

First-Year Experience (FYE)

PEER MENTORS' HANDBOOK
2024 - 2025



CALENDAR

August 19-21, 2024	FYE in London Student Orientation
*August 25, 2024	Peer Mentors Return to Campus by 4:00 p.m.
*August 26 – August 30, 2024	Peer Mentor Training
*August 29, 2024	Pre-Orientation Opening
*September 1, 2024	Opening Day and Convocation
*September 1-3, 2024	New Student Orientation
September 4, 2024	Classes Begin
September 4, 2024	First Day that Students can claim hours worked via Oracle
TBD	The President’s Receptions at Scribner House
TBD	Peer Mentor Timesheet Due (at 11:59 pm)
TBD	Peer Mentor Timesheet Due (at 11:59 pm)
TBD	Peer Mentor Timesheet Due (at 11:59 pm)
October 18-20, 2024	Celebration Weekend
TBD	Peer Mentor Timesheet Due (at 11:59 pm)
October 28, 2024	Advising Period begins
November 5, 2024	Registration for Spring 2024 begins
TBD	Peer Mentor Timesheet Due (at 11:59 pm)
November 29 – December 1, 2024	Thanksgiving Vacation
TBD	Peer Mentor Timesheet Due (at 11:59 pm)
December 11, 2024	Last Day of Classes
TBD	Peer Mentor Timesheet Due (at 11:59 pm)
December 12-15, 2024	Study Days
December 16-19, 2024	Final Exams
December 20, 2024	Fall Semester Ends
TBA	Peer Mentor Timesheet Due (at 11:59 pm)

*Mandatory for all Peer Mentors

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WELCOME

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a Peer Mentor for this year's incoming class. You will be an essential resource for the first-year students as they negotiate their transition into collegiate life, and in doing so you will also support your Scribner Seminar faculty in significant ways. We hope, too, that you will learn a lot about yourself and about leadership in the process.

This Handbook provides important information about expectations and policies; please keep it for reference, and feel free to call or stop by our office if you have questions or concerns. We look forward to working with you and to another successful year in the FYE.

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OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

Peer Mentors are selected early in the spring semester by faculty who will be teaching Scribner Seminars in the following (fall) semester. In the week prior to the start of fall classes, Peer Mentors receive training on the means and methods for supporting first-year students as they make the often-difficult transition into collegiate life. Peer Mentors support their first-year mentees throughout the fall and spring semesters. In exchange for their service, Peer Mentors receive both financial compensation and academic credit.

Peer Mentors function primarily in the context of the Scribner Seminar, which is a four-credit interdisciplinary course required of all first-year students. In that context, the Peer Mentor is an active participant in the seminar, helps the faculty member plan and execute fourth-credit-hour programming focused on issues related to the transition into college, and provides additional support to students both inside and outside the classroom.

The ideal Peer Mentor is committed to academic excellence, readily available and accessible to first-year students, and knowledgeable about the wide array of resources at the College. Since Peer Mentors serve as role models for first-year students, they are expected to maintain excellent social and academic integrity records (and will not be accepted into the program without passing academic and social integrity checks). They are also expected to support the seminar instructor and represent the College and the Office of the FYE in the most positive and helpful ways possible.

Peer Mentors may be sophomores, juniors, or seniors.

Peer Mentors are required to

- Attend all class meetings of a Scribner Seminar (coded as ID 202);
- Attend all weekly meetings of ID 201 ("Peer Mentoring Workshop");
- Attend a 5-day training session in late August;
- Accompany the seminar students in all orientation activities;
- Support the seminar instructor in planning and executing fourth hour programming.

Peer Mentors are also expected to

- Serve as academic and social role models for first-year students;
- Help new students integrate into the Skidmore community;
- Address strategies (time/stress management, study skills, etc.) to foster academic success;
- Identify and facilitate use of resources such as the Writing Center; Peer Academic Coaching; Office of Academic Advising; clubs and organizations; Career Services; the Counseling Center; Health Services; Student Academic Services;
- Serve as a general resource for the students in the seminar.

Peer Mentors are NOT expected to

- Act as teaching assistants. They do not grade, teach, or do clerical work.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND COMPENSATION

The following are required of a Peer Mentor:

- **Early return to campus (Sunday, August 25, 2024) for mandatory training.** Due to this training, you may not participate in Pre-Orientation programs.
- **Participation in all FYE Orientation programs.**
- **Enrollment in the 1-credit Peer Mentoring Workshop (ID 201).** The workshop will meet on Fridays from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. Attendance of all class sessions is required.
- **Enrollment in the Scribner Seminar (coded as ID 202) for 2 credits.** Attendance of all class sessions is required.

Peer Mentors will be compensated in the following ways:

- **\$12.75 per hour for a maximum of 3 hours per week in the fall.** This payment is for support and programming you may provide outside of class during the fall semester.
- **\$250 stipend for participation in all required New Student Orientation activities.** This is taxable income. Peer Mentors who fail to attend all of the New Student Orientation activities as required will forfeit this stipend and will jeopardize their positions as Peer Mentors.
- **\$12.75 per hour for a maximum of ten hours total in the spring semester.** This payment is for support and programming you may provide during the spring semester when your mentees are no longer meeting on a regular basis.
- **One credit and a grade** for ID 201 (Peer Mentor Workshop).
- **Two credits and a grade for attendance and participation in the Scribner Seminar.** Basic expectations associated with the role include attending *all* classes, completing *all* reading assignments and in-class assignments, participating in class discussions (when appropriate), mentoring students, supporting students as they make the academic and social transition to college, meeting with students outside of class, cultivating a robust living-learning community, and helping the instructor with fourth-credit hour programming. Academic credit for this activity will be granted in a grade for ID 202 (Peer Mentor Experience). The final grade will be determined by the Scribner Seminar professor and will reflect the quantity and quality of the support provided inside and outside of class. Peer Mentors are encouraged to meet with their professor so that they clearly understand the faculty member's expectations of their involvement.

EXPECTATIONS—BEYOND THE BASIC

As a social and academic role model and a representative of the Office of the FYE, a Peer Mentor is held to a high standard of accountability during the time of service. This means maintaining an excellent integrity record, of course, but it also means projecting a positive and

helpful attitude. The following lists may help you to think through some of the benefits and challenges of the position.

DOs and DONTs

Do

- Offer genuine friendship to the students in your seminar. In the beginning they may feel isolated, and they will appreciate offers to share a meal or simply hang out together.
- Speak positively about your own experiences at Skidmore. Share what has worked well for you.
- Listen carefully and try to respond as fully as possible to any problems presented.
- Strive to maintain a positive working relationship with your faculty member. This means fulfilling their particular expectations as well as honoring the boundaries that they set. It is a good idea to develop a written contract at the beginning of the term to which you can both refer to later on; a sample contract is available on the FYE website.
- Maintain strict confidentiality. Do not discuss your mentees with anyone except your faculty member or the FYE Director.
- Use your training in informal as well as formal ways. Your faculty member may or may not allow you to deliver presentations or facilitate discussions in the fourth hour, but your training—about college resources, substance issues, time management, etc.--is always at your fingertips and should be considered part of your mentoring toolkit.
- Contact the FYE Director if anything arises that you feel you can't handle, or if you have any questions or concerns.

Don't

- Discuss the seminar instructor with first-year students in a way that disparages them or compromises their authority. Remember that you are supporting the faculty member as well as the students.
- Disparage offices, departments, or individuals at the College. Even if you had a bad experience with a person or group, it does not mean that others will.
- Attempt to counsel students who appear to have acute anxiety, stress, or other mental health concerns. Refer them to the appropriate professionals. The same goes for students with serious academic or personal problems.
- Develop inappropriate relationships with mentees. Since you are in a professional situation, avoid developing strong friendships with particular mentees and refrain from dating them. These boundaries will help you avoid serious problems that can arise when students are made to feel *excluded* on one hand or *violated* on the other.
- Advise students on who the "bad" or "good" professors are. Your perceptions may not be shared, and you will rob first-year students of the experience of discovering for themselves which pedagogies and teachers they like best. If a student pushes you for an opinion, tell him/her/them that your position precludes prejudicial comments. (It may be difficult to hold the line, but in doing so you will model genuine leadership.)
- Assume that fourth-credit-hour programming "belongs" to you. The faculty member makes the decisions on how best to utilize the expertise of the Peer Mentor, and it is your job to work within those rules.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Peer Mentor Training Attendance Policy:

Peer Mentors are often in a better position than anyone to spot signs of trouble and intervene or advocate for first-year students in crisis (especially in the first few weeks of class). This being true, the welfare of first-year students often rests heavily on Peer Mentors, and they need to be prepared. It is with this set of facts in mind that we require all Peer Mentors to attend a 5-day training during the week prior to New Student Orientation. The training is meant to prepare Peer Mentors to deal with first-year students in distress or crisis and to lead difficult discussions in the classroom setting. It is indispensable leadership and pedagogical training that requires active participation and is only offered during that week. For these reasons, we cannot be flexible on our attendance policy.

Funding:

Each seminar has a budget attached to it and your faculty member may allot some of that money to you for co-curricular programming. Your expenses might include refreshments, movie or performance tickets, etc. You may email digital copies of receipts to the FYE Admin, Christy Brown (christybrown@skidmore.edu) for reimbursement. Your faculty member will need to notify us beforehand concerning how much money you may spend.

Important:

- **Tax paid for any item will not be refunded.** You must use the College's tax-exempt card/form when you make your purchases; otherwise, you will be reimbursed for the item(s) but not the tax.
- **The College will not reimburse you without an itemized receipt.** If you purchase food or beverages, for instance, we *must* have a complete *itemized* account, not just a final total.

Transportation:

You are welcome to lead your seminar students in off-campus events or activities. However, the College [Motor Vehicle Policy](#) *strongly discourages* the use of personal automobiles for such outings. Instead, Peer Mentors should:

- Use the [CDTA bus](#) (free with a Skidmore ID). Bus routes are available [here](#).
- Get authorized to a [Skidmore College fleet vehicle](#) which requires that applicants are 18 years of age and have a valid U.S. driver's license.

Working with Residence Life:

Peer Mentors may not work simultaneously as Residence Life assistants without permission from the FYE Director and the Director of Residential Life. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Termination of Duties:

Social or academic integrity offenses on the part of a Peer Mentor are taken seriously; a single serious offense or a series of minor offenses will be cause for termination. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

SOME THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

Accessibility

First-year students will have plenty of questions as the semester progresses, and they will want/need the encouragement and friendship that a Peer Mentor provides. Please make yourself easily accessible to your students while at the same time maintaining clear boundaries to ensure your own well-being. We encourage you to hold regular meetings or gatherings at a convenient location on campus; you should also share your email address and telephone number.

Serving as a Role Model

As a Peer Mentor, you will be in a newly visible role; younger students—sometimes even those who are NOT in your seminar—may be watching you closely and taking cues from you. Hence you need to think of role modeling as a 24-hour activity! Your mentees may encounter you in a variety of venues, including in the residence halls, at parties, and in clubs or other co-curricular organizations. How you comport yourself inside and *outside* of class will be important to gaining credibility and trust.

Confidentiality

Peer Mentors should NEVER be overheard discussing first-year students or faculty members in a public space. Moreover, nothing that a mentee or faculty member shares with you should be repeated to anyone else, including other Peer Mentors. Violation of any individual's confidentiality may be cause for dismissal of the Peer Mentor. The only exception to the expectation of confidentiality is cases of sexual and gender-based misconduct which Peer Mentors must report to the College Title IX Coordinator, Joel Aure.

Integrity

Peer Mentors must maintain an excellent integrity record during their time of service. An integrity violation during the time of service is cause for termination; the decision will be made by the Director. In the event of termination, the student will be removed from ID 201 and ID 202 and will forfeit the credits, resulting in grades of W or F on their transcript.