Program Goal

The purpose of the mentor program will be to assist first-year graduate students with their transition to the University of Florida, the Plant Pathology Department, graduate school, graduate student life, and Gainesville. All incoming PhD and MS students will be invited to participate. Non-first year students coming from REC's and MS students in the department transitioning to a PhD program internally, will also be invited to participate.

Structure of the Program

Incoming students that express interest in participating in the program will be assigned a second- to fourth-year peer mentor pursuing the same degree level in order to provide support as well as guidance on degree program requirements. The program will begin with a comprehensive orientation or review for the mentors, discussing the various campus and community resources available to the students. Throughout the year, mentors will help the new students by answering questions and/or aiding in finding information.

Overview

- **Recruiting mentors for the program** – The program would seek students in their 2nd to 4th year with a desire to be mentors and that have experience in taking UF courses, belonging to UF associations/clubs in and/or outside the Plant Pathology department and the university, and participating in community activities.

  * A meeting would be arranged to discuss the resources that would be useful for mentors to have in order to help the new students feel welcomed and to discuss the needs of the new students as far as navigating through Graduate School and the Plant Pathology Department.

- **Training Mentors** – Mentors would receive information about the available resources (bus routes, graduate school office, the Hub, webpage/online resources, etc.), and discuss what the mentor-new student relationship should include.
  
  * A meeting would be arranged to discuss the resources that would be useful for mentors to have in order to help the new students feel welcomed and to discuss the needs of the new students as far as navigating through Graduate School and the Plant Pathology Department.

- **Building Mentor/New student relationships** – Mentors and new students would be paired up at least 2 weeks before the start of the Fall semester and introduced via e-mail. The e-mail would include information about the program, introduce each person, and provide contact information.

- **Monitoring and Gathering Feedback from the program** – To ensure the program remains on track and effective throughout the new student’s first year, feedback will be collected from the Mentors and the new students. Feedback would be gathered through group discussions and/or e-mail surveys. The discussions and surveys will let us evaluate the areas of the program that need improvements, help us better support the needs of the mentors and the new students, and help us fine-tune the goals of the program.