Mentoring First-Generation Graduate Students 
at the University of California, Riverside 

Presented by Kim Palmore, PhD
Pierre Bourdieu calls this socially constructed personal space “habitus”: a structure of the mind created by an acquired or imposed understanding of one’s surroundings and an ultimate acceptance of social sensibilities, tendencies, behaviors, tastes, and preconceived ideas (Brubaker).
Susan Gardner’s First Generation “Themes”

1. Breaking the Chain
2. Knowing the Rules
3. Living in Two Worlds
4. Seeking Support
We had to imagine a program that helped reshape “the fit”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Validating Working-Class Strengths</th>
<th>Demonstrating Middle-Class Skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Greater verbal agility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to Community</td>
<td>Larger vocabularies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forthrightness</td>
<td>More comfort with authority figures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>More familiarity with abstract concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Sense</td>
<td></td>
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We invited 66 students

47 accepted

We hired 25 peer mentors

And 13 faculty mentors
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What do Peer Mentors Do?

- take an interest in developing another person’s career and well-being
- have an interpersonal relationship with those whom they mentor
- advance the mentee’s academic and professional goals in directions most desired by the individual
- tailor mentoring styles and content to individuals, including adjustments due to differences in culture, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic opportunity, physical ability, etc.
- share stories with students about their own educational careers and the ways they overcame obstacles
- help students manage interaction with professors both in class and during office hours
- show students how they learned time management
- listen to students describe personal problems and explore resources at the university to deal with problems
- help new students understand how to use resources at the university
The impostor syndrome is the feeling of being an intellectual fraud, and it is particularly rife among high achieving persons. It is characterized by the inability to accept one’s success.
Initial Design for Peer Mentoring Program from 2010-11
Winter 2011 Schedule

Week 1: Welcome Back!
- Wrap up concerns from last quarter (grades, enrollment, classes, relationships, etc.)
- Discuss goals and what we want to cover together this quarter

Week 2: Research and Writing: Getting Started this Quarter
- Continue conversations from last quarter about writing and research
- Set goals together about researching and writing
- Go over essay from last quarter together to discuss comments and improving writing

Week 3: Conferencing Introduction
- Talk about upcoming conference presentation (audience, time limits, etc.)
- Conference Background: What is a conference? What do you do at a conference?
- Discuss goals of conference presentation and create list for "what makes a great talk"

Week 3: Conferencing (Continued)
- Are you getting conference paper aloud? Share papers and edit together
- Talk about organization, sentence structures for reading aloud, and clarity

Week 5: Conferencing (Continued)
- Read conference paper aloud (mentor and mentee share papers together)
- Give feedback on talk
- Introduce conferencing and what to expect during the actual talking experience

Week 6: Creating a "Starter" CV
- Meet and discuss different kinds of CVs (English discipline
- Bring in draft of CV and workshop
- Discuss how to build upon this starter CV

Week 7: Writing and Research: Wrapping Up Research and Starting to Draft
- Discuss research and creating a thesis
- Request feedback from your mentors

Week 8: Writing and Research: Starting to "Really" Draft
- Discuss strategies for writing:
- Refine thesis statements and look at drafts together

Week 9: Managing Your First Quarter of Teaching Composition
- Discuss managing teaching and seminar work
- Discuss class and look at a sample syllabus with lesson plans

Week 10: Starting Your First Quarter of Teaching Composition (Continued)
- Discuss navigating the title "GTA"
- Discuss creating a teaching persona
- Discuss creating classes that speak to your own academic fields
Thursday April 14
Rickerby Hinds
Effective Presentation Techniques: Focus on Acting

Friday April 22
Aaron Bushong
Time Management

Thursday April 28
Genevieve Tauxe
Financial Planning for Grad Students

Friday May 6
Tanner Higgin
Building a Personal Website

Thursday May 12
Sonia Rodriguez
Becoming your own Editor
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussed your academic program or course selection with an older student or peer mentor</td>
<td>Mean 3.34</td>
<td>Mean 2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed ideas for a term paper or other class project with an older student or peer mentor</td>
<td>Mean 2.93</td>
<td>Mean 2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked harder as a result of feedback from an older student or peer mentor</td>
<td>Mean 2.86</td>
<td>Mean 2.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked an older student or peer mentor for comments and criticisms about your academic performance</td>
<td>Mean 2.76</td>
<td>Mean 1.91</td>
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Grad Mentoring Program 2011/12
www.gradmentors.ucr.edu

- 66 incoming students placed in the program this year.
- NSF Grant Writing Workshops
- Time Management Workshops
- Networking Skills
- One to One Weekly Conferences
- Building Faculty Relationships
- Skill Building
Managing Stress and Anxiety
by UCR Mentors on March 23, 2015

Graduate school is an extremely stressful environment. However, if graduate students feel that they can cope with the anxiety-inducing factors that they may actually have control over, I believe, graduate students may feel in control of their stress.

On a personal level, managing anxiety and creating balance in my life has been a primary focus for me over the past quarter. Indeed, starting last quarter, I had a really rough time trying to write my first dissertation chapter and felt anxious and horrible about myself all day, every day for about three months. Here are some ways in which I've been working towards managing my own graduate school-related anxieties—ways that I would like to share:

1. Limit work time. Create a schedule for work, and focus on completing work during the times set aside. If work does not get done in these focused work times, the work will have to wait.
2. Participate in “happy” activities. For example, I like to have at-home spa evenings, go out to lunch or dinner with friends, and take my dog for walks.
3. Limit caffeine. Limiting caffeine may sound silly. However, since beginning graduate school, coffee, for me, has become a major crutch. Coffee, in large quantities, of course, can exacerbate anxiety. This past quarter, I started drinking tea, which has much less caffeine than coffee.
4. Eat for health. When I get stressed out, I find myself eating serious junk food. And, I know I'm not alone in eating junk food when stressed out. Indeed, many graduate students eat salt- and/or sugar-laced foods during periods of extreme stress. Eating junk food, I have found, only aggravates my anxiety and makes me feel terrible, physically and mentally.
5. Focus on one task at a time. Graduate students have to juggle many activities and obligations all at once. Focusing on one activity/obligation at a time helps graduate students feel on top of work.