

Sample Program Structure: Integrated Mentorship Model

For Consideration and Discussion

1 Purpose

Entering university is a significant turning point for students. The first-year experience is especially important. Sanagavarapu et al. (2019) suggested three primary domains of transitional challenges that may be encountered in first-year: *personal* (e.g. balancing work commitments with studies), *socio-emotional* (e.g. making new friends), and *academic* (e.g. completing assignments). To facilitate deeper and more diverse connections across the campus community, mentorship has emerged as a strategic priority to support first-year transition and sense of belonging:

The purpose of this discussion paper is to:

- Explore a variety of evidence-based mentorship models.
- Identify ways mentorship might be introduced and strengthened in the StFX context.
- Recognize how mentorship can foster productive growth and development for StFX students.

Rather than treat every opportunity for mentorship as the same, this discussion paper moves away from one-size-fits-all mentorship, and towards more dynamic relationships. We will explore a variety of evidence-based mentorship models that can be used across higher education and identify the ways various mentorship models might be introduced and strengthened at StFX.

2 What is Mentorship?

Sample Definitions

- An experienced person (mentor) provides career and/or personal support to another individual (protégé) (Livingstone and Naismith, 2018).
- A relationship between two individuals, whereby the more experienced person is committed to providing developmental support to the other, less experienced person (Crispe et al., 2017).
- Building a purposeful and personal relationship in which a more experienced person (mentor) provides guidance, feedback and wisdom to facilitate the growth and development of a less experienced person (mentee) (McWilliams, 2017).
- Advising students in academic and career decisions. Psychosocial functions of undergraduate mentoring may be related more toward supporting a student in adjusting to life apart from home and making wise personal decisions (Allen and Eby, 2010).
- Mentoring is focused on the growth and accomplishments of an individual and may include several forms of assistance and broad forms of support (academic, professional, career); it is personal and reciprocal (Crisp and Cruz, 2009).

Common Elements:

- Psychological/emotional support: listening, providing moral support, identifying problems, and providing encouragement.
- Goal setting and career paths: assistance with setting academic/career goals and decision-making.
- Academic subject knowledge support: acquisition of necessary skills and knowledge, educating, evaluating and challenging mentee academically.
- Role model: the ability of mentee to learn from a mentor's present and past actions and achievements/failures.

Sample Definition for StFX

We define mentoring as a mutually beneficial relationship that supports student development by providing sustained support to students in their pursuit of personal goals, academic achievements and career success. Our approach to mentorship informs: our relationships with students, questions we ask, resources we suggest and goals and decisions we help them make to increase their capacity to maximize their university experience and become life-long agents in their own success and well-being.

For Discussion: What experiences of mentorship do we already provide at StFX? What experiences are students having in these existing programs?

3 What We Have Heard

In Fall 2021, the StFX Senate Quality of Life Committee hosted a series of campus-wide consultation sessions to inform the StFX Student Experience and Opportunity Plan. To facilitate deeper and more diverse connections across the campus community, mentorship emerged as a strategic priority to support first-year transition and sense of belonging:

- Participants specified sources of support and mentorship deriving from peers, faculty and staff as having important functions for students as they navigate the transitions and daily stress of university life. These comments reflect the NSSE (2020) survey results, which suggest that 67% of StFX students report feeling left out some or most of the time. Clearly, there are individuals who do not experience the campus as a supportive community, and as a result, are not benefiting from the protective advantage of social support.
- Some participants identified groups on campus that might be considered vulnerable with respect to the experience of being included and supported. For example, international, Indigenous, Black, and 2SLGBTQ+ students may experience additional stress of not feeling included in the community experience, that may lead to mental health symptoms.

- Overall, there is a recognition that enhancing mentorship connections through deliberate efforts by staff and faculty can be an important antidote to the experience of isolation for many students.

Career Development and Mentorship

As one of the participants put it, we should not be letting our students wait until they have a degree in their hand and walking across the stage to start thinking about what they will do next; rather, it is our job as educators to help them make informed career decisions well before they even reach graduation.

Retention and persistence research indicate that institutions need to focus more on second year students when it comes to career mentorship and advising. Often times, we have a tendency to think of our first-year students as needing the most transitional support, but our second-year students are actually at a stage of “transitional knowing” – moving from the absolute thinking of the first year to the independent and contextual thinking of the upper year (Baxter-Magolda, 1992), which directly correlates to career support.

This is further validated by a relevant study, which suggests that 16%-19% of second-year students leave their first institution at the end of their second year (Noel-Levitz, 2013). In looking for recommendations to reduce attrition rates, many of the students showed an interest in acquiring career-related assistance in particular areas, including leadership experience. These statistics serve as a reminder of the critical role that advising and career development play in our second-year students’ success.

Equity, Access and Inclusion

In 2021, the Presidents’ Advisory Committee on Anti-Racism was convened to examine concerns regarding systemic discrimination and to assist the University in gaining a better understanding of the experiences and concerns of racialized faculty, staff and students. The PACAR Interim Report 1 (October 2021, p.7) recommended a series of major categories of action, among which was the creation of **mentoring and support networks for wellbeing**, to address the finding that a lack mentorship and support represented a barrier to advancement for some members of historically excluded groups.

This conclusion is supported by academic mentorship literature, which reveals that historically excluded students can benefit from participating in mentoring programs, including:

- increased student satisfaction and persistence (Kuh, 2008; Finley and McNair, 2013);
- increased sense of belonging and engagement (Kimzie et al., 2008); and,
- improved academic performance (ibid).

The same authors also highlight the importance of psychosocial supports for historically excluded students, which boosts well-being, satisfaction and persistence. An effective mentoring program would therefore include a dimension aimed at providing psychosocial coaching/advising, in addition to instrumental and technical supports related to transferring institutional knowledge and enhancing skill development.

4 Mentorship Models

In higher education, various models exist that illustrate the multiple ways that students seek and receive mentorship. Within this nearly endless diversity of mentorship, most mentoring will fall into one of the following types. This list is not comprehensive of every available framework and does not address overlapping ideas; however, it does illustrate how widely mentoring is influenced and defined.

Formal	This type of one-on-one mentoring pairs a mentor and with a mentee, usually from the same department, for a specified period of time. This approach assumed mentors accept responsibility for helping mentees grow and develop.
Informal	Voluntary mentoring relationship that are not assigned and lack structure about how mentors work with mentees constitute informal mentoring.
Dyad	Mentees are paired with more experienced mentors, often with institutional support. Successful dyad mentorships require active participation, with equal responsibility between mentors and mentees.
Peer	Peer mentoring consists of two or more people, often similar in experience, interacting as equal mentoring partners to achieve mutually determined goals. Each member provides guidance, expertise, support, counsel and advice, providing opportunities to pool knowledge and strengthen relationships. Peer mentorship can also effectively address psychosocial needs, normalize challenges, and reduce isolation.
Group	Group mentorship is where one mentor supports a group of mentees who hold themselves individually and collectively accountable to a common purpose of learning and development. Group mentoring provides opportunities for discussion and socialization, encouragement and support.
Constellation	Constellation mentoring is when one mentee has multiple mentors who take active interest and action to advance the mentee's development. Constellation mentoring allows mentees to experience mentors with different knowledge, experience, styles of mentoring and leadership, providing rich and in-depth engagement. Furthermore, having multiple mentors provides mentees with greater opportunities to expand their networks.

Additional Considerations for Mentorship Beyond Specific Models

- An integrated mentorship program involves the provision of academic support; career support (career guidance, skill development, networking); and psychosocial support (emotional support, confidence boosting, role modeling).
- Effective mentoring relationships must be dynamic, shifting as the skills and competencies of the mentor grow and as the needs, interests and goals of the mentees change. A single mentor may not have the entire suite of knowledge skills, abilities or connections needed by their mentee, suggesting that the use of multiple mentorship models are important for mentees' success.
- Mentoring should be integrated into the mental health continuum. Although mentoring relationships cannot replace professional care, they can be integrated along the continuum of care as one tool to promote mental well-being by helping students develop social-emotional

skills. For students who need more support, mentors can create connections with appropriate services and remove some barriers to access.

- It is critical that mentors engage in culturally relevant practices in the process of providing mentoring and support to increase access, persistence and success of students from historically-excluded and equity-deserving populations.

For Discussion: What experiences do we want students to have through the development of an 'integrated mentorship program'? What specific actions will be needed to realize this priority?

Case Example: Western University

Western University includes specific mentorship programs for off-campus students, mature students, student athletes, students registered with Accessible Education, or student wanting extra support from an upper year student in their faculty.

Society of Off-Campus Students (SOCS): A university-run group led by upper year students, designed to facilitate connections with other first-year students, have a student mentor, learn about the services at Western, and build lasting friendships. SOCS Leaders/OC Sophs student leaders representing all faculties who are carefully selected and extensively trained. For all SOCS Leaders, the first-year experience is still a fresh memory, and they are sensitive to the challenges faced by first-year students.

Out-of-Province Students Association (OPSA): A mentorship program for incoming first year students to connect with an upper year students from the same province (and often times from the same city and program as well). Initial connection takes place in the summer prior to arrival at Western in September, and guidance and support is maintained throughout the year. The mentor can support the first year student in timetabling and registration, and this program provides an avenue that first years can direct questions/concerns. For a first-year student this is a comfort of a first friend at Western as they embark on their journey, and for the upper year student it provides beneficial leadership experience.

Society of Mature Students (SMS): Regardless of how you were admitted to Western—mature, college, or university transfer student—students who identify with being a “mature student” can join SMS, the Community for “Mature” Students.

The Student Athlete Academic Mentorship Program (SAAMP) is a unique community of upper year student-athletes who volunteer to assist new student athletes at Western in making connections with other mentees and mentors in the program, learn about academic support services at Western and build lasting friendships. The group provides both transitional and ongoing academic support for new student athletes attending Western University. This program is a partnership between Sports and Recreation Services, Mustang Athletic Student’s Council and Academic Support & Engagement. All SAAMP Mentors are varsity athletes who are sensitive to the academic and social challenges faced by first-year student athletes.

5 Sample Mentorship Model for StFX

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Drawing on the theoretical frameworks informing the development of the StFX Student Experience and Opportunity Plan, all programs, resources and supports provided by StFX Student Services will be intentionally designed and grounded in the following evidence-informed frameworks to support student success and well-being.

Theory	Key Concepts	Alignment to Proposed Mentorship Program
Cultivate a Flourishing Campus	Cultivate environments that optimize emotional, psychological and social well-being; Recognize and focus on the student strengths	Mentorship will support students' academic, intrapersonal and interpersonal knowledge and skills development
Support Mental Health as a Continuum	Wellbeing exists on a spectrum; Integrate effective upstream, midstream, and downstream approaches to support wholistic student success.	Mentorship will be integrated along the continuum of care, to support wholistic student success and well-being
Recognize and Respond to Social Determinants of Health	Apply an intersectional lens; Provide culturally relevant programs and services; Address the specific needs of diverse student populations	Students with similar characteristics (identity, background, interests) will have an opportunity come together in community
Promote Agency through Wholistic Student Engagement	Recognize relationship between academic success and quality of life outside the classroom; create personalized pathways to student success	Students will acquire academic, interpersonal and career support and mentorship opportunities.
Harness a Developmental and Proactive Approach	Create facilitated and guided transitions; Focus on the first-year experience and intentionally scaffold student learning across all years of study.	Students will align themselves with mentors who share common interests, experiences and career pathways; opportunities for all students to engage across all programs and years of study

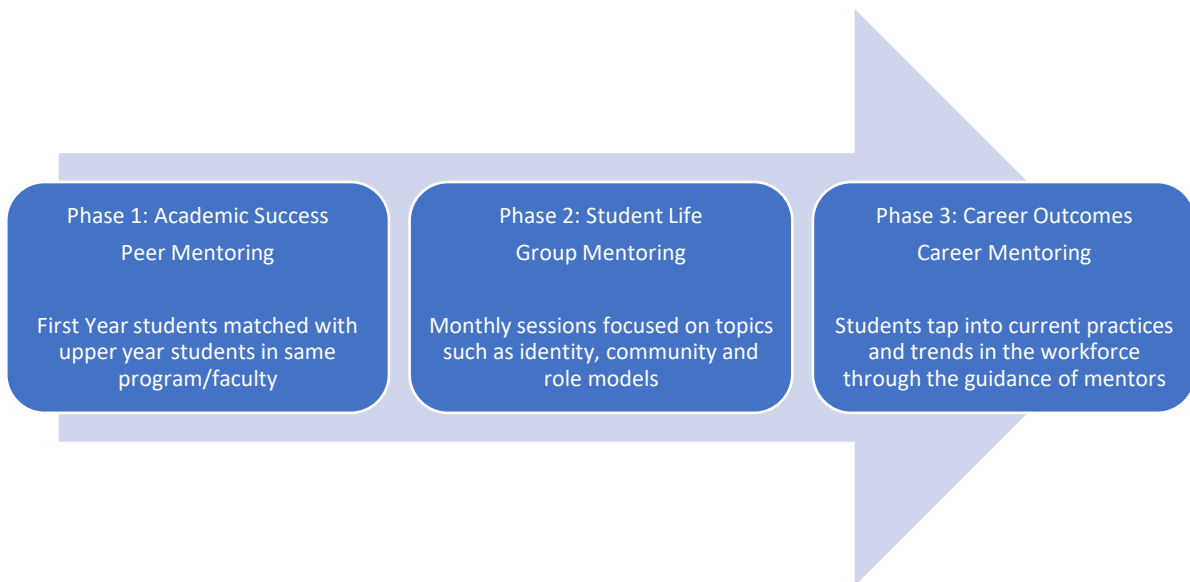
Sample Learning Outcomes

All Departments within StFX Student Services will intentionally cultivate student learning across the five factors of flourishing, allowing students to deepen their understanding of their personal strengths, and connecting these strengths to learning opportunities where they gain transferrable skills that will become the drivers for their future careers and lives.

By engaging in an integrated mentorship program at StFX, programs will encourage students to:

Be a(n)	By
Critical Thinker	evaluating resources, supports, services and programs that are available and how to access them
Future-Focused Planner	acknowledge and celebrate their growth through the creation of and reflection on personal, academic, and career goals.
Adaptable Problem Solver	discover their talents, develop their strengths, and describe ways that they can leverage their strengths for their personal development.
Community-Minded	identify connections and communities where they feel belonging.
Engaged Citizen	reflect on their growth through the process of discovering, acknowledging, and expressing their identities.
Innovative Leader	evaluating individual strengths while defining their personal vision for their university experience and their futures.

Sample Program Structure



Phase 1: Peer Mentoring

The Peer Mentoring Program matches first year students with upper year students in the same academic program (or with similar interests) in order to help incoming students successfully transition to StFX. Mentors and mentees may be paired together based upon common research interests, career paths, geographic location, or residence community. Students can also request to be matched culturally, linguistically, by academic program or faculty.

Phase 2: Group Mentoring

Students have the opportunity to get involved in Group Mentoring in order to connect and share their experiences. This could include groups for students who are 2SLGBTQ+, Black, Indigenous, mature students, international students, students with disabilities, first-generation, women in STEMM, etc.

Phase 3: Career Mentoring

The Career Mentoring Program guides 3rd year or 4th (graduating) students in making a successful and informed transition after graduation in the workforce. Students are given the opportunity to become a Mentor again by being paired with a Career Industry Mentor who share their expertise and experience in specific industries. They would also continue to mentor a first year Student Mentor.

To receive a professional mentor in the career industry of the student's choosing, each student in turn agrees to mentor a first year student (mentee). This sort of arrangement helps bolster the support structure for the program and cultivate a sense of giving back.

Curriculum

Information such as

- Academic expectations (e.g., student success habits and expectations)
- Accessing academic resources
- Accessing information about non-academic-related activities (e.g., counselling services, etc.)
- Getting familiarized with e-platforms (e.g., email, Moodle)
- Effective study strategies

Skills such as

- Self-management (e.g., strategies for managing time, academic work, etc.)
- Critical thinking
- Collaboration skills (e.g. teamwork)
- Asking questions and seeking help

Development such as

- Understanding course materials (e.g., syllabus, handouts, reading materials)
- Goal-setting (e.g., for a semester/an academic year, further studies)
- Undergraduate research
- Job and resume preparation
- Balancing social life and academic life

Are there aspects of the sample program provided that would help to advance our approach to wholistic student success and well-being? Are there other elements of the design, development and implementation of this program that we need to consider?

Sample Supporting Actions

To operationalize the priorities identified above, we can start to identify SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound) actions. The following provides some sample actions StFX could consider in order to advance the priorities identified above (for consideration and discussion):

Priority 1	SAMPLE ACTIONS
Develop an integrated mentorship program that will cultivate meaningful connections and enable all students to discover their personalized pathways to success and well-being.	1. Strengthen capacity for Residence Life Leadership Team to frontload developmental mentoring to support first-year transition and student success through intentional leadership development and training opportunities (Build Capacity)
	2. Develop a Peer Mentorship Program to support first-year students in building community connections, navigating post-secondary education and supporting academic success, with a focus on facilitating peer mentorship opportunities for historically excluded students.
	3. Create group mentoring networks for students from historically excluded groups to come together in community, share experiences and explore career opportunities and pathways.
	4. Create employment opportunities for upper year students from historically excluded groups focused on providing peer mentorship to new students.
	5. Develop a mentor training and development program to increase mentor skills development, strengths-based coaching, equity and inclusion and promote positive and enriching mentor-mentee relationships.
	6. Promote broad mentorship networks with StFX faculty, alumni and career services to ensure all StFX students have opportunities to seek career mentors from a diverse network.
	7. Enhance and expand our current mentorship networks with increased opportunities for students to gain professional experiences both at StFX and within Nova Scotia,

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