

Peer Mentor Program Overview

Goals of the Theatre Arts Department Peer Mentor Program

- **The primary goal of the peer mentor program is to partner successful returning theatre company members with new theatre majors, both traditional freshmen and transfer student, in order to help them have a smoother, more positive, productive transition into UW-Parkside, the Theatre Arts Department, and the many academic, artistic, and company expectations of the university and the professional theatre training company. The specific goals of the theater peer mentor program include:**
 - helping new students become more aware of and comfortable with the UWP campus and the Theatre Arts Department;
 - helping new students “find their way” around the department and campus during the first weeks of school;
 - helping new theater students more aware of the academic expectations and demands placed on university students in general and theatre company members specifically;
 - clarifying the Theatre Arts Department’s academic, artistic, and company policies and expectations as outlined in the student handbook;
 - providing a one-on-one peer advisor and friend who can offer informal advice, guidance, and suggestions on a full range of academic, production, company, social, and personal issues and topics;
 - serve as a “connection” and “bridge” between all theater company members (including students and staff) and helping new students to feel more “included” in the programs many projects and activities;
 - serving as enthusiastic role models for succeeding as students, company members, artists, and positive members of a collaborative community;
 - inviting new students to actively participate in various creative and social activities and projects;

Important Concepts the New Students Need to Know According to Peer Mentors

- New students need to have regular, informal contact with peer mentors throughout the months prior to the start of classes so that they can better prepare for the transition to UW-Parkside and the Theatre Arts company;
- New Students need to know basic “survival techniques” and “do’s” and “don’ts” when as it relates to being a college student, a theater major, and a member of an active production company;
- New Students need to know more about how the “system” works on the campus and in the Theatre Arts Department – helping them to understand who to go to and how to get important things done;
- New Students need to understand the heavy expectations and demands placed on Theatre Arts majors and company members so that they can better live up to these expectations and demands;
- New Students need to be made aware of dates for Monday Peer Mentor meetings, Wednesday All-Department Meetings, and weekly Wednesday noon Drama Club meetings;
- New Students need to learn what academic support services are available on campus and in the department, as well as the importance of making us of your faculty and staff advisors;

- New Students need to learn where to go on campus for various essential things, i.e. registrar, financial aid, classes, cafeteria, theatre spaces, etc.
- New Students need to understand how to get actively involved in departmental activities, including fully produced shows, FreshINK productions and Drama Club special events;
- New Students need to know about the unique and diverse personalities (students, faculty, and staff) of the department and discuss how they can work together in a positive, collaborative manner;
- New Students need to know more about course rotation charts, degree requirements, Company Participation Record Forms (CPR), the Company Expectations and Policies Document, acting and technical practicum requirements, and class scheduling issues;
- New Students need understand the importance of grades, as indicated in the departmental policies document, so that they can succeed academically and remain eligible to be active in all artistic and production projects of the program;
- New students need to understand how the January Academic Reviews and May Talent Reviews work so that they can better prepare for these important assessment programs;
- New students need to be made aware of various production and backstage etiquette rules and expectations for actors and crew members;
- New students need to be made aware of the Theatre Department's master production calendar, as well as the importance of keeping personal calendars and day planners;
- New students need to be made aware of the many employment opportunities that exist in the Theatre Arts Department, including scenic lab, costume lab, ArtsAlive, and Fireside employment;

Expectations of Student Mentors

- Mentors should contact their selected new students throughout the summer months, making themselves available to discuss any questions that new students may have.
- Mentors and new students should attend monthly meetings as a group, all scheduled for Mondays at noon.
- Mentors should have regular contacts with their mentees – both formal and informal – and mentors take more *responsibility* for helping their mentoree to succeed;
- Mentors should connect with their mentees at the annual beginning of the year all-department picnic.
- Mentors should offer a TOUR of the theatre facilities and the entire campus in the first week of classes – perhaps as a scavenger hunt or game.
- Mentors should invite new students to “shadow” them in the first week when mentors take partners to shops, rehearsals, bookstore, class rooms, meals, the laundry, etc.
- Mentors should actively participate in all-department meetings and monthly mentor meetings as we review various program policies, such as the Academic Achievement Policy, the Active Involvement Policy, and the Quality Assurance Statement so that new students can better understand program expectations and procedures;
- Mentors should invite new students to come to the Green Room and other gather spots for company members, introducing them to all the people they need to know;

Additional Words of Wisdom from Successful Peer Mentors for New Students

- New students should realize that being a Theatre Arts major and company member is very demanding and challenging. It is essential that new students clearly understand the Theatre Arts Department's academic and artistic policies and expectations.
- New students need to get as involved in the Theatre Arts Department as active company members as soon as possible; engagement is key to success early on in the semester.

- New students should understand what it means to be a “company member” that everyone can count on to get things done.
- New students need to understand the getting jobs outside the department are challenging due to the intense academic and production schedules that theatre students maintain. It’s tough to work off campus more than 10 hours each week – and you need a flexible employer.
- New students should understand various essential techniques and strategies for success in classes – and ways to effectively deal with academic challenges and problems that may arise throughout the semester. Drop/add dates are important things to clarify and stress.
- New students need to know that the faculty and staff of the department expect students to be professional, prompt, and prepared for the work at hand – whether it be classes, rehearsals, production practicums, Super Saturdays, and other departmental events.
- New students need to know who to go to on campus and in the department to help them with their questions, projects, and concerns.
- New students need to understand the value of working with their academic advisor.
- New students need to understand that it’s important to ask questions and seek help when they need it.