Fellow-to-Fellow Mentoring Program

This peer mentoring program is a graduate student initiative created in Fall 2020.

Mission Statement

The Interfaces of Global Change (IGC) Fellow-to-Fellow Mentoring Program seeks to foster a graduate student-led support system, community, and inclusive space for incoming, current, and alumni IGC fellows.

Overview & Primary Benefits

The IGC Fellow-to-Fellow Mentoring Program provides graduate students from across multiple university departments with the opportunity to actively engage in mentorship and become a part of an inclusive community.

- Senior graduate student fellows in the IGC program will have the opportunity to help incoming IGC fellows navigate the IGC program and graduate school in general by sharing their experiences and the wisdom they have gained from their time in the program and graduate school

- Incoming graduate student fellows in the IGC program will have the opportunity to better integrate into the IGC community and obtain advice from senior graduate student fellows who have previously 'been in their shoes'
    - *As mentees rise through the program, they have the opportunity to transition into a mentor role.*

- All fellows will play an active role in building and strengthening the IGC community

- The program will normalize seeking guidance and help in graduate school and in life

Secondary Benefits

- Mentees will have the opportunity to network both within and outside of their cohort, which may help plant seeds for future collaborations in the IGC Capstone project or side projects outside of IGC

- Mentors will have access to resources that will help them in their mentorship role
    - *Resources include, but are not limited to, tips and strategies on how to establish clear boundaries, how to set goals and expectations, how to build trust and comradery, how to navigate challenging topics, how to refer mentees to services available on campus that may be helpful to them, how to plan and execute inclusive activities*

- Senior graduate students who have finished the IGC requirements have the opportunity to remain active within the IGC program and stay connected to the IGC community

- All fellows will have the opportunity to stay connected with IGC alumni that go on to work in a diverse array of positions
  - *Current IGC alumni hold positions in academia, consulting industries, a zoo, as well as state, federal, and international agencies*
  - *Alumni fellows will be invited to serve on panels and to participate in IGC events such as the Welcome Reception, holiday party, and research symposium*

Responsibilities of a Mentor
Mentors will be responsible for:
- creating and maintaining a safe and harassment-free space for communication
- taking the initiative to organize and schedule small group gatherings
- actively engage with mentees in forum discussions and as needed by mentees
- help mentees navigate the IGC program
- be present and willing to have individual meetings with mentees
- provide mentees with advice on topics such as:
  - adjusting to graduate school
  - adjusting to living in a new place (if applicable)
  - establishing and maintaining a work-life balance
  - time management / effective prioritization
  - integrating into the social network of IGC
  - collaborating with other graduate students, faculty, etc.
  - networking with GCC-affiliated faculty, as well as researchers in general

Responsibilities of a Mentee
Mentees will be responsible for:
- creating and maintaining a safe and harassment-free space for communication
- attending and engaging in small group gatherings
- engaging in forum discussions as needed
- reaching out to mentors for individual meetings when needed
- asking mentors for advice on topics such as:
  - adjusting to graduate school
  - adjusting to living in a new place (if applicable)
  - establishing and maintaining a work-life balance
  - time management / effective prioritization
  - integrating into the social network of IGC
  - collaborating with other graduate students, faculty, etc.
  - networking with GCC-affiliated faculty, as well as researchers in general

Creating the Mentorship Groups
IGC graduate students interested in becoming a mentor or mentee will fill out a short form. Two to three mentors and two to three mentees will be assigned per mentoring group. Efforts will be made to pair mentors from different departments on campus and different stages in their graduate career. Mentees will be assigned to mentors that are outside of their department to help expand their social network and foster a sense of community across departments.

Types of Communication

There are several ways that mentors and mentees can communicate: small group gathering, one-on-one meetings, and/or forum discussions:

- Small group gatherings: these small group gatherings include both mentors and all mentees. These gatherings will provide a safe and supportive space for mentors to foster a sense of community with mentees and discuss any questions as a group.

- One-on-one meetings: these one-on-one meetings include a smaller subset of the mentoring group. These meetings can provide a safe and supportive space for mentees to ask mentors questions they do not feel comfortable sharing in a larger group setting.

- Slack discussions: these forum discussions will occur on Slack and will be open to both mentors and all mentees. These forums provide a safe and supportive space for mentees to ask questions or introduce discussion topics.

Meeting Recommendations

Mentors will meet with their mentees a minimum of three (3) times per semester: ideally at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end. However, more frequent meetings are encouraged.

Code of Conduct

All mentors and mentees are responsible for creating and maintaining a safe and harassment-free environment. No discrimination is tolerated on any basis including discrimination based on race, religion (if applicable), sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, age, language, political opinion, or socioeconomic background. For Virginia Tech's Principles of Community, please see https://inclusive.vt.edu/vtpoc0.html.

Useful Links

https://graduateschool.vt.edu/student-life/student-services.html

Contact Information for IGC Mentoring Program Committee

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