I. Purpose:

The purpose of this guide is to work towards the goal of building the capacity of individual Graduate Programs to construct self-sustaining Peer Mentoring Programs. The purpose of this peer-mentoring program is to optimize graduate student success through two specific objectives:

1. To develop mentoring skills and leadership capacity within graduate students [mentors] and
2. To facilitate the formation of trusting professional relationships and social-support system which will:
   a. lead to an environment of inclusion and community for incoming first-year graduate students [mentees] and
   b. "prepare students for the complex social demands of life and the workplace" through collaboration and "productive human connections" (Fung, 2017, p.118).

Additionally, we hope that this program will expedite the connection of graduate students with existing University resources developed for graduate student development, wellness, and overall success.

i. **What is a mentorship?**
Mentorship is the guidance provided by a person who has knowledge or expertise in any given area. In education, it can come in many forms such as your advisor, a postdoc, faculty, committee member, or other graduate students. There is a difference between a mentor and academic advisor. An advisor is someone who gives advice to any student: tips for graduating, passing your comprehensive exam, and finishing your dissertation. These pieces of advice apply to all students looking to complete their degree. A mentor will provide guidance based on a student's personal and professional values, and long-term career goals. It is wisdom from a peer. And mentoring goes beyond a person simply giving advice: it provides a support system rooted in understanding, trust, and similar positions. These mentoring goals for the mentee can include "skills or competency development, psychosocial or socioemotional support, and career development" (Montgomery, 2017).

ii. **Why have a mentorship?**
Graduate school is a challenging time for students, and students have shown that anxiety and depression levels are lower in students who have supportive and mentoring relationships (Evans et al., 2018). In a broader sense, mentoring has been demonstrated to increase favorable behavioral, health-related, and career outcomes (among others) for the mentee (Eby et al., 2008). Specifically, graduate students who participate in a peer mentoring program report that their participation played a strong role in their success (Sattler et al., 2012). Peer mentoring provides an environment of support and comradery for graduate students where they can learn from others who have faced similar challenges and, in turn, share their experiences with others. Overall, mentoring matters because:
   a. Mentees perform better and develop new, innovative skills, when they are supported and guide by mentors to try things they may not have done on their own;
   b. It creates a supportive environment in which failure is embraced and molded into avenue for future successes;
   c. It creates a better workplace environment where students are connected to their community and have a strong sense of belonging, leading to higher levels of job satisfaction;

d. And successful peer mentoring increases graduate retention rates (Tobajas et al., 2010), a standard proxy for graduate student success.

Finally, mentoring is rewarding for the mentor and mentee. Each partner benefits from the relationship – the mentee gains support, wisdom and insight from the mentor and the mentor gains a sense of satisfaction from being able to help a fellow student through a challenging time. Developing a skill set as a graduate student mentor can provide valuable leadership experience that can directly translate to a career in academia where supervising graduate students is expected, or outside of academic where the ability to work as a part of a unified team and manage other employees is a highly valuable skill.

II. Structure:

It is critical to consider the target audience, and ultimately, the challenges mentorship is meant to tackle (i.e. what does success look like for the target audience or using exit surveys to see changes in student responses to their satisfaction with the program)?

Make the program: [1] accountable (are we achieving the program's goals?), [2] equitable (are all participants equally successful?), [3] efficient (can we achieve these goals in a bounded amount of time?), and [4] sustainable (will this program last into the future?). To maintain a program that is accountable, equitable, efficient, and sustainable, we consider the following design elements:

i. **WHO RUNS AND PARTICIPATES IN THE PROGRAM?**

This may vary from program to program and should reflect, and match, the scale and make-up of the target audience. This will be implemented at the departmental level. The three main participants of the program are:

- Mentoring Chair - DGP
- Mentoring Coordinator(s) – GSC
- Mentors – Second-year Graduate Students ($\geq$18 graduate credit hours)
- Mentees – First-year Graduate Students (<18 graduate credit hours)
  Part-time mentee students will be paired with available mentors regardless of part or full-time status.
- Future participation might include faculty advisors and program advisors.

The **Mentoring Chair** or DGP's key duties are to promote the program and attract participants, connect mentors and mentees (see section Paring Mentors/Mentees), and resolve any complications within the mentor-mentee relationship.

The **Mentorship Coordinator** or GSC is responsible for organizing and implementing the program, facilitating and verifying the interactions among mentors and mentees, assessing the effectiveness of the program, providing future recommendations such as providing training opportunities for mentors (see Section V: How to Be an Effective Mentor), and promoting social events that build community and inclusion within the target audience as a whole.

ii. **WHEN AND HOW LONG SHOULD THE PROGRAM RUN?**

To ensure the long-term sustainability of the program and appropriate use of often limited resources, we will tailor this program for 1st-year graduate students. This peer mentoring relationship will serve as a networking catalyst, and students will continue to use and expand their personal and professional networks throughout and beyond their time at NC

State. Due to the length of this program, it is necessary and appropriate for the mentoring relationship to last at least one year regardless of whether the student is full or part-time.

These relationships begin during the summer before orientation begins (mid-July to early August). Mentors can be of value for a wide variety of purposes, such as: with the transition of moving to a new place (e.g. where should I live? who can I live with?) or the transition to a new university and a new job (e.g. how should I address a conflict with my advisor?). Depending on the value mentors will provide mentees, this might necessitate beginning the program before or during the arrival of mentees.

The frequency in which mentors and mentees meet should be a balance of accountability and sustainability. Ideally, mentors and mentees will meet as often as necessary; however, asking too much of an already overburdened and stressed group (graduate students) can hamper future mentor recruitment. With this in mind, mentors should meet with their mentees approximately five times a semester – one of which is during the annual Faculty-Student Social at the beginning of the semester. We recommend keeping the meeting times consistent among all mentors and mentees to maintain a culture of equitability (i.e. all mentees should have the same potential for success). To make the limited time together productive, we provide notes on what topics to cover during a meeting in "Section VI: Building an Effective Mentor/Mentee Relationship." Future funds might be used to defray the cost of these meetings (e.g. reimbursements for coffee or lunch meetings on a regular basis).

iii. HOW SHOULD MENTORS & MENTEES CONNECT?

After the matching process has finished between the mentors and mentees (see Section IV: Pairing Mentors/Mentees), both parties will connect. Within a mentoring program, a mentoring style must be selected to promote growth in the most effective manner possible. Ideally, this mentoring style will uphold the four tenets mentioned in the beginning of the section: accountability, equitability, efficiency, and sustainability. There are two options that may be applicable to the participants in the program.

One-on-One – One mentor and one mentee will organize regular meetings.

Group-Style – A group of mentors and mentees will organize discussions.

iv. PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS

As outlined in the previous section, there are four main groups in the Peer Mentoring Program: [1] the Mentoring Chair, [2] the Mentoring Coordinator, [3] Mentors, [4] Mentees, and [5] Faculty Advisors. To ensure a consistency of effectiveness across programs, we've outlined a number of core expectations vital for each role.

i. **Mentoring Chair**
   - Be available to mentees if there are issues with their mentor/need someone.
   - Monitor the effective pairings of Mentors and Mentees.

ii. **Mentoring Coordinator**
   - Recruit mentees and mentors to the program.
   - Periodically remind mentors to meet with their mentees, and verify that

mentors are meeting with mentees.
- Connect mentors with relevant training opportunities.
- Set up group events for strong interactions between the entire mentor/mentee program. Some events will require collaboration with AEGS.
- Assess the effectiveness of the program.

iii. **Mentors**
- Set up consistent, regular meetings (or check-in via email when appropriate).
- Discuss any issues and help resolve/point mentee to resources.
- Encourage open dialogue in a judgement-free zone and demonstrate cultural competency and sensitivity.
- Be aware of resources at the university and department so that you can help provide beneficial information to mentees.
- Be aware of your limitations, and recommend mentees to an expert for an issue you are not trained/capable of handling (e.g. crisis situation refers to NC Cares).
- Maintain a respectful and professional relationship with your mentee – specifically, be aware and supportive of mentee's background and culture.
- Communicate on a regular basis, return calls and emails in a timely fashion.

iv. **Mentee**
- Set up consistent, regular meetings (or check-in via email when appropriate).
- Be open with, and reach to, your mentor(s) about relevant personal/professional issues hindering/helping your academic experience and professional performance.
- Navigate other university or local resources that can help you.
- Maintain a respectful and professional relationship with your mentor(s).
- Listen and follow through advice.
- Take ownership of the relationship, and give active feedback to your mentor and mentoring chair(s).

v. **PAIRING MENTORS/MENTEES**

We will randomly pair students, who volunteer to participate, hopefully from within the same concentration to create an organic relationship between mentor and mentee as NC State's Peer Leaders program has done at the Poole College of Management. If this is known to be ineffective after a year of evaluation, we will use an interest survey to help facilitate the pairing of students. In the event that this program is pushed out to all graduate students under the English department, students who do not answer the survey will be randomly paired with another mentor/mentee who did not answer the survey. For mentees who do not get along well or experience complications with his/her mentor, he/she will be paired with a new mentee regardless of the basis for the issue. This may result in a mentor having more than one mentee, but the new mentee will only be assigned to a mentor who is willing to have more than one mentee as noted in the mentor application, as available.

However, the creation of appropriate mentor/mentee pairs is essential for the success of the program and all individuals participating in the peer mentoring program. In order to

create effective matches between mentors and mentees, a few items must be considered and addressed in the interest survey would be:

- Concentration/Major
- Career path
- Intellectual and Social interests