



CHAMPIONING PEER MENTORSHIP

in the Department of Chemistry

Peer mentorship is a critical driver of success for undergraduate students in introductory courses. In the Department of Chemistry at Wayne State University, students who have excelled in introductory courses serve as mentors to students who are taking the same course for the first time. In addition to helping their peers develop a solid foundation in chemistry coursework, mentors gain meaningful coaching and on-campus employment experience.

Students who work with a peer mentor have benefited from higher letter grades and pass rates

in their chemistry courses, stronger engagement with faculty members and fellow students, deeper understanding of course content and a mastery of problem-solving techniques. However, academic success is not the only thing students gain through mentorship. Student mentors who come from similar backgrounds can provide their peers with valuable cultural and social support, helping them feel more comfortable and connected on campus.



■ IT'S ALL IN THE NAME

The purpose of peer mentorship is to foster student connection and relationship development. Among its many benefits, peer mentorship cultivates communities in which students can learn, share and grow together. Wayne State is one of Michigan's most diverse college campuses and is the top Michigan institution with a Carnegie R1 classification – which denotes the highest level of research activity – in social mobility. This is demonstrated by Wayne State's commitment to helping economically disadvantaged students earn degrees and prepare for prosperous careers.



Lower-income and first-generation college students may face unique challenges related to their cultural backgrounds or lack of family experience with higher education. Peer mentors can assist in orienting students with academic resources and study strategies, but they can also help motivate students along their academic journeys and boost their confidence that they, too, can excel in college and achieve their dreams no matter their circumstances.

■ SUPPORT THAT IS OBLIGATORY, NOT OPTIONAL

In 2020, the Chemistry Learning Community program employed 44 peer mentors to support students in all foundational chemistry courses. Although the program is no longer supported by the university, the six learning communities, spanning seven introductory courses, benefited a total of 1,600 students and peer mentors. Since student mentorship communities were implemented, the department has seen an increase in student pass rates in all introductory courses each year, including from 70% to 82% in the Chemistry Skills and Reasoning course.



"I peer mentored for a few introductory chemistry courses. Those experiences strengthened my relationship with the faculty and brought me into a community of like-minded students who were interested in the same things, which helped solidify my decision that this was the right academic route for me."

Paul Marshall
Biochemistry and chemical biology major



Our primary need is funding to hire more peer mentors who can support more chemistry students. Peer mentors are paid an hourly rate that equals \$1,875 per semester, or \$3,750 per year. As our available funding depletes and the value of STEM education increases, philanthropic support for the Chemistry Peer Mentor Program is more essential than ever. To equip our students with the skills and experiences needed to begin successful careers and become advocates for others in the community and in the field, we must invest in their personal and professional development through peer mentorship.

Your generosity offers students in the Department of Chemistry invaluable growth opportunities that increase their success beyond graduation. We appreciate your interest in helping students build a brighter future through the exceptional education Wayne State provides.

