

Department of Sociology Fact Sheet on Doctoral Student Peer Mentoring Program

During their first two years, doctoral students often face considerable challenges adjusting to the responsibilities, roles, relations, and ways of life that are associated with making progress in graduate school. This is when they are primarily focusing on coursework and not yet fully embedded in their faculty mentor's research team.

In the 2020-2021 academic year, MSU SOC launched a Peer Mentoring Program in which veteran graduate students (who have completed at least two years in the program) serve as peer mentors to incoming graduate students during the latter's first two years in the program. Peer mentors may offer support, deliver advice, provide direction, and give feedback to their assigned mentees in ways that help the latter learn key formal and tacit knowledge and hone key skills for successfully adjusting to our MSU SOC PhD program.

This peer mentoring complements the mentoring/advising, socialization, and enculturation that our doctoral students otherwise receive from the SOC Graduate Program Director (GPD), the Graduate Academic Program Coordinator (APC), the Chairperson, the Professional Development Workshop Series, their Temporary Advisors, their eventual Guidance Committee Chair, and their course instructors.

The goals of the SOC Peer Mentoring Program are to:

- further integrate both mentors and mentees into the Doctoral Program (and Department more generally),
- heighten information-sharing and collaboration among doctoral students,
- increase inter-cohort interaction, and
- increase retention and improve matriculation among doctoral students.

To be eligible to serve as a mentor, doctoral students must:

- be currently enrolled,
- be in good academic standing (i.e., achieving program benchmarks in a timely fashion), and
- have successfully completed two years of requirements in the doctoral program.

To be eligible to have a mentor, doctoral students must:

- be accepted into the SOC Doctoral Program (prior to their first semester) or be currently enrolled (between their first and second years), and
- be in good academic standing (i.e., achieving program benchmarks in a timely fashion).

Once a mentor-mentee match is created, the SOC GPD, Graduate APC, Chairperson, and the mentees' Temporary Advisors will work together to implement our Peer Mentoring Program. They will provide support, resources, and programming for participating mentors and mentees:

- a \$500 award/stipend to **support** their participation and offset their investment of time and energy,
- **resources** such as general (and discipline-specific) mentoring toolkits, handbooks, and guides, and
- new and/or existing **programming** such as mentor-mentee luncheons, brownbag speakers, panel presentations, informal receptions, and/or writing boot camps.

They also will encourage mentor-mentee co-participation in professional development activities and responsible conduct of research (RCR) workshops by the Graduate School, College of Social Science, and other MSU units.

During a typical academic year, we expect mentors and mentees to meet at least twice a month for structured discussion (e.g., to debrief after research presentations in the Department) and/or for co-participation in a range of the programming mentioned in the prior paragraph. Also, we expect that mentors and mentees will work together on early drafts of their Goal Setting Report (early in the fall semester) and their Annual Progress Report (late in the spring semester), before sharing these with their respective faculty advisor.