



Mentorship Program Toolkit

Prepared for: Student Leaders and Program Faculty
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May 1, 2014

Resolution 10: The Student Academy resolves to encourage the creation of a mentorship program at each PA program, where the clinical year students serve to aid the didactic year students through encouragement in academics and help with any other issues a first year student may encounter.

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Introduction Letter

Dear Student Leaders and Program Faculty,

One of the goals of the Student Academy of the American Academy of Physician Assistants (SAAAPA) is to aid in the development of students, enabling them to become excellent practitioners upon graduation. At the 2013 AAPA conference, we heard from students that mentorship was a key component to surviving the challenges of PA school and succeeding as a clinician. We thank you for your interest in coordinating a mentorship program at your own school – we believe that developing this support system is crucial. Mentorship programs can offer support to first year students and provide experience in mentoring and leadership for second year students. Students who have participated in such mentorship programs expressed to us how much the program helped them throughout their journey. A first year student from Misericordia University affirms, “I was so nervous about starting PA school and was relieved to hear that my school offered an opportunity to connect with a second year student who would serve as my mentor. As soon as we had our first discussion, a huge wave of relief came over me. My mentor was able to answer so many questions.”

We strongly encourage your school to implement a mentorship program and we have developed an easy-to-use toolkit with materials designed to help you. This basic framework of suggestions and recommendations developed by the SAAAPA Mentorship Volunteer Group is meant to serve as a guide. Schools across the nation have developed innovative ways to connect their students, with many “success stories” as a result, so we suggest using your creativity and ambition to customize a program that suites your students’ needs.

Remember, the Student Academy is here to help you – should you have any questions about the included materials, please contact us. As you develop or enhance your mentorship program, we encourage you to submit photos and updates to be featured in SAAAPA publications. In the meantime, continue to get ideas and stay in touch with SAAAPA via our website www.pastudentessentials.com, Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/AAPAstudents> and Twitter <https://twitter.com/SAAAPA>.

Thank you for taking on the task of improving mentorship opportunities at your school!

Sincerely,

The Mentorship Volunteer Group

Student Academy of the American Academy of Physician Assistants (SAAAPA)



Sample Pairing Form

Answers to these questions can be reviewed by a committee to determine similar matches or can serve as an introduction for random pairs. Remember to tailor the questions to fit your program! Consider using Formsite, Survey Monkey or a Google Drive form to get all of this information digitally!

Name & Graduation Year:

Email/Phone:

Age/Birthdate:

Hometown:

Family: Married? Kids? Pets?

Housing: On campus? Off campus? Roommates? Family?

Personality: Extrovert? Introvert? Spiritual? Homebody?

Interests: Hobbies? Sports? Clubs?

Favorites: Food? Drink? TV shows?

Biggest factor in choosing this school?

Are you interested in any particular medical field or population?

What are your go-to study methods?

If you were stranded on an island and could only bring three things, what would they be?

What are/were you most excited about in regards to starting PA school?

What are/were you most worried about in regards to starting PA school?

Describe the qualities/characteristics of your ideal mentor/mentee:

Identify one of your strengths and one of your weaknesses:

Ways to Connect

Connecting with your mentor/mentee will, of course, depend on the amount of time you have available, the resources near you and your group dynamic. Face-to-face interaction is usually the most comforting and effective for first year students, but when second year students are off-campus, emails may have to suffice. Either way, make sure to clarify expectations early on for all students and propose a variety of ideas on ways to connect.

Out & About	On Campus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go sightseeing • Pair up with another group and sing karaoke • Go for ice cream or frozen yogurt • See a movie, concert or comedy show together • Support your local sports teams • Be running buddies as you train for a 5K • Take a yoga, boxing or dance class • Plan a skiing, snowboarding, or sledding trip • Check out a local vineyard, brewery, or festival • Test your knowledge at trivia night • Bake treats for your entire class • Volunteer at a local community center • Lend a hand as a volunteer medic for a marathon • Attend a local PA networking event or conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide intel on classes and professors • Reveal your PA school obstacles and triumphs • Read JAAPA and discuss your impressions • Plan a coffee date for every Monday morning • Tour campus before the start of class • Share your secret study spots • Point out the best lunch places • Design a personalized study plan together • Discuss test taking skills and strategies • Swap résumés for editing and ideas • Practice using your ophthalmoscopes • Shop for binders, highlighters and #2 pencils • Decorate your lockers with inspiring quotes • Share a table to study quietly at the library



Mentorship Success Stories

First Year Student Perspectives

"My mentor was able to answer so many questions, from the way the classes are structured, to which textbooks I really needed. Our mentor/mentee relationship didn't end after school started – my mentor was able to help me organize myself for midterms and develop study strategies for my first semester. I couldn't have gotten through the grueling first semester in PA school without my mentor, and for that I owe her a huge thanks."

A.S., St. John's University

"I was fortunate to be paired with a very caring and involved buddy. We have formed a close relationship and in my experience, the buddy system is a great way to transition into a graduate program. My buddy is able to answer any questions I have about professors, books, class schedules, etc., because she has already been through it. I arrived without knowing anyone in the program (or really in the city) so it was wonderful that I had a buddy to introduce me to her classmates even before school started. On top of all of that, it is awesome when she offers me her old books!"

K.L., George Washington University

Second Year Student Perspectives

"Lock Haven assigns a first year PA student to each incoming student. They contact the incoming students and offer their advice, and answer any questions an incoming student may have. Having a mentor before starting the first day of PA school was a breath of fresh air. It was extremely helpful having insight from someone who just completed their first year. My mentor gave me helpful tips on how to survive the rigors of PA school, stress relieving activities and recommended texts he would buy. When it came time to go on rotations he was still there to guide me on the journey of entering the clinical year. Having a mentor makes the transition from undergraduate to graduate school a lot less terrifying."

B.P., Lock Haven University-Clearfield

"I am currently halfway through my second year and I am about to start rotations. Our program assigns us to a 'big' when we first get into school. It's been so helpful and reassuring to have someone to talk to who has been where we are now. I have gotten such great advice and guidance from my big on topics like how to study, what to expect, and even just encouragement when things get tough. I believe having this support is crucial for PA students to succeed in school."

A.M., Rutgers School of Health Related Professions



Newly Developed Mentorship Programs

"During my first year of PA school we did not have much interaction with the second year class. It was not until the end of the first year that I met some second year students and felt comfortable enough to ask for advice. This kind of advice was something I wish I'd had months and months prior! With that in mind, our PA Student Society (PASS) initiated a mentoring program between first and second years. We had a few bumps in the road at the beginning: I approached our program director about the idea, but she was hesitant to mandate students to be mentors. From this we decided to affiliate with PASS instead of our program as a whole. We then asked for second year volunteers. Initially we had little interest until we started reaching out to our second year classmates whom we thought would make good mentors. Those students we reached out to responded to our encouragement and we got about 45 percent of our class to volunteer to mentor. Each mentor was assigned 2-3 first year students. We matched the mentors with the incoming first year students based on a ten questions survey. The questions on the survey covered topics like interests outside of school, family life, and what each person expected to get out of the mentor program. Choosing the match ups was a long process, but in the end, putting the extra time to find people with similar interests helped break the ice. With the first semester of our mentor program coming to an end, I would say it was a success. There was a lot of good feedback from our first year class. Many of our first year students have already inquired about being mentors next year!"

H.C., Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences University

"My feelings before PA school were the same as anyone else's, I'm sure. Although this was something I had set my mind to long before applying, I was terrified for the semester to begin. One thing that helped ease my mind was the mentoring program that the Hofstra PA students put together. They individually pick mentors for the incoming class by having both classes fill out a survey. Not only was the survey school related, asking questions such as "how do you study best" and "what do you think are your strengths and weaknesses are about PA school" but they asked us personal questions like "what do you like to do on the weekend" and "what kind of extracurricular activities did you participate in during undergrad." The upper-classmen were able to get an idea about our school training and they dug a little into our past to find a compatible match for us. Not only is my mentor a great, smart student who helps calm me down before an exam, but she is also my friend. We talk about non-school related subjects and even go out on the weekends when we both aren't busy studying for an exam. I sometimes think I am more similar to her than I am with some friends from home. As I'm writing this, I'm helping prepare questions for the upcoming mentoring survey. Due to my great experience, I'm beyond excited to help someone in the incoming class the way my mentor was able to help me."

S.W., Hofstra University

Checklist

- ☐ Evaluate existing mentorship opportunities at your school.
- ☐ Determine if there is a need to create or improve mentorship opportunities.
- ☐ Brainstorm what the ideal Mentorship Program may look like.
- ☐ Recruit a task-force of students to develop, implement and maintain your Mentorship Program.
- ☐ Determine if the Mentorship Program will be its own entity, absorbed into your student society, or hosted by the school.
- ☐ Obtain permission from your school's faculty/staff such as the Director or Dean.
- ☐ Consider having a faculty advisor.
- ☐ Design your Mentorship Program using materials provided by SAAAPA as well as your students' own original ideas.
- ☐ Distribute mentor/mentee surveys with a deadline for responses.
- ☐ Collect surveys and match mentors with mentees.
- ☐ Create a facebook group as an online platform for buddies to connect.
- ☐ Offer suggestions on ways for students to connect with their buddies at and around school.
- ☐ Plan at least one program-sponsored mentor/mentee event per semester.
- ☐ Send monthly reminder emails with new ideas and opportunities for connecting.