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## Honors Peer Mentorship: A Guide to Sustaining Community in the Institution

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**Honors Peer Mentorship: A Guide to Sustaining Community in the Institution**

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June 2022

*For Zoe, Olivia, Simone, Katie, Rosia, and Jay.*

*For my friends Dani and Shirley who made sure this got done, and for Emily Bishop who was the only reason I didn't drop out.*

*For my first cohort of mentors who showed me nothing but patience every time I forgot to answer an email.*

*For HSOC who made Honors worth it.*

*Thank you.*

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### **A message to the mentor lead**

You will not do everything in this guide. *I didn't do everything in the guide.* If it had been up to me, this mentorship would have consisted of the planned community dinners and outings and regular 1-on-1 conversations with mentors, mentees, and faculty and staff. But the reality is that at the time of development, I was a full-time student juggling a pandemic, academia, two other jobs and the grand job of finding who I am outside all of these responsibilities.

Students of color in positions of leadership, in programs like Honors, tend to be over-achievers. We want to demonstrate to the world that we are valuable and more. But I want you to know that by putting yourself in this role you have already demonstrated that. You have shown to your mentors, mentees and to the Honors staff that you are dedicated to the advancement of the students around you. There is nothing more valuable in this world than the love you have for it.

I wholeheartedly believe that this work should be done by a person who has the schedule of a full-time job to dedicate to it, not by a full-time student who is only allowed to clock in 19 hours a week. Do not let this work consume you. This mentorship will not solve the inequities that exist in the college. That is not on you. My goal was to create building blocks to something that could be improved. To prove that this is something we needed. Your role now is to look at what you and your peers need and create the experiences that provide that.

### **An Introduction and Some History**

I want to warn whoever is reading this that you will not find objectivity in this guidebook. As author Prisca Dorcas Mojica Rodríguez writes in her book *For Brown Girls with Sharp Edges and Tender Hearts: A Love Letter to Women of Color*, “So, since all perspectives are subjective, I will start by letting my readers know how this text will be informed by me and my own foundations” (2021). This mentorship guidebook would not exist without the pain I went through trying to navigate the Honors College as a first-generation, immigrant, lesbian, disabled, student of color. It would not exist without the microaggressions and outright moments of racism and xenophobia that my classmates and I experienced from professors and peers alike. And, it definitely would not exist without the stories that students from the Honors Students of Color coalition brought to meetings about their own uphill battles in the program.

This guide is based on a method that Latinx critical race theorists call “counter-storytelling.” Education researchers Daniel G. Solorzano and Tara J. Yosso define counter-storytelling as “a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told” (2002). For several years, students of color have been told by the Honors College that some of their experiences are only unique to them. “Not every student is in HSOC” or “You can't be sure that that is how every student of color feels,” were comments I heard often. I take the concept of mentorship, which is -often -used to prepare students of color for the harms of the capitalist working place, and turn it on its head to expose, analyze, as well as challenge deeply-entrenched

narratives and characterizations of the experiences students of color face within the Honors College, through counter-stories.

My goal with this guidebook is not to provide a guide on how this mentorship program should be done. (I personally don't think I have any say on how you should run this program.)\* My goal with this is to create a living, breathing text that reflects the history of students of color in the program and the effort that has been put in by students to meet these needs in an institution that was not built to serve or support us. This guidebook is my reflection on the last four years of existence as a student of color in the Honors community while providing you, the mentor lead; the professor; the student—the reader, with the tools I found useful in creating this resource.

During the past decade, higher education institutions throughout the United States have placed emphasis on increasing the number of underrepresented and marginalized students they bring onto their campuses. In 2020, Western Washington University boasted a historical high in overall admitted students of color (Western Today, 2020).

As a student of color in the Honors College who has dedicated a substantial amount of her time in the program to advocate for students of color, the director, Dr. Scott Linneman, and I have had several conversations surrounding the methods that the Honors College can use to increase student of color and first-generation student application rates. Some of these strategies have included presenting at Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) classes, tabling in schools with high percentages of first-generation/students of color, as well as spotlighting existing students of color on Honors social media and the website. According to a presentation Dr. Linneman gave to Senate Faculty on April 4, 2022, “20% of applicants in 2021 were students of color; 24% of the admitted students were students of color; 28% of the 2021-2022 Honors cohort were students of color.” Additionally, during the same presentation, Dr. Linneman noted that at the time of presenting, 22% of applicants and 24% of admits to the college for 2022 were students of color (WWU Faculty Senate, 2022, 48:56).

It's obvious that all of these strategies Honors has implemented are useful efforts to connect with students who otherwise would not have the resources to connect with programs such as the Honors College, but these efforts do not solve the issues *existing* students of color in the Honors College face.

### ***Why Mentorship?***

I arrived in the United States in 2004 with parents who were not equipped to help me navigate the social and educational systems I found myself in. I quickly learned that if I wanted to succeed against students who already knew how to navigate these systems, I needed to learn how to do

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\*More on this later

things on my own all the while wishing that I had someone who could guide me through state tests, pre-calculus, and later college.

As the oldest sister of three wonderfully intelligent children, I have seen how having someone who understands the educational system and what needs to be done, including the hoops that need to be jumped, has made their life easier. I have also heard newer students of color in HSOC talk about how easier it was to navigate the Honors College with the knowledge provided by existing students of color.

Studies show that first-generation students of color are less likely to be mentored than their white peers in the same programs and fields (Johnson, 2015; Thomas et al., 2007). Mentors can serve not just as role models for incoming students, but they can provide connections to resources outside of the program like faculty and student services offered by the school which can then provide cultural and social capital, especially in areas where women and other marginalized communities are underrepresented (Whittaker & Montgomery, 2014). The 2018 Gallup Alumni Survey found that "college graduates are almost two times more likely to be engaged at work if they had a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams" (Gallup, 2018).

During an HSOC meeting held on Zoom during the pandemic, I brought up the idea of mentorship to HSOC. The first HSOC cohort knew that if we wanted to continue to build community through the pandemic, we would need to find new ways to connect with incoming students. I emailed Kiersten Horton, Honors Student Life Coordinator, who was on board with talking about the idea and presenting it to Dr. Linneman. When I was given the go-ahead by the Honors staff, I began researching what being a mentor even *meant*.

I've had mentors before, in unofficial and official capacities, but I had never been in charge of shaping mentors. Western Washington University offers mentorships throughout its many fields, but one mentorship program I had the opportunity to go through during my first year was the one provided by Student Outreach Services (SOS). When I spoke to Bryce Sasaki, the SOS Peer Mentor Program Coordinator, I felt like I was completely out of my depth. SOS was working off of an award-winning, expensive, certified peer mentorship program. From experience, I knew this was a great tool for first-years, but it didn't feel like it was what students coming into the Honors College needed. SOS was providing mentorship to several dozen students across campus. I wanted something more personal with a lot less paperwork.

As I continued to research, I found that the most powerful mentoring relationships encompass four characteristics: a focus on achievement and development, a reciprocal and personal relationship, a relationship where the mentor is an individual with more experience and a relationship where a mentor has similar lived experiences as the mentee (Jacobi, 1991). The following is my version of these four characteristics. I believe that in order to progress from the pain that has affected us, we must provide pathways for those that follow behind to not have to feel that pain. I needed someone to guide me, so I am providing someone to guide others.

## Overview of the Guide

I suggest you don't use this guidebook as law.\* The mentorship program as I present it now was a reaction to the times we were living in. When I first began outlining the mentorship at the beginning of 2021, I divided the program in terms of the school quarter calendar and from there, chose the most pressing issues that I felt were a priority in my time as a first-year. The students I was building this program for did not have the ability to create the connections necessary to build community the way we did the first year that HSOC was created. The pieces of training I include here were also reactions to the pandemic and the anger mentors and mentees were feeling as they navigated the politics of the Honors College which later resulted in the [HSOC Demands](#). Like I told my mentors during our first meeting—this year was about testing what worked, they were my guinea pigs. But more importantly, this iteration of the mentorship was about survival and about proving that this was worth the money the Honors College was spending on it. As the mentor lead now, you have the responsibility to connect with the community you aim to serve with this program. Ask yourself: what did I need in my first year that I can provide now?

### ***Part 1: Hiring***

*A WWU Honors Peer Mentor provides first-year Honors students with the resources and support necessary to have a successful first year in the Honors College at Western Washington University. A primary goal of the Honors Peer Mentor Team is to increase support for incoming Honors students from underrepresented backgrounds and facilitate connections with cross-campus partners, including the Ethnic Student Center, Student Advocacy and Identity Resource Center, LGBTQ+, Disability Outreach Center, mental health resources, Academic Advising, Career Services, etc. - From the 2022-2023 Position Listing*

In all honesty, when Kiersten Horton first brought up the question about hiring mentors, I froze. I didn't feel prepared to create this program and had no idea what the contents were going to look like. But I knew that I wanted two things in a mentor: 1) a student of color and/or first-generation student who had been through the first year sequence and 2) someone who I could see was ultimately dedicated to the student body.

Traditional mentorship programs and research will talk about the benefits of mentorship to connect students with job opportunities and provide them with experiences their white peers will have easier access to (Johnson, 2015; Thomas et al., 2007; Jacobi, 1991). Traditional mentorship is about student retention in institutions that will ultimately cause harm and advance a corporate machine that will exploit the most decorated of its workforce.

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\*This is later.



Despite its existence in the institution, this mentorship is meant to defy that by centering its practices (trainings, mentor-mentee meetings, community events) on love.

Author and social activist bell hooks helped to articulate the idea of love as a verb — a concept that shifts attention away from love as an abstract emotion that is between one individual to another and onto the concrete manifestation of intentional actions (such as care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect, and trust). bell hooks provided an idea of love that was an act of transformative labor and offered important pathways for communities surviving and challenging systems of oppression (hooks, 2018).

I knew that in order to create a mentorship team that would be impactful in the times we were living in and in the systems we were occupying, love needed to be present in everything we did. Anyone could be a mentor to pad their resume, I didn't want that. I needed mentors who loved their community.

At this point, you are newly hired. You probably worked as a mentor in the Honors Mentorship Program or have had a similar position. Maybe you even participated in the mentorship program your first year! You know what you provided to students during your time as a mentor and you know what you needed during your first year in the Honors College. In the applications you receive, you are going to get a group of students who want to participate in the program for different reasons. As you read through carefully written resumes think about:

- What are the qualities you would like to replicate in your mentors from mentors you have had before?
- What are qualities you *don't* want to replicate?
- Do the applicants demonstrate that they created a genuine community with students of color and first-generation students in the Honors College? What about outside of Honors?
- Do they show a passion for this community or is it about how great this community will look on their resume?
- What knowledge do they demonstrate in terms of dismantling the systems that have created the conditions that make this program necessary in the first place?

Tip: The Education and Social Justice Program office and the Center for Education Equity and Diversity in Miller Hall are both great resources to talk to about these topics and their effects on higher ed.

I believe that final question is incredibly important and I hope that it's something that continues to lead you as you use this building block for your mentorship experience. This program is operating within the boundaries of a colonial, white supremacist system. I am not saying to not hire students who are not aware of this truth—this can be an opportunity to learn—but be aware of your own abilities to teach this within your trainings. Are you prepared to guide your mentors to understand the effects of coloniality and white supremacy on their lives and the lives of their mentees if they haven't? Are you available to offer support and provide resources?

These are questions you should continue to think about as you create the interview questions. Remember: hiring processes are built for those who have the privilege of connection and only as equitable as we make them. Not everyone is prepared with a polished resume and a beautifully written cover letter. If it were up to me, I would much rather hire a student who has been involved with the Honors student of color community than one who isn't but has experience mentoring students outside of it.

### ***Part 2: Preparations and Onboarding***

In our weekly meetings leading up to the end of the school year, I told Kiersten that I would be working several hours a week creating this program. Unbeknownst to Kiersten, I was drowning in my own ideas.

Tip: Ask for help.

All the research described mentorships that connected students with faculty and provided tailored, hands-on experience for the mentees across different campus resources. The thing was, I had technically only been on campus for a year and a half. Outside of SOS and the Ethnic Student Center (ESC), I wasn't sure what resources Western even offered for students. And so began a deep inquiry into student support programs across campus.

I am writing this portion with the assumption that you are currently on campus, enjoying the Bellingham spring weather. This is a perfect time to use your resource (the previous mentor lead) and have them connect you with the staff of various campus resources while you wait for mentor applications to roll in or for the mentors you have chosen to be completely hired.

While it may not feel like it, Western has over 50 key services that exist to support student identity and accommodations, safety, academics, well-being, and extracurriculars. Sit down with your mentor lead and discuss your priorities. Which offices do you feel will provide the best support or experiences for the students you are serving?

Key offices you should always keep in your back pocket:

- [Counseling Center](#)
- [Career Services Center](#)
- [Disability Access Center](#)
- [Financial Aid](#)
- [Civil Rights and Title IX Compliance](#)
- [Student Outreach Services](#)

*A few more recommendations from your current SAIRC student employee and ESC club leader:*

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Ethnic Student Center</i></p> <p>The ESC is key for community and survival at any predominantly white institution. Just the ability to be around people who look familiar with similar experiences is an incredible feeling after a long day of being on campus. Additionally, you will have a direct connection with more than 20 ethnic student clubs.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Contact</p> <p>Amy Westmoreland, director of Multicultural Student Services <a href="mailto:westmoa2@wwu.edu">westmoa2@wwu.edu</a></p> <p>You can also contact the ESC student staff for collaborations, information, and to just chat.</p> <p>Their information can be found on the ESC website: <a href="http://as.wwu.edu/esc/">as.wwu.edu/esc/</a></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Student Advocacy &amp; Identity Resource Center</i></p> <p>The SAIRC is made up of four student-run offices that function as smaller versions of existing WWU offices. For example, the Disability Outreach Center is a student-run version of the Disability Access Center. Same with the Queer Resource Center and the Gender Liberation and Access Center. The only center in the SAIRC that functions as a single office is the Blue Resource Center which works with Blue Group, an ESC club to provide resources, events and information to undocumented, mixed-status and non-citizen students.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Contact</p> <p>Karen Deysher, SAIRC coordinator <a href="mailto:deyshek@wwu.edu">deyshek@wwu.edu</a></p> <p>To connect with specific offices, I suggest visiting them on the 7th floor of the Viking Union or keeping up with the social media</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Western Outdoor Center</i></p> <p>The AS Outdoor Center provides a spectrum of programs, resources and services to enable the students, faculty, staff and</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Contact</p> <p>Stephen Magnuson, Manager Viking Outdoor Recreation,</p>

Alumni Association members to safely participate in a variety of activities, develop and refine skills, practice environmental responsibility, and interact with each other and members of the local community. This is an incredible opportunity to collaborate among your mentors and mentees while exploring nature.

[stephen.magnuson@wwu.edu](mailto:stephen.magnuson@wwu.edu)

Below, you will find a section of the work calendar I built as I developed the program. The initial vision for the Honors Peer Mentorship summer session was a tightly structured summer session led by focus questions and heavy goal setting. I wanted to equip the mentors with community tools and necessary knowledge so that they didn't have to scramble on Google for information, when their mentees needed it. During your onboarding with the existing mentor lead, you will build a working calendar like this. Much like everything we do in this program, it is not set in stone. It is your outline and your time to prioritize the issues that will affect your mentoring team and mentees.

- August
  - Mentors meeting 1
    - Informational meetings where we connect
      - Goal setting
      - Focus questions: “What are you expecting from this mentorship, as a mentor?” “What support do you wish you had as a first-year”
      - Q&A
  - Mentors meeting 2
    - Informational meetings - on-campus resources
      - Focus questions: “What offices are you familiar with?” “What offices have been a crucial part of your experience as a student?”
      - SAIRC Offices
      - Academic resources/SOS
      - ESC and BSO

- Student employment center
- Mentors meeting 3
  - Informational meetings - on and off-campus community
    - Focus questions: “Who/what has made it easier for you to live in/around Bellingham?”
    - ESC clubs
    - School clubs
    - Identity reaffirming places around Bellingham

### ***Part 3: The Summer Session***

Okay, it's summer, and the program is all yours. You have worked with the past mentor lead to create the perfect mentorship program for the year and foster connections for useful resources around campus. I want to reiterate that your vision for the program will change as you meet your mentors, mentees, and as the needs in the Honors community evolve. You will be surprised how easily one event or comment can change the entire trajectory of the program. That's okay, advocacy is fluid. Check in with your mentors and let their knowledge of their mentees guide your decisions.

In order to do that, you have to get to know your mentors. Maybe you already do, but the summer session is a great time to connect with each other in a collaborative capacity. During the summer session, you will set community agreements and expectations for your team, make sure everyone knows how to get paid, share resources, and build your team trainings on their collective and individual experiences.

Additionally, you will have set meetings with the professional staff supporting you. In my case, that was Kiersten Horton. I cannot emphasize enough how valuable these meetings are. It took me a long time to realize that I did not have to come up with solutions and plans for these meetings myself. Kiersten is a great person to brainstorm with. She is here to support you and it is important that you let her know when you need that support. (I was not the best at that.)

**Tip:** A list of websites and apps that will make your life so much easier:

- *Canva.com* for fashionable presentations
- *Jamboard.google.com* to have groups participate anonymously, whiteboard style
- *Microsoft Teams* to store files, create groupchats and share updates. It's like an uglier Discord.
- *Outlook* This is a non-negotiable. Have mentors set up their calendars with their availability on Outlook. It will make scheduling easier.

## Training 1: Onboarding

(See: Presentation, Training 1)

### PURPOSE

A University Honors Peer Mentor provides first-year Honors students with the resources and support necessary to have a successful first year in the Honors Program at Western Washington University. A primary goal of the Honors Peer Mentor Team is to increase support for incoming Honors students from underrepresented backgrounds and facilitate connections with cross-campus partners, including the Ethnic Student Center, Student Advocacy and Identity Resource Center, LGBTQ+, Disability Outreach Center, mental health resources and academic advising.

As culturally conscious student leaders, Honors Peer Mentors should be prepared to share personal experiences to assist and help ease the transition from high school and/or previous colleges to Western.

The first meeting I had with the mentors after their hiring was in June. This was the main onboarding meeting. Kiersten and I hosted a Zoom meeting and shared the logistical information of the program with the mentors. We explained the purpose of the Honors Peer Mentorship as well as expectations—not just what I expected from them, but what they could expect from me as the mentor lead.

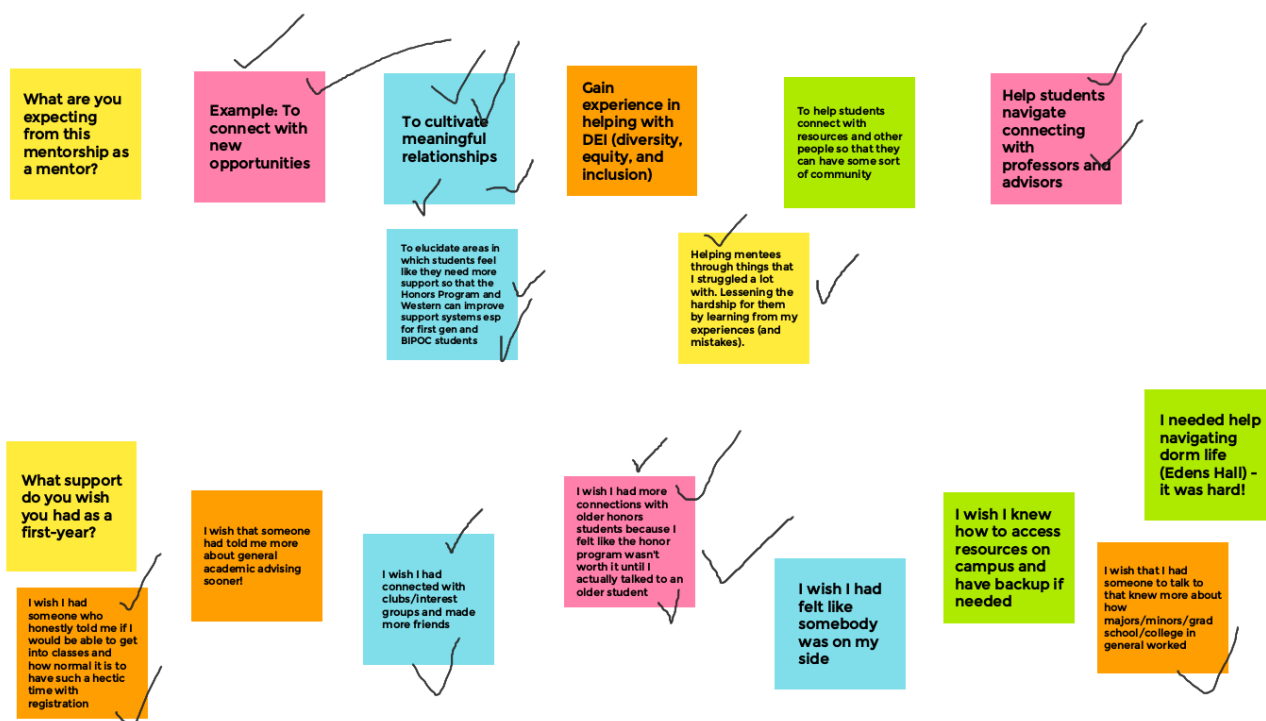
### Advisement / Expectations

<p>What we expect from mentors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fulfill job requirements &amp; expectations           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Meet with mentees to develop an interpersonal relationship that encourages academic and personal growth</li> <li>○ Connect, communicate, and collaborate with the Honors Program staff, including Honors Mentor Peer Lead</li> <li>○ Encourage involvement in service and activities that support student interest</li> <li>○ Maintain student confidentiality</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Show up, be present, be mindful, and be engaged</li> <li>● Communicate, communicate, and communicate!</li> <li>● Ask for help, support, guidance, and advisement.</li> </ul>	<p>What mentors can expect from us:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Flexibility!</u></li> <li>● Advocating for you as individual and an employee</li> <li>● Hands-on support</li> <li>● If there is work I can take off your plates, I will do it.</li> <li>● Care, commitment, trust, responsibility, respect, and knowledge</li> </ul>
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We also talked about the schedule for the summer and for the year and about timesheets. Most importantly, we did group work around two focus questions:

1. What are you expecting from this mentorship as a mentor?
2. What support do you wish you had as a first-year

Here is what the mentors replied anonymously on the Jamboard I provided:



This conversation was the moment when it finally hit me: this *was* something that students in the program needed. It wasn't just a passion project, but something that was going to have a real, tangible impact on everyone involved. And this was just the onboarding meeting!

### *Training 2: Peer Mentorships and Community Resources*

A month later, we had our second team meeting. Since the summer session was built on establishing the knowledge necessary to navigate campus, we focused on breaking down the idea of mentorship even more and learning about resources on campus.

(See: *Presentation, Training 2*)

During the second training, the mentors and I

- Created community guidelines (See: *Community Agreements*)

- Talked about program logistics: how would the year be scheduled and how would matching work?
- Talked about the role of the peer mentor: how would we build empathetic, validating, encouraging relationships with mentees that emphasized active listening between both parties?
- Talked about the anatomy of a college resource: what Western offices touched on handling student issues of 1) academics 2) health and 3) identity.

We also did two activities where I had the mentors respond to my questions on a Jamboard and then we discussed:

1. Think about a mentor or person who you see as a mentor: What were some qualities that they demonstrated? What are things you would like to replicate? (*See: Jamboard, Activity 2.1*)
2. Match the category with at least one club or WWU office (*See: Jamboard, Activity 2.2*)

To finalize what felt like our first official training, I left them with some homework. Which in all honesty, I do not recommend doing. I am staunchly against paperwork and this just turned into more paperwork. We did not have standards to meet, so in reality, there was no point for it other than it just felt like the thing to do (*See: Homework 1*). Still, it was nice to know that the information I was providing was being received by the mentors, especially as Zoom-lagged as we all were.

### *Training 3: Building Community*

As I continued doing research during the summer to prepare the mentors for their mentees, I kept going back to my experience with previous mentors. In all official capacities, I was instructed to set goals, both short-term and long-term, which my mentor and I would go over as we met. If I accomplished my goals, then great! I was on track in terms of their program. If I didn't, we explored the setbacks I was facing and found the resources necessary to overcome whatever was in my way. We would meet every week or every other week even if I didn't have anything particularly innovative to talk about and so instead of a space for opportunity, several of my mentoring experiences became a chore. I found that peer mentors who had been hired by accredited mentorship programs were so eager to be useful to me as their mentee, that they were no longer being helpful.

### **On Community Agreements**

*What is a community agreement?*

A shared agreement about how we want to work together over the course of our time together.

*Why create community agreements?*

Community agreements are established to facilitate discussion. They ensure that the group environment is respectful and that everyone knows what to expect from each other during discussions. They also create a horizontal-style leadership format across the meeting.



With this program, I knew I wanted to pull away from the routine that ended with reluctant students and relationships that ended abruptly. I wanted to push against the boundaries of what it meant to be a mentor in an elite program, but I continuously found myself returning to the procedures I was familiar with. With the third and final summer training, I wanted to introduce the idea of creating the relationship between the mentor and the mentee. We were a few weeks from the beginning of the school year, but instead of framing it as a power imbalance where one party has more experience than the other, I wanted to frame it as building community across Honors cohorts.

*(See: Presentation, Training 3)*

During the training the mentors and I talked about:

- Mentoring from within by reflecting on what help they needed during their first year?  
*(See: Jamboard, Activity 3.1)*
- The guiding goals of the mentorship program:
  - Productive: Goals are established, evaluated and discussed
  - Empathetic: We've been there: we listen and hold experiences with care
  - Healthy: We set boundaries and ensure that everyone is comfortable in every situation
- The Stages of Mentorship
  - Stage 1: Developing Rapport and Building Trust
    - The “getting to know you” phase is the most critical stage of the relationship. Things to expect and work on during Stage 1 include:
      - Predictability and consistency
      - Establish confidentiality
      - Goal setting
  - Stage 2: The Middle — Reaching the Goals
    - Once trust has been established, the relationship moves into Stage 2. During this stage, the mentor and mentee can begin to start working toward the goals they set during the first stage of the relationship.
    - SMART. Goals
  - Stage 3: Closure

- Reflecting, thanking and moving forward

### ***Reflections and Recommendations***

Knowing what I know now, I would compare the mentorship program to a water landing by an airplane. Sure the plane isn't crashing anymore, but people are still stranded in the water. That is why I want to emphasize so much that this program will not be the fix to the Honors College's systemic issues. We are the airline-provided life jackets. We keep people's heads above water. There is no right way to plan the mentorship experience. Like I said before, your time as the mentor lead will be influenced by the experiences you and your mentors bring as well as the needs your mentees have. When I was planning this, I was living 230 miles away from Bellingham with no way to return while the mentors slowly returned to campus.

At this point, this was my ideal mentorship program. I was working based on my experiences with accredited programs and things that seemed to work in the situation we were in. I felt secure in the program I was building every time we ended our meetings, but as the year progressed, I found that there were things I should have done to prepare myself, the mentors and the mentees for certain situations.

1. Mentors *need* academic advising training.

When I was creating the program, so much of my focus was centered on being culturally and emotionally conscientious that I forgot that this role includes academia. We ended up doing a training on advising later in the year, but by that time we had several mentees who decided that they no longer needed the assistance. I suggest that you include advising training during the summer session.

The Advising Center at Western has an [Advising Tools and Resources](#) page. You can build a training that walks the mentors through the resources that are available. You can also connect with the Advising Center directly at [advising@wwu.edu](mailto:advising@wwu.edu) before the school year ends to ask about scheduling a training for your mentors.

2. Discussing boundaries, mandatory reporting and Civil Rights and Title IX Compliance (CRT) is necessary.

This is a resource that I think every student of color or other marginalized students should have available. Regardless of all the safety nets students of color create for themselves, we inhabit spaces that are not safe for us. In 2019, *Inside Higher Ed* reported that “about 84 percent of the participants indicated they knew of some sort of behavior violating an antidiscrimination policy and 82 percent had encountered a hate crime” (Bauer, 2019). The Honors College is housed in a predominately white institution with students, staff and professors who disregard the experiences of marginalized students for the sake of academia. Discrimination and microaggressions in the program are not rare. The

Association of American Universities also found that “13% of all students experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence, or incapacitation (among all graduate and undergraduate students)” (Cantor et al., 2020).

Events like this will severely impact the victim and the victim’s support system. In this case, the support system includes the mentor and yourself. Peer mentorships make these situations tricky to handle because we want to be as supportive as possible but we are just students and it often ties our hands in terms of solutions. A mentee may tell a mentor but ask that the mentor keep quiet about their situation. How does your mentor handle that?

I suggest talking with the CRT office to schedule some kind of training on what mandatory reporting is, how does it apply to peer mentorships and what resources you need to have on deck in case anything happens. Additionally, I suggest creating a plan with your Honors Staff Support for dealing with situations like this. Will they be the first person you contact? How involved do you want to be in the process?

The CRT office has [resources on their website](#) about responding to this kind of situation but I still suggest contacting them directly: [crtc@wwu.edu](mailto:crtc@wwu.edu)

#### **Suggestions for Response from**

If an individual shares information about sex/gender discrimination, harassment, sexual assault or violence, the reporting party should:

- Respond with care and concern. Thank the individual for trusting you with this information.
- Disclose your obligation to report the information to the Title IX Coordinator.
- Offer information about the confidential resources that are available, including counseling and other support services.
- Assess the safety of the individual. Understand that the safety of the affected individual is essential in providing a supportive response.
- Inform the affected individual of their right to file a Title IX-based complaint.
- Inform the affected individual of their right to report a possible criminal act to school/campus or local law enforcement.
- Do not investigate or make judgments. Avoid victim blaming.

3. Have things planned out a quarter in advance.

Because of onboarding, this should not be the biggest problem, but if you are thinking of creating new trainings and opportunities for your mentors it is easier to work around your real-life and school if things are planned ahead. It also gives you a better timeline to create any changes if necessary.

#### 4. Create bonding opportunities.

Did you know that the Outdoor Center has a team-building course at Lakewood that you can request to use? They also have several other team-building and outdoorsy-style activities that I learned about during the last quarter of the year. A big portion of the feedback from mentees and mentors asked for more opportunities to connect within the mentoring program. These kinds of activities are perfect because you can connect with other offices and you're able to just enjoy the program for what it is: a community-building tool.

### ***Part 3.5: The Mentees***

While reading this you will find that a lot of things that should have been a priority in my head to create a mentorship program were not. One of those, oddly enough, was getting mentees. Sure it was something I was thinking about and even talking to Kiersten about, but it didn't become something that I worried about until the quarter officially began. This, of course, was a terrible idea since building a mentorship program is a little hard when you don't have mentees.

As I sit here and look back at my journey in creating this program, I genuinely cannot come up with a good excuse for why this got pushed to the backburner. I am a public relations major. I have worked professionally in public relations and marketing for years. Marketing is like my whole thing. And with this quick simple guide, it will be yours too!

The marketing for the mentorship program can be broken down into three categories: 1) The Proposal; 2) The Call to Action; 3) Matching. Below I will provide a simple marketing timeline that you can work on with your Honors Staff Support.

#### 1) Spring Quarter: The Proposal

- During the spring quarter, the mentor lead before you will attend several prospective student and admitted student events to pitch the mentorship program.
- After College Decision Day (May 1st) you or the previous mentor lead will work with Honors Communications to send an email to all incoming first-years about the mentorship program and any details you may have at the time: benefits, meet the mentors, etc.

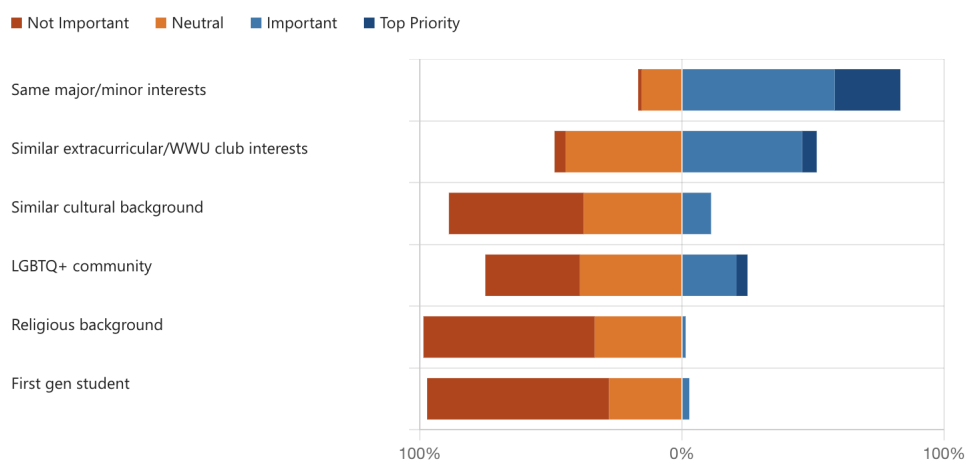
#### 2) June - End of August: The Call to Action

- During Summer Session you will review the registration and matching form for the mentees and mentors. There are two forms: one which your mentors will fill out and one which your mentees will fill out.

Based on an unofficial survey I conducted while working on the mentorship plans, this was what students in 2021 were looking for in the program:

5. What is the most important thing you want considered when being paired with a mentor?

[More Details](#)



This was a sample of 72 students with an 81% first-year majority. There were no other identifiers asked during the survey other than year, email and if they would be remote so this is not the most accurate data. That being said, reflecting back, I would suggest treating the matching and registration forms like personality quizzes. Yes, we want to address the needs of the students, but we also want to ensure they get along with the person they're assigned with.

- Between July and August, you will collaborate with HSOC to host several online meet and greets and Q+A sessions for students to join virtually. This is a great way to connect with incoming students and create mentorship practice opportunities for your mentors.
- The end of August is the perfect time to send out the registration link for mentees. Your mentors should have already filled out their form (*See: Forms, Mentor Matching Form*) so you will have an idea of the strengths your team has. You will also have met several prospective mentees through collaborations with HSOC. Have the Honors communications team send emails about the registration link

being open. Create social media posts on Canva with the link (tinyurl.com and bitly.com are good resources for this) to the form and a QR code for accessibility.

### 3) September to Prologue: Matching

- Set a clear deadline for registration. Preferably by the beginning of September so that when Prologue rolls around, you are able to create mentor-mentee programming.
- Sit with your Honors Staff Support and match your mentees and mentors. Because of the ranking system, you will find that some mentors have more requests than others. While it's important that everyone gets their first choice, trust your gut. You know your mentors, their strengths and what they can provide.

### *Reflections and Recommendations*

Like I said, I left this portion all the way to the end of my to-do list. We didn't have matched mentees until October which really pushed all of my plans back significantly. Since you will have a head start, the first couple of weeks of the quarter are a great time to create community within the program.

- Connect with the Prologue team about creating time in the agenda where mentors and mentees are able to do something together.
- Have a meet and greet social during the first few weeks of the quarter where mentees and mentors can just talk.
- Bring food.

You may also see that mentees drop the program throughout the year before the end of the year. This can be upsetting to your mentors and create insecurities around their position. Unless there is a problem that caused the relationship to fracture, students leaving the program beforehand is a *good* thing. It means that your mentors are doing their job of equipping students for success and they feel comfortable exiting the program.

If students are leaving the program because they are dropping Honors, again remind your mentor and yourself that that is not your fault. Repeat after me: *this program will not solve the systemic issues in Honors*. Sit down with both your mentor and their mentee and talk the decision out. Ask if they would like to continue being part of the mentorship or if they want to be guided to other resources in their major(s)/minor(s).

You may want to keep the registration open on a rolling basis. This way mentees can still be added to your mentors' lists as long as they have availability. If no one is available but you have students needing mentors, I suggest setting up and announcing mentor office hours. Sometimes students just want a peer to listen to them or give them quick tips. This is useful for that.

Additionally, you may want to keep in mind the issues with interracial mentorship. Because the mentorship program is built for students of color and/OR first-gen students where the mentors are primarily students of color, there can be issues when it comes to having mentors of color relate to white mentees. Despite economic similarities, the racial power imbalance is still present and may create difficulties within the relationship. In my research, I have found that the majority of the literature looks at the relationships between white mentors and mentees of color (McCoy et al., 2015; Leitner et al., 2018), but never in the reverse. I don't have a solution to this, but I would suggest checking in with your mentors of color and their comfort level with mentoring white students as well as doing continuous check-ins during 1-on-1s to ensure that both parties have the resources necessary to succeed. I do not mean to say that there should not be white mentees, but that the safety of all students involved should be the priority within the mentorship.

## Part 4: Fall Quarter

Welcome to fall quarter and congratulations on returning for another year at WWU! Fall quarter is easy in terms of the mentorship. It's probably your most planned quarter and you are going to be on your A-game. You have probably returned to campus with a promise that you will do all of your readings ahead of time and go to office hours. This is your "it girl" moment.

Or at least it was for me. But I want to be completely transparent with you as you move through the rest of this: there is going to be less direction as we move toward the end of the mentorship. Instead of guides, it is going to become reflections of what could have been and what I hope it will become as students shape it to fit their needs. It is only a living document because you, your mentors and mentees, and those who come after you are breathing life into it.

*The original working calendar detailing everything planned for fall quarter.*

- September
  - Recruiting mentees/pairing mentees and mentors (first 2 weeks)
    - If on-campus: have mentors host campus tours, host a meet and greet in Honors Center, have mentors be a part of Honors Launch Event
  - Mentor Meeting
    - Preparing for mentees
      - Goal setting part 2: What kind of relationship do you want to foster with your mentees
      - Exercise: What are the top 3 things first-years need to know about: Honors, resources, community
      - Going over mentorship agreements and school schedules
  - First mentor-mentee meeting
    - Goal setting
      - Agreements
- October: Building Community
  - Mentor Meeting
    - Full team check-in
    - Focus questions: What is Honors



- Mentor-mentee meeting
  - Soft check-in: clubs and involvement (on and off-campus)
  - Leading up to Midterms
- Mentor meeting
  - 1-on-1 check-ins with mentor lead
- November: Resources
  - Mentor meeting
    - Full team check-in
    - Focus question: “What does community look like?”
  - Mentor-mentee meeting
    - Soft check-in: on-campus resources
    - Leading up to finals
- December
  - Full team meeting: end of quarter celebration

## *Prologue*

### 2021 Prologue Schedule

This year, we will be taking an excursion to Larrabee State Park with Honors faculty and staff.

**9:00 am:** Meet at the Viking Union

**9:30 am:** Leave WWU by bus for Larrabee State Park

**10:00 am:** Break-out activity with Honors faculty (tide pools, beach geology, etc.) Breakout options will range in physical activity.

**11:30 am:** Catered lunch from WWU

**1:00 pm:** First-year faculty groups

**2:00 pm:** Cohort group activity

**2:30 pm:** Depart Larrabee State Park by bus for WWU

Fall quarter begins with [Honors Prologue](#). In the weeks leading up to this event you and an Honors staff hopefully sat with your mentors to talk about Honors Prologue based on the agenda that Honors has created. Everything about Prologue is meant to introduce the new cohort to first-year professors, the Honors staff, and more importantly to each other. For the purposes of the mentorship, Prologue is the best time to get to know your mentors and market the program to your primary audience: first-years.

In the simplest terms, mentors attend the event to act as chaperones. Your mentors will be assigned to a bus and they will take attendance

and make sure none of the students have gone missing between trips. I don't suggest doing a lot of big programming around this time because the day is already packed as it is. First years will climb onto the bus half awake and leave for their dorms tired, hungry and overloaded with information.

Like a person on Instagram posting half-hidden pictures of their significant other, this is your soft launch. You are giving students a glimpse of the kind of support the mentorship can offer without revealing the whole package.

Some simple tips to create a fun Prologue for everyone:

1. **Connect with clubs before Prologue to ask for their meeting times so you can provide the best information for students.** Honors has several clubs that you or your mentors can plug (like the mentorship registrations...)
2. **Introduce yourself!** Name, pronouns, position, major, etc. Students want to find someone to relate to. By providing some of this information, they will have a person to go to for questions.
3. **Do announcements before you do ice breakers.** You have about 50 students trapped on a bus with you, this is the best time to get them to really listen to you. If you do an ice breaker first you will interrupt any conversations that they've started.
4. **Do announcements on the bus ride there and on the bus ride back.** Make little flyers if possible, even. They will forget what you told them, believe me.
5. **Don't overthink ice breakers.** Most students will be sitting next to their roommates and won't want to move away from the only familiar person they have on the bus. If you are thinking about doing ice breakers, have each seat turn around and create a group of four. Do a simple question and introduction: *Name, pronouns, and if the zombie apocalypse is coming, who are 3 people you want on your team?*
6. **Have fun!** Use this time to get to know your mentors even more. Listen to the presentations, participate as much as possible, and demonstrate to the first years that the space is built for them to have fun.

#### ***Training 4: Contextualizing Our Self in Honors***

Our first training began in October. By that time we were already behind schedule but I was rolling with the punches. Unlike the rest of the mentors, I was still living back home, four hours to the southeast of Bellingham, and conducting all of our meetings and check-ins over Zoom and email. It was not an ideal situation.

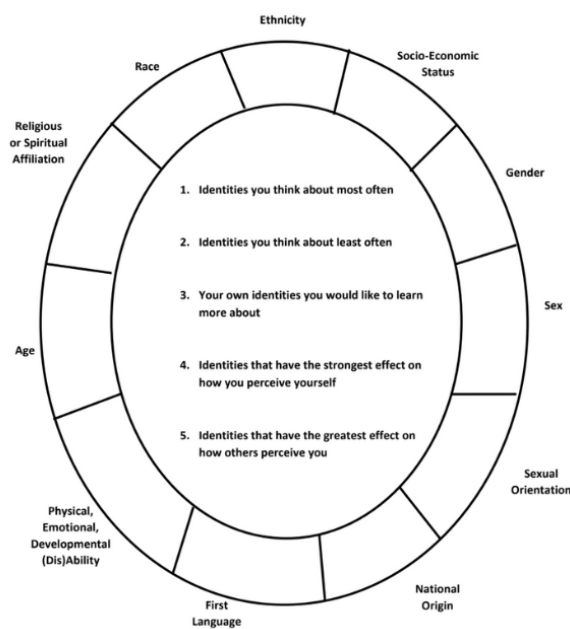
But we made the best of it and started with the light topic of examining who we are as people, students and mentors. For the first training of the school year, the goal was to examine our positions as mentors for underserved students in a program that at its core, is elitist.

I wholeheartedly believe that bringing students into the Honors College without providing students with the tools and resources they need to succeed doesn't just set them up for failure, but it sets students of color up to exist in a mentally and emotionally violent environment. While the ideal solution would be to dissuade students of color from applying to Honors, I know that realistically, that is impossible. The Honors College as it exists at the moment of me writing this relies solely on HSOC and this mentorship program as support for students of color. These programs did not exist one or three years ago, meaning that some of my mentors had HSOC but didn't get someone to lead them through the first year of Honors. In order to understand your and your mentors' roles in this system, it is important to understand how this system impacts you, its history and how this will contribute to the kind of mentoring you can offer incoming students.

(See: *Presentation, Training 4*)

During the fourth training, the mentors and I:

- **Talked about intersecting identities:** A mentor's gender identity, gender expression, race, ethnicity, class (past and present), religious beliefs, sexual identity and sexual expression (among other things) will affect how they exist at Western and in the Honors College. Because this mentorship is malleable to the mentor-mentee relationship needs and based on the experiences that shaped the mentor's first year, understanding these experiences on the bases of their intersecting identities is important. It provides students with a framework on how they can possibly relate to the mentees that have chosen them. It leads them to think: if they and their mentee have similar backgrounds, will they have similar needs?



- **Talked about the history of Western and the Honors College:** You've heard the quote: "Know history, know self." This is just part of a phrase Filipino hero, Jose Rizal posited to his community that emphasizes the importance of understanding how a community's history is integral to understanding how someone exists in the world and why we exist in

that way. While discussing the history of Western, I presented the college's origins as a teaching school and its move to becoming a public university in 1977. I also touched on the short-lived existence of the Ethnic Studies College and other ways the school has resisted creating safe spaces for students, from the origins of Huxley College to student demands.

In addition, we talked about Honors and what it means to live by the phrase displayed on the logo: *Societatem Colimus Pro Scientiam Humanitus Enitentes*. Does Honors truly cultivate a community striving compassionately for knowledge? If so, who is this community meant for? We also talked about the implications of having an Honors dorm room and the experiences of students of color.

- **Discussed how the history of the institution contextualizes our identities.** Do we exist in the margins because of our identities? Are we truly supported by the institution based on our identities? If not, will our mentees be?
- **Talked about our Why:** I have found this exercise to have been particularly impactful with the mentors. As first-gen and/or students of color, a lot of the time we migrate from one program to another that shows that we are just as good as those who have had the resources all along. This conversation asked the mentors to question: why they joined Honors, why they stayed, how Honors has affected how they exist in their identities, and how their goals as mentors are affected by their identities and their experiences in the college.

These conversations were meant to examine how we can create a loving community in a space that does not create time for love. I had plans to create a cumulative document of places where members of HSOC went to decompress or find familiarity in the community outside of Western. I wanted to share about how the day I was going to drop out of Western a few weeks into my first quarter, I took the bus to Walmart, stood in the Latin American food section and cried.

And then we didn't have that conversation. We didn't get to have any more conversations outside of chat messages on Teams and sparsely scheduled 1-on-1s. It wasn't because I was unprepared. In fact, there was a lot of work that went into planning the first couple of months of the program. I created mentorship agreements and goal-setting documents to build something that resembled what everyone was so used to. I had the mentors fill out a Google Sheets document anytime they talked to their mentee and did weekly check-ins through Teams where I would ask everyone how their week was going. But keeping track of all of that meant that I was missing deadlines on class assignments and meetings for my other jobs. It was not sustainable.

I think that the general knowledge that there is someone there to support me when needed is enough.

Support in and of itself is huge, imo. I think knowing you have someone you can call if you're needing help or someone who may have direction for your questions is always super helpful.

### *Feedback from mentees regarding their first quarter experience*

Slowly, I let the mentors take control of their portion of the program and let them meet with their mentees as they saw fit. Most of them stopped tracking their time with their mentees and even stopped using the goal sheets. I never once doubted that they were doing their job. I had mentees email me about how nice it was that their mentor could just text them to check in and to talk about how helpful it was to have someone who could just listen to them for a little bit. It was a very gratifying experience. But sitting here now, thinking back to what could have been, I can't help but feel guilty. There were a lot of expectations for what the mentorship was meant to be. Most, I could not deliver on, but I want to at least give you a rough outline of what I would have wanted to do.

### *A series of What Ifs*

- **Get rid of the paperwork.** This includes goal setting and meeting trackers. When I was building the mentorship I gravitated toward the concept of SMART goals. The SMART in SMART goals stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound. Other mentorships had them as part of their working philosophy and it just made sense to me to use them as well. But, when you google "SMART goals," corporate success websites are the first results. When we think about deconstructing the mentorship we have to think about the impact the goal-setting structure will have on mentees. SMART goals (and meeting trackers) are meant to measure the success of the program. Mentors can report that they're having weekly meetings, which is great, but how do we measure how comfortable a student is in these meetings? How do we set a time frame on someone's ability to connect emotionally with people if their goal is to make friends?

SMART goals are a useful tool for students who want to engage with the program for academic and career resources and want a simple, timeline-based approach to their on-campus experience. But for marginalized students who are looking to survive systemic harm, measurable and time-bound goals are not the solution.

- **But not all of the paperwork.** One thing I really wanted to do with the mentors originally was have them keep a journal. Mental health professionals have recommended journal therapy, also known as expressive writing, to process emotions and keep track of experiences (*Journaling for Mental Health - Health Encyclopedia*, n.d.). I have always

worried that by creating this program, I was putting mentors at risk of being retraumatized by the experiences their mentees were facing. And due to the lack of space in our schedules, there was no time to break down some of these worries as a team. If this idea is appealing to you and your team, I suggest you set up a form on Microsoft or Google, where mentees are able to journal about their experiences. Include prompts in the description so that the mentors have a jumping-off point if this is the first time they are journaling. For example,

- List 3 things you talked about with your mentee today?
- What emotions are lingering with you as you leave your meeting?
- What questions popped up during your meeting that you could answer? What about that you couldn't answer?
- How can your mentorship team support you with your mentees?

During the first quarter of the program, we had something akin to this (*See: Forms, After Meeting Form*), but more formal and it wasn't something the mentors could go back and look at. Journaling, I believe, could be a more accessible version of the After Meeting Form and can be a jumpstart for conversation during team meetings.

*Screenshots from After Meeting Form submissions, Fall Quarter*

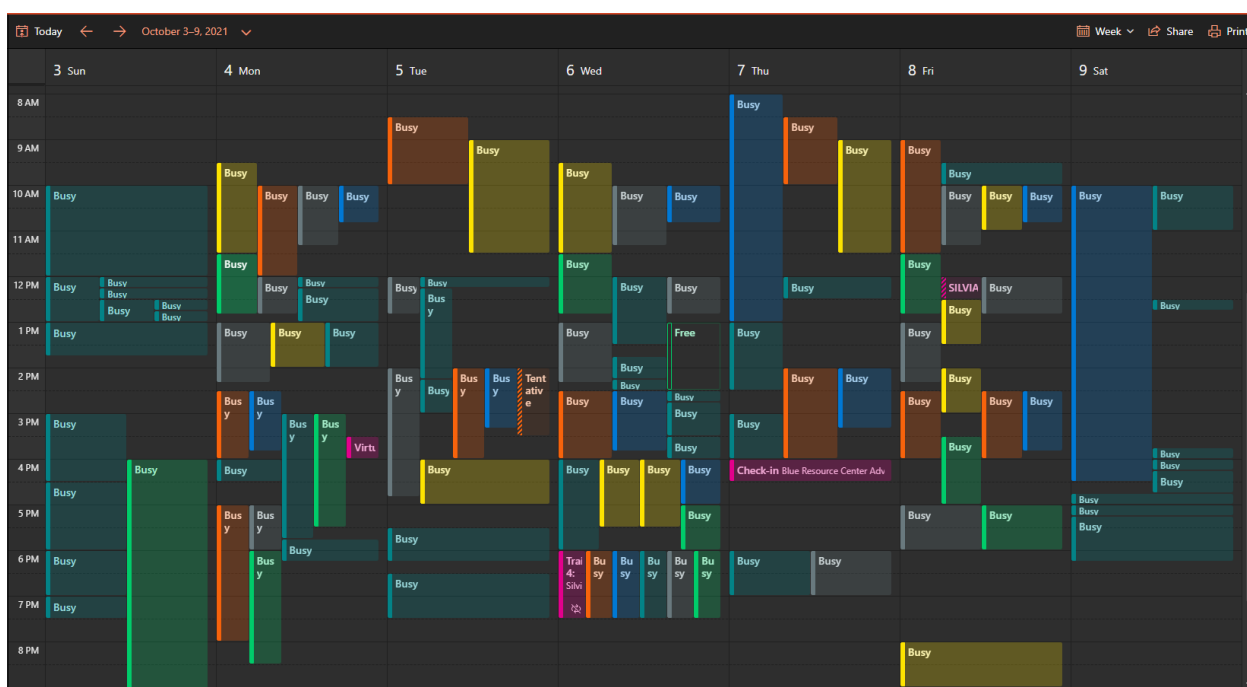
Good meeting- she said it was nice to have another POC to talk to about what's been happening in 101/103, so I'm glad the mentorship is working as intended in that sense! We just did a general check-in, so I don't really have much to add here

They are doing good in their classes from the sounds of everything, and it sounds like they've gotten more involved and grown a lot more socially, which was one of their concerns at the beginning of the quarter. They're nervous about transitioning into a new quarter from a break next quarter and getting new classes with new professors, which is totally understandable. That'll definitely be something to check in on. They like being home, and I think that they get homesick and miss their family frequently. Looked at on-campus job opportunities as well, they mentioned maybe wanting to get a job. Also, they're going to start looking into apartments and seem a little nervous about that.

He still doesn't seem like he needs a mentor, but maybe it is just a nice safety net since he still wants to meet winter quarter. He doesn't really have any questions about advice or anything, we more just try to fill the meeting time with general get to know you questions, but it seems to be going fine still and as long as he expresses interest in scheduling our next meetings than I'm still available for him. He's been finding resources on his own and he doesn't have anything I can do to help when I ask. I just tell him to keep up the good work lol.

- **Meet consistently.** Looking at everyone's Outlook calendar at the same time is probably the worst part of this program. As students who are tasked not just with school, but with extracurriculars and other jobs, we are busy. In fact, any time I had to schedule a late-night Friday meeting, I started by showing the mentors our calendars at the same time as an apology.

*My Outlook Calendar for the week of October 3-9, 2021 with all of the mentors included*



If I had the option to reorganize our meeting schedule, I would have scheduled weekly 30-45 minute meetings at the beginning of the week so that the mentors had time to decompress, brainstorm and provide feedback to each other. The top comment I received while doing exit interviews with the mentors was that they wished there had been more time for community bonding and for meetings to not have been just presentations. These full team check-ins and the journals feel like a solution for both of these. While I don't

guarantee you will have a time that works for everyone, decide on something early on in the quarter so that people can work it into their calendar.

- **Treat this program like mutual aid.** As defined by lawyer and professor, Dean Spade, mutual aid is a collective coordination to meet each other's needs, build solidarity, and create collective spaces for skill sharing and learning (2020, 7-17). During the summer of 2020, I, like much of the general public, learned what mutual aid was as communities came together to support each other during the pandemic and protests. While I was at home, high school friends and I got together to create a mutual aid collective that provided food, information and resources for my hometown's houseless people. We built a community out of this and I made friends and learned skills I previously didn't have access to.

While this program isn't exactly a movement-building coalition, it is here to meet student needs. The people in your team all come from different backgrounds and experiences, and hold unique understandings of the Honors College and Western. Use these bits of knowledge and experiences to your advantage. If one of your mentors is very knowledgeable about the campus, ask if they will lead a tour for the mentees. If you have someone who has certain connections to a club or office, ask them to coordinate a training. Create a collaborative space, rather than a space where you are constantly stressing about what to talk about next.

- **Collaborate with other offices and clubs.** Here is a series of events and trainings I planned to hold during the first quarter but was not able to.
  - A tour of the Multicultural Center
  - A tour of the resources in the library
  - A meet and greet with Honors Advisors
  - Study nights open for mentors and mentees around midterms and finals with snacks
  - A training examining how we understand power and privilege and building relationships with communities we are not a part of.
  - A training breaking down the elitism in Honors colleges where we discuss what "smartness" looks like and how it is racialized or categorized in the Honors College. The discussion goal would have been to use these ideas of "smartness," our cultural understandings of "smartness" and how these may affect the way their mentees engage with the Honors College.



## Part 5: Winter Quarter

Welcome to winter quarter! You are officially almost at the midpoint of the school year, which means you are going to have to start thinking about hiring the new mentor lead and thinking about how you want to guide your successor into molding the best program possible. The prospect of passing the mantle on to the next person may sound scary, especially in a program that is as vulnerable and personal as this one.

I can admit the moment Kiersten brought up the idea that we would need to start looking for a new mentor lead, I panicked. Not because we didn't have people who weren't qualified— on the contrary, I knew exactly who I wanted for the job—but because I knew I was not in the mental state to let go of this program I had put so much of myself into. Looking for a new mentor lead also signaled my graduation date approaching and that was something I definitely didn't want to think about. For better or for worse, the last four years of my existence were intrinsically tied to the Honors College. I had created resources that held so much of me, it was scary to think about leaving so much of myself behind.

This fear was further exacerbated by the fact that seasonal affective disorder was teaming up with the general doom and gloom of the pandemic to kick some butt on campus. Data from a 2015 and 2016 Canadian Community Health Survey found that young adults and teenagers are more likely to deal with seasonal depression than adults (Stroka, 2019). When I began building the mentorship, this was something I was acutely aware of and wanted to be prepared for.

The driving theme for winter quarter was all about mental health. How can we support students who may be living away from home for the first time while simultaneously upholding a human-first philosophy and taking care of the mentors' mental health?

- January
  - Mentor Meeting
    - Full-team check-in
      - Goal setting
    - Focus question: “What is mental health?” “How can we deconstruct mental health and focus it around community”
  - Mentor-mentee meeting
    - Goal setting for the quarter
    - What are your long-term goals (if any)

- Mentor meeting
- 1-on-1 check-ins with mentor lead
- February
  - Mentor Meeting
    - Full-team check-in
    - Focus question: “Cultural Mental health”
  - Mentor-mentee meeting
    - Soft-check in
- March
  - Mentor meeting
    - Full team check-in
    - Focus question:
  - Mentor-mentee meeting
    - Soft check-in
  - Full team meeting: end of quarter celebration

### ***Training 5: An Introduction to Mental Health***

As I was planning the program, a big worry of mine was separating HSOC and the mentorship. I knew that most of the mentors were HSOC members and that the mentees who joined would most likely be part of the HSOC’s demographic, but I still felt like I needed to separate the two. Less because HSOC would be hindering the progress of the program or vice versa, but because it felt like if I didn’t, the mentorship would lose its credibility and be reduced to just another club despite us having a payroll. Pretty soon, though, it became increasingly obvious that separating the two would be impossible.

Our first and only training of winter quarter was held the same night that the Honors Student of Color Demands were presented over Zoom to Dr. Linneman. In fact, the meetings were scheduled back-to-back with a hastily added 15-minute break in between to regroup, mentally

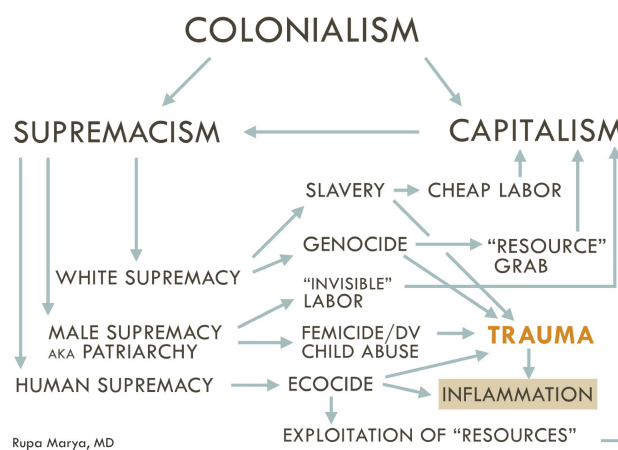
and emotionally. All but one person from the mentorship team was present during the demands meeting and we were all jumping from one Zoom room to another disappointed, angry, and exhausted.

Fittingly enough, the mentorship training I had planned for that night was an introduction to mental health.

(See: *Presentation, Training 5*)

During the fifth training, the mentors and I:

- Did two Jamboard exercises that asked the questions: What is mental health? What affects mental health? (See: *Activity 5.1, Activity 5.2*)
- **Framed the world in which we exist.** As students of color and/or first-gen college students we live through systemic aggressions that oftentimes we don't find the name for until we are much older. According to Dr. Rupa Marya, these systems, or social stressors, all create trauma that can manifest themselves as physical illnesses like chronic inflammation.



*Chart from Rupa Marya, MD's Ted Talk. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/@radiorupa/health-and-justice-the-path-of-liberation-through-medicine-86c4c1252fb9>*

- **Framed how the legacies of colonization affect us in the present.** By dividing our individual identity into separate categories, we were able to discuss how colonialism affects each aspect which makes up a whole identity: economic; historical; political; social and cultural.

We specifically talked about spirituality. In this case, we were not talking about religion but our spiritual connection to humanity and nature. By utilizing the frameworks

presented before, we talked about how academia and Honors specifically remove us from being able to connect spiritually with ourselves, others and the nature around us.

- **Discussed the concept of Healing Justice and how we can use this framework to mitigate systemic trauma through community building.** A concept adopted from the Chicago based organizer, Cara Page, “healing justice” is a framework that identifies how we can holistically respond to and intervene on generational trauma and violence and to bring collective practices that can impact and transform the consequences of oppression on our bodies, hearts and minds (Corporan & Breedlove, n.d.).

At its core, healing justice centers the community in the process of intervening in generational trauma. This framework led us to talk about *why* we should center community when we are trying to heal from trauma (generational or otherwise) and what that looks like in a college setting.

- **Talked about creating collective experiences that engage and influence the six senses.** Utilizing Seattle-based organizer Roxana Pardo Garcia’s conceptualization of healing justice, the mentors and I discussed how we can create mentoring experiences that create memories that are tied to joy and thriving.

### *A series of Whats Ifs*

The moment I ended the Zoom meeting after this training, I knew that if I had the chance, I would go back and rewrite the program in its entirety. I would have pulled in practices from prolific organizers since the beginning. I would have brought in community building strategies from the Black Panther Party who operated “out of a love for their people and a devotion to empowering them” (Taylor, 2015). I would have created a program that wasn’t just harm reduction, but healing and empowering.

- **Bring in outside presenters!** The mentorship is the perfect space to bring in speakers for the mentors and the mentees. Originally, I was going to bring in Roxana Pardo Garcia to talk about building joyful community experiences and mental health, but our schedules never matched. Bringing in community organizers from marginalized communities around Whatcom is a great way to network and also get survival tips from folks who live in this environment full-time.
- **Make trainings open to mentees.** When I reflect on this particular night, I can’t help but think about how important these conversations are to have with the mentees as well. If we are looking to reduce harm in the college, then we should invite the mentees into conversations as crucial as the ones surrounding mental health.
- **Collaborate with other offices and clubs:** Here is a series of events and trainings I planned to hold during the quarter but was not able to.

- A collaboration with WWU's Counseling Center about surviving seasonal affective disorder while being a full-time student
- A conversation about what cultural mental health looks like outside of the Western world and a space for everyone to share cultural mental health strategies and food. (Possible collaboration with HSOC)
- A scholarship session. Scholarships at Western open and close in April. Preparing students for this is crucial.

### **Part 5.5: The New Mentor Lead**

I knew who I wanted as a mentor lead halfway through the year. This was someone who I had met through the mentorship program and had the experience, the knowledge and the passion that I knew was necessary to run this program. They had demonstrated in our 1-on-1s and in their involvement with their mentees and Honors clubs that supporting their community was their priority. I saw in them the same love I felt for my classmates.

While I don't want to dissuade you from hiring outside of the program, I believe that more often than not, you will find the perfect candidate for the mentor lead within your mentorship team. The familiarity with the community and the fluidity of this program will be an asset and a quality that you will not find with someone who has mentoring experience outside of this mentorship. As you look through your candidates ask yourself two things: "Does this person's commitment stem from a dedication to their classmates?" and "Will this person bring innovative ideas that challenge the system in which the mentorship is housed in?"

## Part 6: Spring Quarter

Woo! Ten more weeks! You are so close to summer and most likely even graduation.

Spring quarter is emotional to say the least. For several reasons but unless you have made the decision to come back as the mentor lead for another year, this quarter is the end of your involvement in the program. And maybe you're excited about it. This has been a long year and coming to the end of the first year of the Honors Peer Mentorship is a measure of the work the mentorship team has put into this. Or maybe you're also terrified, I know I am. There is something incredibly scary about realizing that you are leaving a very big part of who you are behind. A legacy of sorts, that you will no longer be part of. I wish I had advice on how to get through this feeling, but all I am seeing is that it grows each time I get closer to finishing this guide.

Nonetheless, the year is ending. Despite spring quarter being the full 10 weeks, it feels like it's the shortest quarter with how fast everything starts moving. Families will also start touring campus which means that you will find yourself as the spokesperson for the mentorship program and Honors. You will be invited to talk to prospective and admitted students about your experience in the college and to pitch the mentor program to students and parents alike.

I added the final installment of my mentorship calendar mostly so that you can see what I had planned for this quarter. I can say that I didn't do any of this. If there is one piece of advice that sticks with you from this is to make sure you do not overload your final quarter in the mentorship with classes. You will not have time to finish off the way you want to. Your mentors will be busy, your mentor lead will already be planning the next year and you will struggle to find space to create a conclusion for your program.

- April
  - Mentor Meeting
    - Full-team check-in
      - Goal setting
    - Focus question: Reflecting
  - Mentor-mentee meeting
    - Goal setting for the quarter
    - Scholarships and careers fairs
  - Mentor meeting

- 1-on-1 check-ins with mentor lead
- Recruiting new mentors
- May
  - Mentor Meeting
    - Full-team check-in
    - Focus question: how can this mentorship help me in my future career
  - Mentor-mentee meeting
    - Soft-check in
  - Hiring new mentors
- June
  - Mentor Meeting
    - 1-on-1 check-in: Reflecting on goals
  - Full team meeting: end of quarter celebration
  - Feedback from mentees and mentors

We didn't exactly do much as a mentoring team during spring quarter. The new mentor lead was hired and working on their own plans, mentors continued meeting with their mentees, and I presented to prospective students. At the beginning of the quarter, we had a small team meeting to check in with each other and see if there were any astounding needs that the mentors needed help with. Then May came around and I began to think about what ending relationships looks like.

One thing to understand about the process of creating this program is that it took *a lot* of googling. First it was "how do you create a mentorship program" and I bookended it in May with "how do you end a mentorship." We didn't have an official training for this aspect of the mentorship. It was the first time we had an in-person meeting and creating a presentation felt a little bit like overkill. So, below are some recommendations and reflections on the conversation we had.

### *Training 6: How to say goodbye*

The name of the game here is reflection. The mentorship as a whole depended on reflecting on our positions in the Honors College and how our academic, economic and/or social marginalizations impact our life in the program. Utilizing the last few mentor-mentee meetings to reflect on the time together, the goals that were set, and on the mentorship experience is good not just for closure but to create a feedback dialogue.

#### *How to close the relationship for mentors:*

- **Let them know a few meetings beforehand.** Your mentee will appreciate knowing that you can only offer a few more mentoring conversations. With this advance notice, the mentee will be able to use these last sessions strategically and can also begin to seek another mentor if needed.
- **Reflect on the mentorship.** What have you and your mentee learned?
- **Talk about the future.** What will your next steps be? Do you have any parting advice for your mentee?
- **Talk about the relationship outside of the mentorship.** Will you still be available as a resource? Are you interested in informal mentoring? If so, what will that look like? If you are unable to continue this mentorship, don't make promises.
- **Say thank you.** Acknowledge each other's contributions to the relationship and the program. Additionally, acknowledge specific areas of progress and growth that you observed in your mentee during the mentoring period. And let your mentee know that they are welcome to apply to be a mentor or come back as a mentee next year.

This is a process we have talked about within the mentoring team already. I gave the mentors the option to end the mentorship at their own time instead of giving them a deadline. They fostered the relationship so it should be up to them to decide how it ends. While this was something I did not do, I think inviting the mentees to a meeting with just you or sending out an email to discuss ending the mentorship is also important.

I would say that this is something that should be talked about during onboarding with the mentors and included with the agreement forms with the mentees for those who drop the program during the school year.

#### *How to close the relationship for mentees:*

- **The process doesn't have to be awkward.** Before your next meeting, communicate to your mentor that you feel like you can move forward without the mentorship program and would like to talk about next steps.



- **Reflect on the mentorship.** Let your mentor know how the mentorship has benefited you. Ask for the relationship to continue informally if you would like to maintain the relationship. Thank each other for the experience and fill out the feedback form provided by the mentor lead.

As your mentors begin to end things with their mentees, start thinking about how you will end things with the mentors. Below is a list of priorities for the quarter as you and the mentors begin the goodbye process.

*A list of priorities for a final goodbye*

- **Continue meeting consistently with your mentors.** During this final quarter do your best to continue whatever meeting agenda you set in the quarters prior. Use these meetings for discussion, processing and closure.
- **Give your mentors something special.** Maybe you have graduating mentors or you just want to do something special. Giving your mentors a small token of appreciation like a thank you card can be incredibly meaningful.
- **Check in with the incoming mentor lead a lot.** You have just gone through an entire year of planning, producing and managing this program. We don't gatekeep here, we just girlboss so make sure you are going through the onboarding process with them.
- **Meet the new mentees.** If possible, I suggest meeting the new mentees. Get a feel for what the new cohort brings and be proud of what your hardwork has done.
- **Legacy documents.** Fill out the legacy documents and have your mentors fill out theirs. This allows incoming mentors and the mentor leads to have references to go back to for any issues, concerns or questions that come up.

## The Results

As I stated in the introduction, this guide is not subjective and neither is the work that we did here. Everything we created was based on our unique experiences and cannot be observed and reproduced. Each year is going to be different and it's important to acknowledge that as the work to provide marginalized students much needed support increases.

The results I present here are not results in their normal definition, but commentary directly from the students who went through this program. I present these as results because I have four years of understanding of the way the Honors College communicates. There is value to numbers, metrics, and objectivity in the program that they do not see in experiences. So I present these results as objective, without further comment.

*(For a full list of responses See: Forms, Mentorship Assessment Survey (Mentees))*

### **Question: Do you feel like your mentor made a difference in your Honors/general college experience?**

“I didn't have to use my mentor that much, but I did have some questions that she helped me with. Without her I would have probably avoided the problems as a whole, so it was good to have that extra push from someone telling me it's not so bad”

“I was able to identify with my mentor regarding issues that other classmates didn't really understand such as that of being a first generation minority student. They also helped keep me updated on the HSOC demands which was nice because I wasn't able to go to any of the meetings. They also helped me with registration and introduced me to new spots on campus along with spots in Bellingham.”

“Because of my mentor, I always knew that there would be someone in my corner supporting me throughout the year. Especially when it came to POC and LGBT issues because there would be very few people who could understand.”

**Question: Did you feel supported by your mentor in reaching these goals?**

“I did because, for example, one of my goals was to study for the math placement test and if it wasn't for my mentor I would not have studied at all and would've gone into the test blind.”

“Absolutely. She is always letting me know about opportunities for me to work on my goals, guiding me to resources, and encouraging self-reflection.”

“Yes - she helped explain the process of things if she knew and gave me resources to help myself if she didn't know how to help personally”

## Final Reflections

So. That's it. Here is the culmination of a really, really long year. There are a lot of thoughts and emotions in me right now that can be summed up by the fact that I really considered not finishing this because finishing this meant creating an ending to my part of this story. When I first started HSOC, it was because I needed a place to be me without the eyes of even my closest white friends. When I started thinking about this mentorship program it was because I saw the need in my friends and peers.

I recently spoke to Ijeoma Oluo, author of *So You Want to Talk About Race* and WWU alumni about her hopes for student advocates. She said that our advocacy should focus on leaving the college as whole beings by creating harm reductions rather than changing the institution. I used to talk about how much I loved Honors and how thankful I was to the administrators that they would let me do all of this work to make Honors a better place. But this work took so much from me. From my first email to Kiersten about HSOC to every meeting about student needs, writing this guidebook has been like leaving pieces of myself behind. I cannot figure out how to put myself together.

That being said, I am incredibly proud of what we have created and despite it all, I would do it all over again in a heartbeat. Do I believe we changed the institution from the inside out? No. I don't think we *can* without a complete overhaul of the program, its mission and vision, curriculum and without finding administrators who are willing to truly revolutionize what being in Honors means. But we created harm reduction options and we helped students find and create community. And most importantly, we created love in a space that cannot and will not love us back.

People have talked about how this program is my legacy, but legacies imply the end of a life. There is a reason why I have been so insistent that this is the start of something I didn't even know I could do. There is something, somewhere in a song about how legacies are symphonies someone else gets to sing for you. But I trust that the people who come after me are going to create a beautiful melody.

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**Supporting Files Are Available By Request****Please email the current mentor lead to access the supporting materials**

Presentation, Training 1  
Presentation, Training 2  
Community Agreements  
WWU Key Services  
Jamboard, Activity 2.1-2  
Homework 1  
Presentation, Training 3  
Jamboard, Activity 3.1  
Forms, Mentor Matching Form  
Presentation, Training 4  
Forms, After Meeting Form  
Presentation, Training 5  
Activity 5.1-2  
Forms, Mentorship Assessment Survey (Mentees)  
Mentor Legacy Paper  
Honors Peer Mentorship Goal Review