

The Sociology Peer Mentoring program is a unique approach to helping new sociology majors and minors transition successfully into the sociology department and the overall college experience.

Through this program, students are able to help one another through providing companionship, useful life and academic advice, and by encouraging each other to participate in community events.

There are two key aspects of the program structure: monthly events and the peer mentoring itself. Each month, the students meet up and attend events or discussions that either educate them about future opportunities or encourage them to socialize and make connections. In Spring 2024, events included a discussion of internships, student employment opportunities within the Sociology Department, and a Faculty Student mixer. In regard to peer mentoring, each mentor-mentee pairing is given food vouchers and prompt cards each month. The themes of the prompt cards change monthly, ranging from approaches to classes and lessons they've learned while taking courses to mental health and how to balance social and academic life. The idea is to encourage students to have meaningful discussions in a casual setting.

The structure of the program fosters a studented environment. Dr. Stykes, the program supervisor commented that this is a crucial aspect of the program, noting it's really important for students to help one another navigate these waters, there's something really special about it [being given advice on how to be a good student] when it comes from a peer rather than a professor." Not only does this type of environment provide students with academic advice, but it also encourages them to communicate better with each other, which was important to the founder of the program, Dr. Cabaniss. After the quarantine for the global Covid-19 pandemic was lifted, Dr. Cabaniss noticed that students were having a hard time connecting with each other. Today, through this program, Professors Cabaniss and Stykes aim to create "a sense of community along students" and to "get them to enjoy being students together, not alone." After interviewing a mentor-mentee pairing, it seems that the program has been successful in creating this dynamic.

Mentor Trinity Smith, a sophomore majoring in Sociology, stated that the program really allows students to "foster deeper and more meaningful relationships." Since joining the program, she felt that she improved her communication skills, as "it's easier to step up

