Project REACH Helps Students Give Back

Peer mentors strive to help their fellow students.

When twenty-one students applied for eleven peer mentor openings in the Project REACH program, the staff knew they had their work cut out for them. “We interviewed all 21 applicants,” said Audrey Dreier-Morrison, associate director of Project REACH, “and were impressed by their understanding of how crucial it is for first-year students to make connections during their first semester of college. They all had a strong desire to help others, to ease new students’ fears by sharing their experiences and wanted to give something back to the College.”

The decision-making process was difficult because all applicants were motivated, enthusiastic, and ready for the many challenges associated with being a peer mentor. The students selected were Raju Chowdhury, Amy Ferguson, Iyanna Henry, Kelly Jennings, Danielle King, Cassie Neary, Nikki Pennacchio, Auxszalee Scott, Renee Strobel, Amanda Wruck, and Ana Zorrilla, who assisted first-year students during the fall semester by sharing resources and knowledge, and orienting them to the campus and its services and programs.

Mentor Cassie Neary believed she could make a difference with first-year students since she experienced many challenges during her first year. She said, “If first-year students have academic problems, they have that ‘go-to’ person with whom they have developed a bond. I have developed a level of trust with my mentees because I am their peer. They know they have someone to confide in.”

Cassie helped Amanda Hernon determine her spring course schedule options and volunteered to tutor her. Amanda said that having a peer mentor helped her break out of her shell. “Cassie is like a sister to me. I had doubts about my abilities, and Cassie reassured me. She told me not to worry about what others think and has helped me deal with missing home. Being involved in Project REACH is a great way to meet people and develop great friendships.”