



**UMA TRIO Scholars
Peer Coach Handbook
2021-2022**

Revised 08-26-2021

Welcome TRIO Scholars Student Peer Coaches!

Thank you for being a part of our team and please know how grateful we are to you. The Peer Coach function of TRIO is a tremendous part of the services that we offer to TRIO eligible students.

Working in the TRIO department is unlike many of the student employment opportunities at UMA. Peer coaching is intense work, but the rewards are plenty and we hope that you enjoy your time with us in this role.

We have recently updated this handbook in order to give the Peer Coach a guide for the coaching function and to share some wisdom about how this relationship with students works. As always in the people services industry, we must treat our jobs as an evolving craft. Therefore, your feedback and your ideas are important to our growth and development as a program. It is no accident that this handbook is dated. The intention for this document is to communicate the best practices according to our current knowledge.

If you have any ideas or suggestions, please offer these, as we will update this handbook from year to year. As we learn more about our students, our student employees, our staff, our community, and the goals of the University of Maine at Augusta, we help all of our students to Declare Your Future.

Thank you again for your commitment to excellence and your desire to guide your peers in this important work.

Yours in Education,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sara', with a stylized, flowing script.

Sara M. Fawcett née Flowers, Ph.D.
Director of UMA TRIO Scholars

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What is TRIO?

The TRIO Program is a federally funded TRIO Student Support Services program intended to assist college students to ensure their success in completing a post-secondary education.

In order to be eligible as a TRIO participant, a student must be a first-generation student, have unmet financial need or be low-income, or have a documented disability. Only students enrolled in four-year degree programs are eligible for UMA TRIO SCHOLARS.

The TRIO Program offers a wide range of amplified support services to aid students in their college experience many of which come from the Peer Coach Program. Such amplified services include, but are not limited to

- Professional staff coaching
- Peer coaching
- Study groups
- Academic tutoring
- Educational workshops
- Cultural outings
- Social engagement
- Time management help
- Additional grant aid (for students who also receive a Pell Grant)
- Career services

Mission Statement

The University of Maine at Augusta has designed the Peer Coaching Program to assist other students with their study skills, time management, stress management, and their adjustment to college. Peer Coaches are trained undergraduates who are available to help students succeed at the University of Maine at Augusta through student-to-student guidance activities. The Peer Coaches also form an important link between students and The University of Maine at Augusta, helping students utilize the many resources available from other campus programs.

The Peer Coaching Program emphasizes the connection between the academic and the social. Peer coaches meet with students in the TRIO offices, located in 195 Jewett Hall on the Augusta campus and 202 Belfast Hall on the Bangor campus. These locations provide an inviting and comfortable environment for students to work together and form lasting supportive relationships.

A successful coaching experience promotes a learning partnership in which Peer Coaches help students build their confidence through academic success and help integrate the student into The University of Maine at Augusta community.

The TRIO-eligible Student

Students who are TRIO eligible are first generation, low income, and/or disabled. In order help student open the doors to an outstanding academic experience, there are some factors that Peer Coaches should know and understand.

First Generation Students

- Some may not know aspects of scholarship that seem obvious to you (e.g. reading a syllabus).
- Their families and home lives may not support their academic goals.
- The people they meet in college may be their only role models for college success.

Low Income Students

- Poverty is not a deficiency in people; it is a situation and education is one of the solutions.
- Having a low income in no way suggests they are not academically capable.
- A positive attitude and personal resiliency are the greatest, cost-free assets we can offer.

Students with Disabilities

- They are not disabled people; they are people experiencing disabilities. People come first.
- Having a visible or invisible disability does not mean that a student is not academically capable.
- Begin by assuming that a student with disabilities is fully capable.

Student Outcomes

By participating in the Peer Coaching Program, students will gain knowledge in

- Time management
- Test-taking skills
- Available support services
- Extra-curricular activities

They will also develop

- Familiarity with campus facilities
- A sense of belonging
- Self-confidence
- Academic self-efficacy
- Meaningful connections with UMA faculty, staff, and students
- The ability to make informed decisions regarding their education

What is Coaching?

Dictionary.com defines a coach as “a person who gives instructions or advice; one who trains or prepares a student.” In the TRIO program, a Peer Coach is a trained upper class undergraduate who supports and helps students succeed at The University of Maine at Augusta academically, socially, and personally.

A more in-depth look at what coaching is reveals the following ways in which the Peer Coach can be effective

- Help students acclimate to The University of Maine at Augusta: finding classrooms, offices, understanding school policies and the language of the university (for example: syllabus, Blackboard, MaineStreet)
- Show students how to find resources: academically and socially

- Help students adjust to college life: scheduling, stress, prioritizing, etc.
- Be a good role model
- Give students the direction, but expect them to make and follow through on the action steps
- Be open-minded and flexible with students
- Offer peer-to-peer guidance and support
- Help students build their confidence

All TRIO eligible students may receive Peer Coaching services; however, priority is to first- and second-year students.

Characteristics of a Peer Coach

The most important aspect to remember about being a Peer Coach is to *coach*! Some common traits of a successful Peer Coach are

- Being accessible to students when appropriate
- Being sensitive to the needs of students
- Showing interest in what is happening with students
- Working diligently and staying motivated
- Displaying a positive attitude
- Being caring, kind, and helpful
- Being respectful when representing TRIO with other departments, faculty, and students
- Keeping personal opinions to yourself
- Only speaking positively about other departments
- Refraining from using profanity

The Duties of a Peer Coach

TRIO Peer Coaches have many different duties. TRIO expects Peer Coaches to help students become more confident in their ability to succeed at The University of Maine at Augusta by supporting them, but TRIO also expects Peer Coaches to be representatives of the TRIO Program, and be role models for other student workers.

The most important duties that Peer Coaches have are

- Setting appropriate boundaries with students
- Helping students build their self-confidence
- Providing reality testing for students
- Confronting negative behaviors and attitudes
- Listening actively to students
- Offering challenging ideas to students
- Helping students develop resources
- Acting as an advocate for students
- Sharing critical knowledge with students
- Providing academic help and study coaching
- Providing career exploration assistance
- Providing emotional support
- Providing social experiences

How Peer Coaches Offer Support

Academic Support

Providing academic support to students is an important part of a Peer Coach's responsibilities. The Peer Coaches are usually the first resource students utilize when coming to the TRIO office, so supporting students academically is essential.

UMA TRIO SCHOLARS expects Peer Coaches to generate discussions with students regarding their educational goals and choices. Many times, students can only see one or two options available to them, when in reality, even though it may not be the path of least resistance, there are many different options available.

Peer Coaches are also there to direct students to available educational resources and services. For example, a coach might direct a student to the Advising office to determine which classes would work best for him, or help a student create an email correspondence to an instructor requesting that she clarify the details of an assignment.

These are ways that Peer Coaches help students become aware of the choices, options, resources and support surrounding them, hence increasing their chances of staying in school and graduating.

Role Modeling

It is important for Peer Coaches to demonstrate what it means to be a successful college student. This includes having a professional demeanor, not only in the office, but also around campus. TRIO Peer Coaches will be visible to most of the college community, so demonstrating professionalism even when not working will help other students recognize the actions of a successful student.

It is also important for Peer Coaches to demonstrate study skills, attend classes, be involved on campus, and share their knowledge with other students. As a student, the Peer Coach has dealt with roadblocks and setbacks. They are well equipped to share how he or she overcame these situations and what other students can learn from each one.

By sharing their own experiences, Peer Coaches will help students become familiar with the behaviors and attitudes that offer them the best chance for success. By interacting with a Peer Coach, students will also see that there are broader horizons and possibilities available to them that they may not have seen in their present environment.

Accountability

Accountability is an important trait for a Peer Coach to demonstrate. A Peer Coach's commitment to a student meeting, an activity, or an appointment should be first priority except in emergencies. Consistent accountability and commitment to students has benefits. When Peer Coaches demonstrate accountability for their commitment to the TRIO Peer Coaching Program, students learn to trust their Coaches and develop a sense of belonging, which is an important first step to building self-confidence. By consistently demonstrating accountability for the commitment the Peer Coach has made to the TRIO Peer Coaching program, students will feel a sense of belonging, which is an important first step to building self-confidence.

A Peer Coach should also help students demonstrate accountability, meaning they should hold students accountable for their actions as well. For example, if a student has scheduled an appointment with the Peer Coach and shows up twenty minutes late, the Peer Coach should address the fact that they were late. They should talk to the student about the steps they could take to be punctual in the future not only to appointments with the Peer Coach but to other appointments or commitments.

If a student is consistently missing their appointments with the Peer Coach and strolling in on another day expecting the Peer Coach to be available, how might the Peer Coach hold that student accountable? Perhaps the Peer Coach could require the student to reschedule an appointment with them. The Peer Coach could also question the student about the reasons they consistently miss their appointments (chances are this is a habit) and discuss with them ways to resolve the problem. The Peer Coach might recommend that they meet with their College Success Counselor to talk about their commitment to success.

It is important to help students develop the skill of being accountable for their actions and choices. It will inevitably help them be successful in the future.

Actively Listening

By actively listening to a student, a Peer Coach is showing that they care about what is happening in a student's life. It is important to show students that the Peer Coach has the time, the ability to listen, and the ability to be neutral and non-judgmental. Peer Coaches should encourage students to talk about their fears, dreams, goals in life, and concerns.

Peer Coaches must practice confidentiality. What is discussed between a Peer Coach and a student should not be shared with a third party unless the student has or is going to hurt himself or others, seems to be in a bad or risky situation, or has given the Peer Coach permission to disclose the information to other individuals. The Peer Coach should bring any concerns, questions, or comments directly to the College Success Counselor.

Active listening is a way of responding both verbally and nonverbally to the speaker. This implies the Peer Coach—the listener—is trying to understand what the speaker is saying, thinking, feeling, and doing. To listen actively one must

- Show understanding and acceptance by using nonverbal cues such as body language, tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, and posture
- Repeat back to them the speaker's important thoughts and feelings
- Avoid interrupting, offering advice, or giving suggestions
- Avoid bringing up similar problems or thoughts and feelings from the Peer Coach's own experience
- Put the self in the other person's shoes in order to understand what they are saying, thinking, and feeling

Word of Caution

Peer Coaches are not professional counselors, social workers, teachers, or advisors. Although an effective Peer Coach uses traits of those professions, they must refer students to the appropriate resources when

their needs exceed the scope of a Peer Coach's job responsibilities. Examples would include referring a student to their instructor or referring them to counseling services. Peer Coaches are guides to these resources on campus.

Benefits of Peer Coaching

Peer coaching benefits many different constituents on campus: the Peer Coach, the students utilizing the service, the TRIO Program, and The University of Maine at Augusta itself.

Being a Peer Coach reaps a number of benefits. The Peer Coaches gain both personal and professional satisfaction in helping fellow students. Peer Coaches also gain improved interpersonal skills and recognition from their peers. Besides looking good on a resume, peer coaching indicates to future employers or schools that the Peer Coach enjoys working with people, has effective communication skills, is flexible, and is genuine. Peer coaching promotes a deeper understanding of students, services, the university, and societal issues.

Peer coaching is also a benefit to students who utilize the resource. Peer coaching exposes students to a positive role model, one to whom they feel comfortable approaching and talking. Peer coaching also exposes students to new experiences and people from diverse backgrounds. Students gain a better focus on their futures by setting academic and career goals with someone who shares similar goals. Students are also encouraged to grow academically, personally, and professionally when utilizing peer coaching. Peer coaching fosters a student's self-confidence and self-esteem, which will lead them to believe in themselves and know that they can be successful.

Peer coaching benefits other constituents across campus as well. It affects staff and faculty, the TRIO program, and The University of Maine at Augusta's morale. It helps develop the skills necessary for successful and effective professional employees, enhances the image of the university, and prepares and assists in the development of a competent future workforce.

Benefits to the Peer Coach include

- Becoming familiar with UMA resources
- Acquiring new skills
- The opportunity to network within the coaching field
- Having a job that looks great on a resume

Benefits to the TRIO Student include

- Having someone to come to for guidance
- Increased confidence in navigating UMA
- Learning to take responsibility for their decisions
- Improved likelihood of staying in school and graduating

Practices of Effective Peer Coaches

In order to be an effective Peer Coach, one must demonstrate the practices listed below. Please keep in mind that this is not an exhaustive list of effective practices of Peer Coaches, but instead sets the stage for what they can do to be as effective as possible.

Effective Peer Coaches will

- Involve their students in determining how they will spend their time together
- Make a commitment to be consistent and dependable, especially when appointments are on a regular basis
- Respect the students' points of view
- Allow their students to make mistakes, but help them learn from these
- Separate their own goals from those of their students
- Focus on skill development versus behavior changes
- Not focus on the negative attributes of their students or their home life, friends, or family
- Seek and utilize help and advice from the College Success Counselor and the [Associate] Director of the TRIO Program

The Ethics of Peer Coaching

While working with students, Peer Coaches should keep in mind the ethics of peer coaching. As a Peer Coach, students are looking to the Peer Coach for guidance because the Peer Coach is a peer. This can sometimes be a double-edged sword, especially if the coordinator assigns the Peer Coach a friend as a student. If the Peer Coach happens to have a student who is a friend, please let the College Success Counselor know so they can reassign the student. This will prevent the Peer Coach from having to deal with a dual relationship.

To keep the relationship professional, it is important for a Peer Coach to remember the following items when it comes to ethics and setting boundaries with students.

Confidentiality

All Coaching is confidential and Peer Coaches should only discuss students with the College Success Counselor or [Associate] Director. If appropriate, the College Success Counselor will discuss situations with TRIO staff and if necessary, the Learning Success staff. If a Peer Coach feels that a discussion about a student should occur with a student's instructor, the Peer Coach should bring the situation to the College Success Counselor and the College Success Counselor will take the appropriate actions. It is important for Peer Coaches to remember that they are not to discuss any student with other students, family, or friends. The Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA) protects student information.

Student employees of the University of Maine at Augusta may be exposed to or have access to verbal or written information which is sensitive and personal in nature.

We must all be certain that we discuss no information regarding an individual student, family, or employee with anyone outside the facility without written consent of the person or persons involved. Unauthorized release of confidential information is a violation of laws regarding individual and family rights to privacy, as well as a violation of UMA policy. When the Peer Coaches are sending a mass email to students, remember to add all of the email addresses to the blind copy (BCC:) section of the email. Including all of the email addresses in the recipient (To:) section of the email will result in disclosure of the student's status as a TRIO student. While emails themselves are not FERPA protected data, acknowledgement of their TRIO status is.

Discussion about private information outside the university can result in a breach of the student's trust and potential humiliation for the student. Such discussions about student data are inappropriate.

Violations of confidentiality will result in the termination of the employee from this department.

Respect for Individual Differences

It is important for Peer Coaches to remember that students have their own unique personalities, learning styles, strengths, life experiences and choices, and cultural backgrounds. We encourage Peer Coaches to learn a student's strengths, values, goals, and learning styles. Peer Coaches should individualize their coaching to meet an individual's needs, but always keeping in mind the goal of helping students build confidence and necessary skills needed to be successful in college.

We expect Peer Coaches to honor diversity among their colleagues and students regardless of race, color, religion or creed, national origin or ancestry, sex, gender, marital status, age, physical or mental disability, veteran status, genetic information, citizenship, or political affiliation.

We also expect Peer Coaches to respect and be open to the basic right of all individuals to make their own decisions. Peer Coaches may offer advice on appropriate topics, but in the end, it is our job to respect the decisions made by the student.

Personal Conflicts

Although Peer Coaches must remember to leave their own beliefs and values at the door when meeting with students, occasionally, a personality conflict can occur. Peer Coaches who experience a "clash" or "mismatch" of personalities that they feel they cannot overcome should communicate with the College Success Counselor to see if another Peer Coach can serve the student. If it does not work with the student's schedule, then the student will work with the College Success Counselor.

Sometimes a student may become agitated in a specific situation. For example, a student who is failing a class may be losing their financial aid or owe the university money. If a Peer Coach feels they cannot help a student become calmer, they should remove themselves from the situation. If the Peer Coach is meeting with a student in the TRIO office, please speak with the College Success Counselor. The College Success Counselor will work with the student to help lessen the stressful situation. If the Peer Coach is meeting with a student outside of the TRIO office, the Peer Coach is encouraged to suggest the student walk with the Peer Coach to the TRIO office to work with the College Success Counselor.

If a Peer Coach has a conflict with another Peer Coach or staff person, please address the concern directly to that person in attempt to resolve conflict. If the conflict cannot be resolved, bring the matter to the College Success Counselor. The College Success Counselor will discuss the issue with both parties present. If the conflict cannot be resolved, it will then involve the [Associate] Director.

Note

If the College Success Counselor is unavailable, please speak to the TRIO [Associate] Director. If the [Associate] Director is unavailable, please speak to the Administrative Specialist.

Educational Integrity

Peer Coaches serve as study coaches and always encourage a “learning-how-to-learn” model when working with students. This means that Peer Coaches always expect students to complete their own work. If a Peer Coach is helping a student with a specific subject, they should always create a similar problem to the one a student is working on and ask the student to complete their problem to show they understand the material.

Peer Coaches should always discourage cheating or plagiarism in any form. Peer Coaches also encourage students to prepare for classes ahead of time, and will not help students cram just before a test or assist on take-home tests, quizzes, or graded homework assignments.

By making students do their own work and learn from their mistakes—for example not studying enough for an exam or waiting until the day before a paper is due to start writing it—Peer Coaches are promoting a “learning-to-learn” model. The Peer Coach’s goal is to allow students to take responsibility for their own learning so they begin to make choices that will lead to success.

Acting as Representatives of the University of Maine at Augusta

Peer Coaches are employees of the University, and representatives of the TRIO Program. We expect Peer Coaches to demonstrate professionalism at all times. This includes opinions about faculty, staff, and other students. When students ask Peer Coaches to give their opinion about an instructor, a given grade, a course text, or a program curriculum, they should focus only on positive feedback. Instead of speaking negatively of their instructors, Peer Coaches should get the student to focus on a study and learning strategy that will help them be successful in that instructor’s course.

As a role model, we expect Peer Coaches to focus on the positive aspects of the instructor, course, text, and curriculum. Peer Coaches should encourage students to meet with their instructors, counselors, college Deans, or the Dean of Students to discuss any concerns they may have.

Setting an Example

Students in the TRIO Peer Coaching Program will look to Peer Coaches for how to be successful in college. We do not expect the Peer Coaches to have all the answers. If the Peer Coach does not know something, admitting so and then demonstrating to the student how to find the answer will provide not only the answer to their question, but also the skills to make the student more independent in their own learning. An effective Peer Coach models good study skills, learning strategies, and a positive attitude. Sharing those skills with students and showing how those skills can be adapted will equip students with problem-solving strategies they will be able to employ to achieve success in their own academic journey.

Quality and Commitment

As a representative of TRIO and a university employee, the Peer Coach always wants to do the best for students and the TRIO Program. This entails coming to work prepared and continuing to learn and improve upon Peer Coaching skills. Being prepared includes

- Arriving on time
- Staying the entire time

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- Taking the allotted breaks (two 15 minute breaks and a half-hour unpaid lunch)
- Coming prepared to spend the shift coaching
- Preparing for educational workshops or socials
- Planning cultural outings
- Performing other tasks as assigned by the College Success Counselor

Note

According to the Student Employment Handbook “all student employees have the same obligations to their employer that would exist in any other work situation” (p. 2) meaning Peer Coaches will have the same expectations put upon them as any other employee. The handbook also states “students are not eligible to be paid for the following: study time, holidays, weather cancellations, sick time, vacation time or administrative leave time” (p. 4). This means that while the Peer Coach is on the clock, they may not work on homework assignments. The Peer Coach may not work at the same time as any of their scheduled courses. If the Peer Coach needs to arrange to get homework done, they should speak with the College Success Counselor.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual Harassment (staring, sexual jokes, teasing, sexually demeaning remarks, etc.) is inappropriate and illegal. Although the Peer Coach/student relationship is often friendly and can develop into close bonds, Peer Coaches must be careful to set appropriate limits in the coaching session, and to confine remarks and behavior to appropriate subjects. If students make remarks or act inappropriately, Peer Coaches should state what behavior is appropriate and expected in a coaching session. If the student does not comply, the Peer Coach should end the session and report the incident to the College Success Counselor. If the College Success Counselor is not available, they should speak to the TRIO [Associate] Director.

Peer Coaching and Boundaries

Boundaries are healthy limits that assist in balancing the Peer Coach’s life and the various roles the Peer Coach portrays. Boundaries offer protection for both the Peer Coach and the students by assisting in the building of a trustworthy relationship. The goal of boundaries is to allow a safe connection between the Peer Coach and the student based on the student’s needs.

Healthy boundaries are a clear set of roles. They are not harmful or exploitive. As a Peer Coach, one may encounter situations that challenge the Peer Coach’s boundaries, such as a student asking for the Peer Coach’s home phone number or asking for a ride. It is important to stress and maintain clear limits. Another example of clearly defining limits includes declining friend requests from students on social media platforms.

It is important for Peer Coaches to have an open and honest discussion about their limits and boundaries as a Peer Coach in order to put the focus on learning, to manage expectations of the relationship with a student, and to ensure mutual accountability. Boundaries that go undefined frequently undermine the Coaching relationship. For example, loose boundaries have a tendency of being misinterpreted. Rigid boundaries, however, may be harmful to the helping relationship. Thus, it is important for Peer Coaches to communicate from the beginning of their relationships with students what they are willing and unwilling to do.

Peer Coaches are unique in their role as they are both Peer Coaches and students of the University creating a dual or multiple relationships in which one person assumes two or more roles simultaneously

or sequentially. To elaborate further, if a Peer Coach takes a class with one of their students, they become both a fellow student and Peer Coach at the same time. This can create a potential for a conflict of interest.

It is important for Peer Coaches to take appropriate precautions to maintain their students' best interests. The following guidelines are to assist Peer Coaches when they are operating in more than one role.

- Set healthy boundaries from the beginning.
- Inform students that the Peer Coach is available to them only when the Peer Coach is working, and other people in the TRIO office can help them on their Peer Coach's time off.
- When students ask for the Peer Coach's home phone or cell phone number, let them know that they can only reach the Peer Coach via email or the Peer Coach office phone number.
- Peer coaches should discuss their expectations with the student and discuss the students' expectations of their Peer Coach.
- Keep the College Success Counselor updated when the Peer Coach is engaging in dual roles.
- Document, document, document.
- While paperwork may seem redundant and meaningless, it serves a variety of purposes. In this case, paperwork can cover the Peer Coach from the potential of outside allegations.

Please keep all Peer Coach and student relationships strictly professional. Peer Coaches should not interact socially (unless the Peer Coach is attending an on-campus event) with their students nor is it acceptable for a Peer Coach to date their student. If the Peer Coach feels that they cannot keep a student relationship strictly professional, please speak with the College Success Counselor who will reassign the student.

Peer Coach Requirements

- Completed at least one year at the University of Maine at Augusta
- Attend regularly scheduled training sessions
- Maintain a minimum 2.5 overall GPA and obtain a minimum of a 2.5 semester GPA (If GPA falls below a 2.5, Peer Coaches will be on probation for the following semester. If the GPA does not increase by the end of the probationary semester, TRIO must dismiss the Peer Coach.)
- Must be eligible for Federal Work Study funds through financial aid OR enroll in the UMA Student Volunteer Program
- Be available a minimum of 10 hours a week and a maximum of 20 during Fall and Spring semesters
- Adhere to a weekly schedule during the academic semester
- Be familiar with issues facing first-generation, low-income, and non-traditional students in higher education

Required Skills

- Effective communication skills and the ability to relate well to others
- A high level of patience and a sincere desire to help others achieve their goals
- Exhibit professionalism and serve as a role model while in the TRIO Office and also around campus
- Knowledge of University resources
- An ability to identify academic tasks and direct students toward completion of those tasks

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- Good study habits
- High motivation and strong work ethic
- A willingness to learn and be flexible
- A strong understanding of confidentiality
- Serve as a role model for other students regarding professional and personal demeanor by attendance and participation in classes and University functions

Entering Blumen Contacts

Peer coaches will have a number of formal and informal contacts with students in their role. While a Peer Coach is “on the clock,” they must enter contact information into the Blumen BOT system for interactions that are

- Not accounted for by another coach or staff (no doubling contacts on one student)
- Communication between a TRIO agent and a TRIO participant that is relevant to their status as a scholar,
- At least 15 minutes in length, and
- Reciprocal in nature: they must respond to emails or messages for contact to be made

For example: face-to-face meetings; synchronous phone calls; email, text message, voicemail, or letters from the participant to which the agent responds; email, text message, voicemail, or letter from the agent to which the participant responds. The contact must include response and reciprocation.

Office Guidelines

The TRIO Program recognizes that the Peer Coach’s primary role at The University of Maine at Augusta is that of a student, however, when the Peer Coach is scheduled to work, we expect the Peer Coach to act as a staff member and will make this a priority during that time.

Dress and Appearance

Student employees are representatives of the office and the University. We ask students to arrive at work on time, looking neat, clean, and dressed appropriately. Please note the following dress code. Articles of clothing that we do not allow

- Tank tops, muscle shirts, or halter tops
- Low-rise jeans/pants that expose the midriff
- Clothing with patches or holes
- Clothing that is soiled
- Words or images that are unprofessional or obscene
- Skirts or shorts above mid-thigh
- Sweatpants
- Pajamas
- See-through clothing
- Necklines lower than four fingers width below the collarbone

Dress up for workshops, events, or for larger institutional meetings is encouraged. The suggested dress is smart casual or business casual. You may find examples of either by conducting a Google image search for “smart casual” or “business casual.”

If the university is having a special event—such as pajama day—student workers may participate. The supervisor may bring other clothing inappropriate for the workplace to the Peer Coach’s attention.

Smoking

Returning to your shift after a break with a heavy smell of smoke on your person creates challenges for this environment. Having a heavy smell and having smoking particles on your clothes and belongings has negative health effects on others. Additionally, we work in a support setting. We have face-to-face contact with many people. Having a heavy, unpleasant odor is not professional. When you have a cigarette break, here are some things you can do to help:

- Wear hair pulled back and cover your hair/head with a hat or hood
- Wear an outer layer (jacket, sweatshirt, etc.) that you can remove before reentering the building
- Cover your hand while smoking with a glove or some other barrier between the cigarette and your skin
- Wash your hands as soon as you return to the building
- Consider rinsing your mouth or brushing your teeth before your return to your shift
- Consider products like mints, gum, hand sanitizer, or a *light* use of body spray if this is permitted in your area

Punctuality

For this position, the Peer Coach may arrange work hours around the Peer Coach’s academic schedule. For planning and efficiency purposes, we require Peer Coaches to set and adhere to a specific weekly work schedule. Please negotiate starting and ending times or any subsequent changes with the College Success Counselor.

If the Peer Coach would like to alter the Peer Coach schedule for a given week, please make the proposed changes with the College Success Counselor at least one week in advance.

If unusual circumstances arise and the Peer Coach realizes that they need to rearrange a shift, please call in as soon as possible to the College Success Counselor. There is a three-strike policy, however, for Peer Coaches who are consistently late or absent. Once the Peer Coach is late three times when it is not an emergency, we will place the Peer Coach on probation. If the Peer Coach is late one more time, we will not ask the Peer Coach back for the following semester.

Please call in absences due to unforeseen circumstances—such as illness—as soon as possible to the College Success Counselor.

Four consecutive working hours entitles the Peer Coach to one 15-minute break arranged with the College Success Counselor. Six consecutive working hours entitles the Peer Coach to one half hour unpaid break arranged with the College Success Counselor when the Peer Coach gets to work in the morning.

Timekeeping

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TRIO uses two methods to track paid time. We expect Peer Coaches to enter their time (including all unpaid breaks) in the journal established by the College Success Counselor at your location. We also expect Peer Coaches to enter their time (including all unpaid breaks) into MaineStreet. Peer Coaches are responsible for keeping track of time in both locations.

According to the Administrative Services Office, we must record employee's time in 15-minute intervals. For example, if the Peer Coach arrives to work at 9:08am and ended the shift at 3:35pm, the timesheet would reflect a 9:15am arrival and a 3:30pm departure. Please round to the nearest 15-minute interval.

The University distributes biweekly paychecks according to the option the Peer Coach selected with the Administrative Services Office. If the hours on the Peer Coach paycheck do not match with hours the Peer Coach worked, please inform the College Success Counselor as soon as possible. If the employee enters time into MaineStreet close to the deadline for supervisor approvals, the employee must notify the supervisor to submit final approvals before the cutoff. Not giving notification may delay the payment.

General Office Area

We assign Peer Coaches a collaborative workspace with a computer, telephone, and access to the office printer. Peer Coaches should print only work-related documents on the office printer and copier. Do not print homework assignments or other personal documents. TRIO may ask the Peer Coach to reimburse the TRIO Office for paper and toner if the Peer Coach prints personal documents. Additionally, Peer Coaches may not use the office telephone for personal phone calls.

Peer Coaches must be responsible for the security of their personal belongings (purses, cell phones, etc.), and must never leave confidential information out on their desks or in the open cubicle areas.

When leaving information for other coaches, place this in an interoffice envelope and put it in their mailbox.

Emergency Procedures

When an emergency arises, seek a non-student staff member to handle the emergency. While this is not always ideal or convenient, the Peer Coach should call 911 first then call UMA's security at 621-3400.

Telephone Etiquette

Peer Coaches have their own office extension and when on the clock they must answer the phone courteously and professionally. The following guidelines and suggested phrases will help assist Peer Coaches in making a professional first impression:

Answering Calls

- Identify one's self and the name of the TRIO department
- "Good (morning/afternoon), thank you for calling TRIO, this is (name). How may I help you?"
- Offer assistance in the absence of others
- Obtain the caller's name

- Take accurate, legible messages with the time, date, person calling, return phone number, and any other additional information given to the Peer Coach regarding their reason for calling

Placing Calls

- Plan the call
- Know beforehand what to say to make the call brief and effective
- Identify yourself quickly and state the reason for calling
- Office phones are not to be used for personal phone calls
- If the Peer Coach needs to make a personal phone call, please use a personal mobile phone on break

Phone Tips

- Use basic phrases of courtesy such as “Please,” “Thank you,” “You’re welcome,” “May I help you?”
- Avoid slang such as yep, yeah, nope, dude, uh huh, etc.
- Avoid chewing gum or eating and drinking while on the phone
- Do not slam the phone down or cut off abruptly
- Do not make promises the Peer Coach cannot keep or follow through on
- Smile while speaking – People can actually hear a smile over the phone

Coaching skills

The following section describes a number of techniques that Peer Coaches utilize when working with students. According to Lois Zachary (2000)—author of *The Coach’s Guide*—there are twelve skills coaches should use to facilitate effective learning relationships with their students. This is not an exhaustive list but a starting point. We introduce more skills and techniques during regular Peer Coach staff meetings.

Brokering Relationships

This skill entails making the right contacts and laying the groundwork for students to connect with other people, services, and resources available to them to achieve their learning and educational goals. Peer Coaches must learn how to network and have diverse contacts from whom to draw expertise, resources, and information. The Peer Coach has experience working with instructors, staff members in other offices on campus, and even the Peer Coach’s own network of community resources!

Building and Maintaining Relationships

Too often, we use a great deal of energy starting a relationship and assume it will continue to develop without additional effort. In fact, building and maintaining relationships requires work throughout the relationship. For Peer Coaches, this requires being attentive, patient, and persistent. TRIO Peer Coaches should be proactive about contacting their students and continuing contact with them. For example, sending frequent emails to students reminding them of TRIO services, and how a Peer Coach can help them is a way to maintain the connection.

Study Coaching

Coaching has to do with the skill of helping an individual fill a specific knowledge gap or barrier by learning to do things more effectively especially learning *how* to learn. As a successful student, the Peer Coach knows the proper ways in which to manage their time, when to start studying, how to read a textbook, and take notes. Share these skills with students and help them develop strong study habits that work for them.

Communicating

Effective communication is critical to successful coaching as well as in any other relationship. Communication does not merely focus on sharing knowledge. It relies on building trust to encourage open communication, being authentic, listening effectively, checking for understanding, seeking clarification, and watching nonverbal cues.

Encouraging

Encouragement in a Peer Coach/student relationship takes many forms. It can encompass confidence building, cheering the student on, motivating and inspiring the student, and gently pushing them at the right time. Studies show that college students become more successful when they have an appropriate balance of challenge and support. Help them learn that they can push themselves and still have a foundation of support on which to rely.

Facilitating

Facilitating is the means by which Peer Coaches enable students to learn. The key to facilitating is establishing a climate that promotes learning. The learner is an active participant in planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating the learning.

Goal Setting

Skills in goal setting assist the student in crystallizing, clarifying, and setting realistic goals. These skills are essential in the coaching relationship. Help students determine what their goals are and help them determine specific steps and checkpoints to reach that goal.

Guiding

Peer Coaches are guides for their students. Through role modeling, Peer Coaches provide an opportunity for students to focus on their current academic learning goals and envision a brighter future.

Managing Conflict

Managing conflict invites verbal communication to understand the student's point of view and how to work together to find common ground.

Problem Solving

Problem solving means engaging the student in finding a solution to a problem. Peer Coaches do not solve problems for their students; rather they provide assistance in the problem-solving process. The goal is to guide the student through the process rather than providing the answer to the problem so they learn the skills to think through all situations and determine what choices are available to them and which would be the best one to take.

Providing and Receiving Feedback

Feedback is essential in the coaching relationship. It helps to ensure that the Peer Coach is on the same page as the student and allows for future clarification. When giving feedback, always focus on the positive aspects first. Allow the students to recognize their strengths and then provide them areas in which they could improve. This way, they can see how to use their strengths to help them make the appropriate changes.

Reflection

Reflection shows that one understands how another person feels simply by reflecting the speaker's basic feelings. It involves stepping back, evaluating, processing, assessing, and articulating the learning—and the implication of that learning—for future action. Help the student reflect on feedback that an instructor, staff member, friend, or family member has given to them.

Stages in a Peer Coaching Relationship

The typical Peer Coach/student relationship goes through four stages. It is important to keep in mind however, that not every Peer Coach/student relationship is going to be the same. Some relationships will progress through the stages faster or slower than others will. Peer Coaches are to remember that their students are individual students and each coaching session or meeting should go at the pace the student needs.

Peer Coaches should be familiar with the following four stages to help determine the specific roles they need to play with each student.

Establishing and Developing Rapport

During the initial meeting with a new student, remember to provide information about the Peer Coach. Identify things the Peer Coach has in common or with which the Peer Coach can assist them. If the student is talking about their class schedule, and the Peer Coach has taken a specific class with a specific instructor, offer some tips on how the Peer Coach was successful in that class.

It is important to take the time to get to know one another during this stage. Talk to the student about coaching. Ask them if they have ever had a Peer Coach before. Find out what they are looking for from the Peer Coach and what they want to achieve here at UMA. If they are not sure, then all the Peer Coach can do and how the Peer Coach can support them personally.

Talk about the Peer Coach's own coaching experiences and ways that the Peer Coach can assist them in reaching their goals. At this time, the Peer Coach may want to share their needs, expectations, boundaries, and limitations as a Peer Coach.

Building Trust

One of the best ways to build trust with a student is to help them accomplish something that is important to them. Peer Coaches must take the time to help students identify the goals they want to accomplish. View the goal realistically, break the goal down into small and manageable steps, and explore ways of reaching the goal. Remember that building trust can take weeks, sometimes even months.

Their students may test the Peer Coach's trustworthiness and commitment, particularly when students have unstable backgrounds or previously disappointing relationships. During the testing period, Peer Coaches can expect their students to miss appointments, not return phone calls, have unreasonable requests, or display angry or sullen behavior.

We expect Peer Coaches to continue contacting their students while they are going through the "testing phase" but we expect the Peer Coach to hold their students accountable. Remember to address their tardiness or consistency of missed appointments. Peer Coaches should remind the student of their boundaries if they make unreasonable requests. Students may become frustrated because they are expecting someone else to solve their problems, but continuing to contact them and meet with them regularly will show that the Peer Coaches are indeed someone who cares about their success at UMA.

The real work cannot begin until the "testing phase" is completed. Peer Coaches should remember that the issue is not whether the student likes the Peer Coach, but that the students may be protecting themselves from disappointment. Remember, predictability builds trust. It is important for the Peer Coach to be consistent and accountable. Peer Coaches should always be on time for appointments, meetings, and study groups. They should also bring any promised information and materials to their meetings and should follow through on promises and contracts that they volunteered.

Peer Coaches need to address the issue of confidentiality to build upon the foundation of a trusting and successful relationship with their students. Peer Coaches should reassure their students that they will not disclose anything that the student does not want them to disclose with other students, Peer Coaches, faculty, or staff with the exception of the College Success Counselor.

Peer Coaches should let their students know that if they feel it is necessary to involve another adult, they will be informed and the request will be discussed with the student first. However, the Peer Coach should let students know that if there is a threat of physical harm to the student or to others, the Peer Coach is required to break confidentiality to seek protection for the endangered person or persons.

Setting and Reaching Goals

In the initial stages of the Peer Coach relationship with the student, it is important to sit down and discuss their goals as a student here at UMA. As mentioned above, determine their goals and ways to achieve them. Use resources and services available to them on campus, utilize the Peer Coach's own expertise in certain subjects and skills to help empower the student and strengthen the relationship with them.

From time to time throughout the semester, the Peer Coach should sit down with the student to discuss the goals they have previously set and if they have met the mini-goals to reach the end goal. This follow up will enable the both the Peer Coach and student to see if the goals need to be altered, or abandoned for new ones. The Peer Coach should also assist the student in praising themselves and giving themselves recognition for achieving their goals.

Closure

Ending the Peer Coach relationship with a student may occur for numerous reasons. The Peer Coach may be graduating from UMA, the student may be graduating or leaving the university, the two may not be a good match, or the Peer Coach get a new job in another office on campus. The possibilities are endless. For whatever reason the relationship terminates, it is important that the Peer Coach acknowledge the closure stage of the helping relationship.

We expect the Peer Coach to alert the student well in advance about the ending of the relationship to help prepare them for the transition to a new Peer Coach. We expect Peer Coaches to use the closure process as a way to discuss and give examples of the student's progress and strengths and to reassure them about what they have learned and of what they are capable. Peer Coaches should also reassure them of the confidence they have in their student. Make sure to discuss positive actions and directions for the future.

Best Practices for Communication

Communication skills are essential for building an effective and helping relationship with the student. It is important to utilize a variety of verbal techniques and notice nonverbal cues. Keep in mind the following when working with the student.

- Using positive communication
- Using clear and specific communication
- Recognizing and remembering that each individual sees things from a different perspective
- Being open and honest about feelings
- Accepting the student's feelings and trying to understand them
- Being supportive and accepting
- Not preaching or lecturing
- Learning to actively listen
- Maintaining good eye contact with the student
- Giving the student time to talk without interruption
- Showing the student that the Peer Coach is interested in what they are saying by using verbal and nonverbal cues
- Using feedback to clarify and understand what is being said
- Listening to the feeling tone as well as the actual words being said
- Asking questions when the Peer Coach does not understand
- Setting examples rather than giving advice

Active listening is a way of responding both verbally and nonverbally to the speaker that implies the Peer Coach—the listener—is trying to understand what the speaker is saying, thinking, feeling, and doing. To listen actively one must

- Show understanding and acceptance by using nonverbal cues such as body language, tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, and posture
- Repeat back the speaker's important thoughts and feelings
- Do not interrupt, offer advice, or give suggestions
- Do not bring up similar problems or thoughts and feelings from the Peer Coach's own experience
- Put the self in the other person's shoes in order to understand what they are saying, thinking, and feeling

Conclusion

Remember that the role of being a coach is a growth process. This is an important role for the Peer Coach to fill because so much of what TRIO Scholars does for UMA students relies on the Peer Coaches' hard work and dedication. If the Peer Coaches have any questions or concerns about the role or the coaching relationship with TRIO students, know that the College Success Counselor and the [Associate] Director of TRIO Scholars are here to support the Peer Coach in becoming an excellent resource for their UMA peers.

TRIO Peer Coach Contract

- I understand that I am required to meet at least once a month with each of my assigned first-year students and new program participant students and schedule additional meetings throughout the semester as needed.
- I understand that it is ultimately my responsibility to contact my student(s) to set up meetings with them. If I cannot contact the student, I must report this to the College Success Counselor.
- It is my responsibility to notify my student(s) at least 24 hours in advance, if I am unable to attend a scheduled meeting with them or need to reschedule.
- I understand that at the beginning of each month I will confirm a weekly schedule (minimum of 10 hours) with the College Success Counselor, and that I will be expected to adhere to the schedule unless changes are arranged with the College Success Counselor.
- I understand that I am to keep an accurate record of my hours each week, both on MaineStreet and in the three-ring binder located with the College Success Counselor.
- I will maintain a friendly, professional, coaching relationship with my student(s) at all times; i.e. dating my student(s) is not permitted unless the Coaching relationship is terminated.
- I will strive to maintain positive relationships with students, other TRIO personnel, and campus faculty and staff.
- I will maintain the confidentiality of my student(s) at all times unless there is a need to break confidentiality to the appropriate TRIO staff member.
- I will fill out TRIO contact data after all formal and informal contacts with student(s) and submit or enter them daily.
- I understand that I will go through an evaluation process at the end of each semester to determine my continued employment for the TRIO Program.
- I understand that the TRIO Peer Coach position is predominantly a leadership position and that I am expected to model effective time management, organizational skills, study skills, and maintain a professional attitude.
- I understand that there are mandatory training sessions (dates and times to be determined) and regular Peer Coach Staff meetings (days and times to be determined). I understand that if I miss more than three regular Peer Coach Staff meetings (except in the case of illness or emergency), I will be put on probation.
- I understand that I will be expected to coordinate regular educational workshops and present at least one educational workshop with the College Success Counselor throughout the semester.
- I understand that I will be expected to attend New Student Orientation as a representative of the TRIO Program.
- I understand that I will be responsible for helping the College Success Counselor create a regular TRIO newsletter to be distributed to all TRIO eligible students.
- I understand that I am to maintain a semester GPA of at least 2.5 and a cumulative GPA of at least 2.5.
- I understand that my continued employment and advancement will be based upon my ability to comply with the above conditions of employment, my overall performance, and my participation in TRIO trainings, staff meetings, and available grant funding.

TRIO Peer Coach Signature: _____

College Success Counselor/Supervisor: _____

[Associate] Director: _____

UMA TRIO Scholars Peer Coach Handbook

Training Notes:

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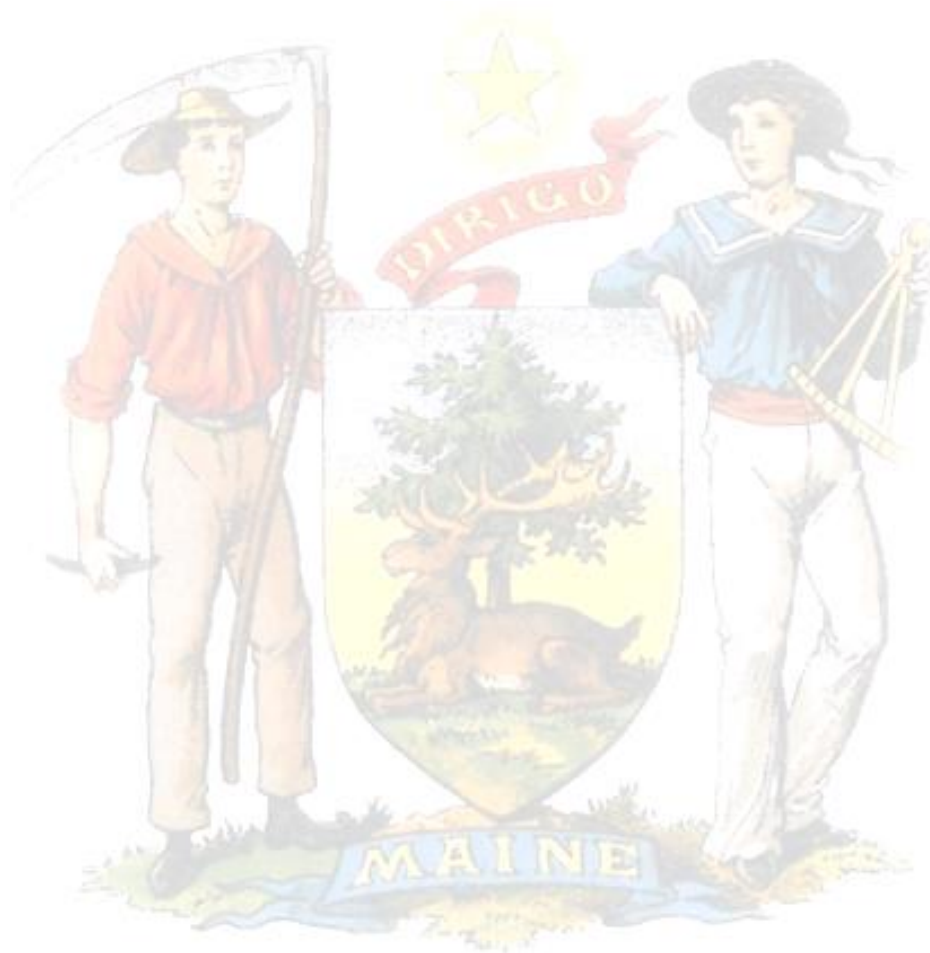
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