

Peer Mentoring Circles

Introduction

The Office of Human Resources is now seeking applications for *Peer Mentoring Circles*. The purpose of the peer mentoring circles is to provide support for employees at all career levels. Providing employees mentoring and career support is a central part of the university's "priority to invest in faculty and staff excellence." The priority is further defined in the following priority statement of the Strategic Plan:

Investing in Faculty and Staff Excellence: Dedicate and ensure ongoing resources to recruit, retain and support exceptionally talented faculty and staff.

- Emphasize innovative recruitment and retention strategies.
 - Identify and invest in ongoing and clear paths for career advancement.
 - Incentivize employee innovation and collaboration.
 - Foster a team-oriented community of employees committed to quality of life and work.
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What

A mentoring circle is a small group of people who meet regularly to discuss specific topics related to their professional development. Similar to group mentoring, it can consist of one mentor and multiple mentees or multiple mentors and mentees. The key difference here is that circle mentorship requires a facilitator. The facilitator takes care of administrative duties (e.g., scheduling, planning meeting topics and formats, communicating with mentees and university stakeholders) and multiple mentees who are usually at similar levels in their careers. With our peer mentoring circles, we plan to have co-facilitators for our inaugural year.

Why

Why peer mentoring circles?

1. Peer mentoring can involve several people who support and advise one another in a group or "circle" rather than a one-to-one relationship.
 2. Little risk of becoming overly dependent on any one person as might occur in a one-to-one mentoring relationship.
 3. Peer relationships can provide a variety of developmental benefits, many of which are similar to the career and psychosocial functions found in conventional mentoring.
 4. Cross-disciplinary mentoring groups give participants a broader perspective of the university community.
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Roles and Responsibilities

The following outlines the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the Office of Human Resources (HR), facilitator, and participants.

HR Role

- Serve as the program coordinator. This entails collecting, reviewing, and approving proposals.
- Host informational mentor training sessions to relay expectations and answer questions.
- Communicate the program campus-wide to gain participation.

Facilitator (Mentor) Role

- Write a proposal for a peer mentoring circle. (See attached proposal guide)
- Attend a short mentor training session date TDB.
- Meet with your co-facilitator to create a plan for the year.
- Create norms for your peer mentoring circle.
- Meet with other peer mentor circle facilitators approximately three times during the year.
- Complete a brief final evaluation and feedback form to inform future and continued peer mentoring circle programming.
- Communicate other relevant university programming to peer mentoring circle members.
- Meet with the Director of Learning and Organizational Development, as needed.
- Consider attending other university events as a group (university faculty/staff semester meetings, Staff Connect, Campus Connections, athletic and arts events).

Participant (Mentees) Role

- Sign an agreement committing to participate in a peer mentoring circle.
 - Attend all sessions unless an emergency arises.
 - Prepare for meetings.
 - Consider keeping a mentoring journal to document activities, questions, and reflections for the year. The journal may be individual or group authored.
 - Contribute to the development of a collective mentoring circle product - or support mentoring circle members in their individual projects/products.
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Proposal Guide Consider the following items as you develop your proposal. All items must be included for your proposal to be accepted.

- A. **Title/Theme/Focus of Peer Mentoring Circle**
- B. **Facilitator Names and Bios** (these will be shared with employees so that they can choose peer mentoring circles of interest)
 - a. Two employees should apply as co-facilitators. Though not required, pairs from different departments are encouraged.
 - b. Bios should include names, pronouns and identities, department, title, service activities, recognitions/awards, other interests and hobbies. In addition, you may include a statement related to what you love about AppState, why you chose AppState, or why you have chosen to stay at AppState.
- C. **Describe a vision for the peer mentoring circle** by completing a sentence such as this one, “In this peer mentoring circle, we will...” (e.g., focus on developing a topic like managing budgets; meet at various destinations in the high country to walk, hike, talk, and decompress; discuss the needs of women in STEM; focus on how to navigate a career while parenting young children)
- D. **Intended audience:** Are there particular people who might benefit from this offering, or is it open to all employees? Is it for parents of young children? Is it for early career administrative professionals? Is it to support the unique needs of second/third shift employees?
- E. **Meeting Pattern and Location.** Specify whether the group will meet in person or on Zoom (or alternate meeting types). Meetings should be synchronous but may also be supported with asynchronous communication. Please indicate the dates your group will meet.

Questions

Contact Learning and Organizational Development with any questions.
