming details still need to be agreed upon and worked out. So far, we have:
 - As part of PHYS 5000 homework, mentees will be asked to fill out an Individual Development Plan (IDP) in early November. The mentees will discuss the IDP with their peer-mentor and faculty-mentor. The IDP form has been developed.
 - TBD.
- The mentees and mentors will be asked to provide feedback on the mentoring program at the end of the fall semester.