



MOUNTAIN SCHOLARS MENTOR HANDBOOK

I. Mountain Scholars Program

A. Mission

The goal of the Mountain Scholars Program is to support aspiring, first-generation (neither parent has completed a four-year degree), and academically motivated students from Summit County in earning a four-year college degree or postsecondary degree. Students start at Colorado Mountain College (CMC), staying at CMC or transferring to a four-year college, and graduate with a college degree.

B. Program Support

1. One-on-One Mentoring
2. Degree and career counseling, financial navigation, college and transfer navigation, and academic coaching with CMC Staff
3. Scholarship support freshman through senior year for tuition and educational expenses
 - Freshman/sophomore students can qualify for up to \$900/year
 - Junior/senior students can qualify for up to \$4,000/year, typically a maximum of \$8,000

C. Partnership Support

The program started in 2013 as a mentoring program and in 2018 grew to be called the Mountain Scholars Program. The program now includes additional staff and financial support through a partnership between the Summit Foundation, Summit School District, and Colorado Mountain College (CMC). The partners noticed that many of the students arriving at CMC from the Summit High School's Pre-Collegiate program were successfully completing their college freshman and sophomore years with mentoring and counseling support. However, they needed much more, in both financial and support services, to reach their goal of a 4-year college degree. Since most of the scholarships for these first-generation college students were awarded for freshman and sophomore years, many students had to quit college beyond that in order to make enough money to cover tuition costs for their upcoming junior/senior years at CMC or when they transferred to another college/university. However, research shows that when students take a break from college after their sophomore year it greatly increases the risk that they'll never return to earn a 4-year degree. So the partners began planning the next phase of the program called Mountain Scholars to help keep those first-generation students in school to earn a 4-year college degree.

D. Program Impact

The Mountain Scholars Program impacts local families by increasing the number of first generation, low income students from Summit County who earn a college degree. In the past fifteen years our community has worked in these 3 important areas of need:

1. Increase graduation from high school and college for first generation students. In 2009, a strong community partnership with the Summit Foundation established the Pre-Collegiate program at SHS. Since then the graduation rate for Hispanic students has risen from 47% to over 90%. Currently about 70% of Summit High School students go to college and one-third of them go to CMC. Mountain Scholars keeps students moving through the college pipeline from high school to CMC to a 4 year college and a college degree.
2. Increase support for first generation students at CMC. Over 115 students have been supported by Mountain Scholars since 2013. Nationally, only about 12% of first generation students complete a postsecondary degree. However, 60% of Mountain Scholars have earned a post secondary degree, exceeding the national average by 48%. In addition, 80% of Mountain Scholar students with Associate's degrees have continued on to a Bachelor's degree.
3. Increase financial support for first generation students who have successfully completed 2 years at CMC but need help to earn their 4 year degrees. Nationally, only 5% of first generation, low-income students who begin at community college actually earn a four-year college degree within 6 years without additional support.

E. Coordinating Committee

Mountain Scholars is an all-volunteer organization with no paid Executive Director or office expenses. It is supported by a College Pathways Coordinator position at CMC. The partners on the committee make in kind contributions of staff time, facilities, and other resources. All mentors volunteer their time to meet with students one or more times each month.

The Mountain Scholars Coordinating Committee currently includes:

Don Dankner, Chairman
Mentor, Retired Attorney and Community Volunteer

Dave Askeland, Committee Member
College Vice President Summit Campus, Colorado Mountain College

Jenn Besser, Committee Member
Assistant Dean of Instruction, Colorado Mountain College

Jeanne Bistranin, Committee Member
Executive Director, The Summit Foundation

Tara Dew, Committee Member
Program Director, The Summit Foundation

Sarah Grant, Committee Member
Regional Development Officer, Colorado Mountain College Foundation

Stan Katz, Committee Member
Retired Finance Professional and Community Volunteer

Lana McLaughlin, Committee Member
Director of Secondary Education, Summit School District

Susan Propper, Committee Member
Mentor, Retired Attorney and Community Volunteer

Rachel Sinton, Committee Member
Foundation Leadership High Country Region, The Moniker Foundation

Andrea Walker, Committee Member
Student Support Services/Pathways Coordinator, Colorado Mountain College

Bonnie Ward, Committee Member
Mentor, Retired Educator and Community Volunteer

F. CMC Staff Resources

Andrea Walker, M.A. Curriculum and Instruction
Student Support Services / Pathways Coordinator
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Jenn Besser, M.A. Counseling, LPC
Assistant Dean of Instruction
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Breckenridge, CO 80424
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Colorado Mountain College Dillon
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PO Box 1414
Dillon, CO 80435
970.468.5989

II. Role of Mentors in the Mountain Scholars Program

- A. Benefits of mentoring: Research on mentoring shows strong benefits for both the mentor and mentee.
 - 1. Having a trusted mentor to process experiences allows mentees to learn from the situation and overcome adversity.
 - 2. Mentors connect mentees with needed resources in the community.
- B. Mentors are matched one-on-one with students to provide academic, personal, and professional support, encouragement, and growth.
- C. Mentors build relationships and are a support network for students to process experiences to become resilient and persistent learners and young adults.

D. Criteria for accepting mentors

1. Bachelor's degree
2. Agree to be a mentor for at least 1 year and ideally through the student's graduation
3. Commit to meeting monthly with your assigned mentee. More face-to-face meetings are especially needed in the beginning. It is understandable that sometimes schedules do not align or mentors may be out of town. However, try to stay in contact and connect virtually if needed.
4. Maturity and experience (at least 3 years older than the mentee) is needed to
 - a) build trust and create a safe space for the student
 - b) listen and help student process
 - c) have self-awareness
 - d) ability to support student's journey regardless of career choice
 - e) have the skills to support mentees navigating their own journey

E. Role of a Mentor

1. A mentor is a good listener and advocates for the mentee and the mentee's story.
2. A mentor is not a professional tutor, social worker, or counselor. However, the mentor should help the mentee access those services when needed in partnership with CMC Staff.
3. A mentor should contact CMC staff anytime and particularly when
 - a) You have not heard from your mentee within a week of contacting them
 - b) Your mentee needs additional support beyond what you can provide – this can look different for every student
 - c) You are not sure how to handle a situation with your mentee

F. Expectations for Mentors and Students in the Mountain Scholars Program

1. Establish expectations early with your student for a successful partnership. Use the guidelines established in the Mountain Scholars Program Goals, Expectations, and Agreements (attached) as a resource annually.
2. Complete the Mentor Intake Form annually.
3. Establish a clear expectation for communication: Mentors and students should reply to each other within 24-48 hours.
4. Try to participate together in the activities provided once a semester by the Mountain Scholars Program. Typically, this includes a cooking class in fall and a spring workshop.
5. Recruitment: Know someone who would be a good fit for the program? Please refer them to CMC Staff to provide more information about the program and begin the process if they're interested! Your referral is the best compliment.

G. Application Process for Mentors

1. Face-to-Face Interview: Prospective mentors will interview with CMC Staff for program overview and mentee matching
2. Complete the Mentor Intake Form
3. Complete Background Check -you'll receive an email with steps after you complete the steps above

H. Required CMC Training and Onboarding

1. Each mentor will be matched with a student
2. An initial meeting will be arranged for the mentor and the student
3. Each mentor will be assigned a lead mentor when you join as a mentor. This peer is available to provide guidance from the mentor perspective. You can connect with your Lead Mentor individually, or at mentor events throughout the year.

III. Advice for Mentoring First Generation College Students

There are many issues to monitor and be aware of when mentoring a first-generation student at CMC. While not all issues may be relevant for every mentee, these are some of the ones that we have observed and ideas we have developed to address them.

Succeeding in Classes

Does your student understand the need to plan due dates for assignments and tests around studying and work schedules?

- Make sure your student understands that class attendance, handing in assignments on time and taking tests on time are all important, as are doing the reading for each class and participating in class.
- The class syllabus lays out how the teacher will grade for the class, when assignments are due, what the reading will be etc. The syllabus is handed out by each teacher at the beginning of each semester.
- CMC creates a free planner, available at the beginning of the school year, that helps students to plan their study and assignment schedule. It also contains a lot of useful information about how to study, etc.
- Planners can help break down assignments into manageable stages for larger assignments, such as tests and research papers. Many assignments only have a due date, so creating personal progress steps, such as topic, sources, outline, written draft, and getting feedback from tutor or SmartThinking for a research paper.
- Make sure that your student understands that contacting a teacher is an important part of succeeding in college. If your student will miss a class, miss a test or has other issues or questions, be sure he/she contacts the teacher and develops an alternative plan for making up the work. CMC teachers are very dedicated and will work with your student to make sure the class material is clear, assignments are understood, etc. Students can contact teachers in the way that is indicated on the syllabus (each teacher has a different preferred method.)
- CMC also provides tutoring at specified times, especially in science and math. Another excellent avenue for help is Smart Thinking, a service offered through CMC's Campus web portal (Canvas), where students can get quick answers on assignments and even review of draft essays etc. from experts in the field. Remember, it is not your role to tutor but instead to help your student access the tutoring provided by CMC.

Study Space

Does your student have a quiet space to study at home? This is very important. If not, discuss where your student can go to complete assignments.

Does your student have access to the internet at home? If not, FIRC knows of a program through Comcast that provides internet access to low-income families at a very low rate.

Class Schedule/Majors

What degree or certificate does your student hope to achieve? Once you know this, determine what classes he/she must take to graduate on time. CMC has sheets at each campus that summarize how to meet the requirements for each degree, that is which classes in each discipline will count toward the degree and how many are required. (This information is also available on line on the CMC website.) Keep in mind that not every class is offered every semester, so some strategizing will likely be necessary.

Please discuss your student's class schedule and what they plan to or need to take before registration each semester. Andrea can provide assistance if you have questions.

Stress Outside of School

Virtually all CMC students work, in addition to going to school. Does your student's work supervisor understand your student's need to prioritize school? Does the supervisor take your student's school schedule into account when scheduling work hours?

Does your student prioritize school?

Does your student's family support his/her decision to attend college and get a degree? Not all do, and you may need to provide this support if the family does not.

Does your student have boyfriend or girlfriend issues?

Paying for College

If your student attended Summit High, he/she may have a scholarship from the Summit Foundation or other local organizations. If so, and your student maintains good grades at CMC during the first year, he/she may apply to the Summit Foundation in late spring for a second-year scholarship. It is also important for your student to work with Andrea to make a plan to maximize scholarship money over a four year period of time. Many scholarships can be held by the Summit Foundation until needed.

CMC also offers scholarships (BaseCamp->Scholarships), which students must apply for no later than March 1 each year for the following academic year. The CMC website will automatically determine which scholarships your student is eligible to apply for, once basic information is completed on the website. Andrea can be helpful with this process. You may need to draft and upload a recommendation for your student to complete the application.

Getting Together with Your Student

The mentoring contract is an agreement that you and your mentee will get together at least once a month during the school year. Some mentees will find it helpful to get together more frequently. Try to establish a regular time each month to see each other. Organizing this around the student's school schedule can be helpful.

Contacting your student can be best through text messages. They don't always read or respond to emails. Discuss the best method for communication with your student. Confirm meetings ahead of time each month to make sure your student will show up.

If you haven't heard from your student in a while and he/she has not responded to messages, talk to Andrea. She will likely see your student on campus and can ask what's up. Students get busy and sometimes are not responsive unless reminded.

Encouraging Internships and Job Shadowing

Local internships may be available for qualified students. Job shadowing can be arranged by mentors and/or CMC staff.

Getting a Four Year Degree

CMC offers four year degrees in a few disciplines. This is often the lowest cost way to get a bachelor's degree. If your student is interested in a degree that is not offered at CMC, or simply wants to transfer after obtaining a two-year degree, there are many good schools in Colorado at which your student can continue studies. However, finances, school culture, and academic offerings, need to be considered for each school before your student transfers. Price tags vary widely and some schools are better adapted to the needs of first-generation students than are others. Andrea can support the student in navigating the transfer options and the process.

Thank you for volunteering as a mentor. Our students benefit greatly from your support and are much more likely to stay in school and receive a degree with your help.

IV. Tips for Getting Off to a Good Start

- A. **GROUND RULES:** Setting some expectations and a schedule can help keep you and your student engaged and in-touch when you both get busy.
- B. **PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT:** Review and sign the attached “Mountain Scholars Mentoring Agreement” to clarify roles and expectations at the outset. This agreement sets clear expectations for communication and other important aspects of your relationship. Review it as needed throughout the year.
- C. **COMMUNICATION:** Establish how you will communicate. Many students do not use email regularly, so ask about the best way to reach them. Let them know the best way to reach you. Share mobile numbers and email addresses. Be open to using in person, digital, and zoom sessions. Set an expectation for prompt replies.
1. Mentor Contact Information:
 - a) Primary Email: _____
 - b) Secondary Email: _____
 - c) Work phone: _____
 - d) Cell phone: _____
 - e) Preferences: (method, time of day, subject line, for time-sensitive questions, etc.)

 2. Student Contact Information:
 - a) Personal Email: _____
 - b) College Email: _____
 - c) Home phone: _____
 - d) Cell phone: _____
 - e) Preferences: (method, time of day, subject line, for time-sensitive questions, etc.)

- D. **MEETING SCHEDULE:** Set a Regular Schedule and make it one that will work for both you and your student MOST of the time. Perhaps connect it to a regular class meeting time, before or after. You can also set a meeting date at the end of the current meeting. Try to meet informally at a coffee shop, for a hike, or a community activity. For more formal sessions use public library student rooms, rec center lobbies, and CMC lobbies.
- E. **TWO-WAY-STREET:** Set joint mentoring goals for the semester and the next meeting session. Decide on the “deliverables” for the next session. Let the student be an equal contributing partner who contributes something. Learn about each other's experiences, families, hobbies, travels, class projects, and career goals/experiences. Plan a variety of experience “deliverables” each semester:
1. Look at the CMC semester calendar and note the deadlines for withdrawing from classes.
 2. Review each course syllabus and help the student fill out a planner (paper or digital) to schedule due dates and time needed to study and complete assignments. Also block in work hours and class schedule.
 3. Build a resume and do a practice interview.
 4. Brainstorm career options, do career assessment, and plan a “Shadow Day”
 5. Do a Self and Career Assessment
 6. Take your student to a professional meeting or industry conference or event
 7. Take your student on an outdoor experience and plan a volunteer experience
- F. **MENTOR NOTES:** Keep notes from mentoring sessions to make follow-up easier.

V. Other Resources Available for Mentors

Skills and Training Resources: Key mentor skills are helpful to ensure student success. Below is a list of the skills and resources to support you in building those skills:

[Becoming a Better Mentor](#) by Mentor National- Overview of the skills and how they apply to mentoring; information available in pdf, video, and podcast form

Lead mentor(s) as peer support

- Skill: Provide Emotional Support and Empathy, self-awareness of own emotional and physical state, read cues of mentee and how to respond
 - [The Power of Empathy](#) (TEDx Talk by Helen Riess)
 - [How to Be More Empathetic](#) (NYTimes)
 - [How to Actively Listen to Others](#) (TEDx Talk by Scott Pierce)
 - [Positive Youth Development Training](#)
- Skill: Practicing Cultural Humility
 - Book: [Bridges Out Of Poverty](#) by Ruby Payne, Philip DeVol and Terie Dreussi Smith
 - [How mentors and mentoring program can support mentees' ethnic/racial identity](#) (The Chronicles of Evidence Based Mentoring)
 - [Colorblind or Color Brave?](#) (Tedx Talk by Mellody Hobson)
 - [Cultural Humility](#) (Tedx Talk by Juliana Mosely)
 - [Low-Income Working Learners](#) (Georgetown Center on Education and Workforce)
- Skill: Build Sense of Belonging
 - [Conquering the Freshman Fear of Failure](#) (NYTimes)
 - [Fitting In on Campus: Challenges for First Generation Students](#) (NPR)
- Skill: Goal Setting and Support
 - Book: [Habits of Achievement](#) (James E. McLeod, former Vice Chancellor, Washington University at St. Louis), reach out to Andrea Walker for a copy
 - [The Effects of Student Coaching](#) (Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis)
 - [Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change](#) By W. R. Miller and S. Rollnick (Book)
- Skill: Honoring Youth Voice and Building Power- listen and take step back
 - [Unconditional Positive Regard](#) (Positive Psychology)
 - [The Importance of Creating Opportunities for Youth Voice](#) By Jaclyn Cirinna
- Skill: Expanding Networks of Support- building social capital
 - [Who You Know: Unlocking Innovations that Expand Students' Networks](#) by Julia Freeland Fisher (Book and accompanying website by Christensen Institute)

VI. Academic/Career Resources Available from CMC

- A. CMC Annual Calendar Booklet printed annually
- B. Annual [CMC Academic Calendar](#)
- C. Resources on website [CMC Breckenridge/Dillon Campuses](#)
- D. Info on [Mountain Scholars on CMC website](#)
- E. A 2020 [Summit Daily article on Mountain Scholars](#)

VII. Local Community Resources

Please feel free to refer your mentee to any of the resources below. In addition, let the CMC staff know when making one of these referrals, so they can also follow-up with the student on support.

Mental Health Resources for Summit County

- A. IF YOU ARE IN CRISIS, contact: The 24/7 Colorado Crisis Line 1-844-493-TALK(8255) or text TALK to 38255. Mentors can also call if you are concerned about a student and you can get some support / advice for what to do. This number can also be used before a full crisis if a student just needs someone in the moment to check in with.
- B. Virtual counseling is still available through CMC! 6 sessions free each semester for current CMC students, multiple therapist languages available. This is best for lower level issues. The link is called Virtual Counseling and is on Basecamp homepage under “student resources”. *(kind of great for students who don't want to run into their therapist at the grocery store)*. Building Hope is recommended for more severe mental health issues, issues that may need medication or issues that may need to continue on or if a student stops going to school.
- C. [Building Hope](#) has scholarships for therapy sessions, support groups, free events to connect (yoga, art, discussion...) and can help with mental health services navigation. Great for community connection and for those wondering where to even start asking for help.
- D. [You@CMC](#) is a tool found on Basecamp that helps students explore a wide range of health and wellness topics in a very private way. We do not track student interactions in any way, and they can take quizzes, self assessments or do research on things from sleep habits and nutrition to COVID stress to addiction. Resources are listed in here if students want to know how to reach out. Students can log in using their student ID and set up an account.

Other Resources

- A. [Summit County Advocates for Victims of Assault](#): Call 970.668.3906. They provide help making safety plans (just in case), give legal aid and have a 24/7 phone line if things get intense but someone is not quite ready to call the police. They have helped many of our students.
- B. [FIRC](#) (Family & Intercultural Resource Center) offers Free Food Markets, Rental Assistance, and much more.
- C. The Moniker Foundation's Student Relief Fund is an opportunity for current students to apply for specific support in regards to challenges and hardships students may face. Students may apply for one-time funding related to basic student needs including but not limited to: rent and housing; utilities; health care, access to internet; computers; school-related fees and materials. The fund will be accessible from August 2021 to May of 2022. To be eligible to apply, students must be enrolled in CMC's Mountain Scholars Program. Apply by [filling this form out](#).
- D. [Mountain Dreamers](#) is a nonprofit organization focused on building awareness and providing assistance to the area's immigrant population, undocumented students and families.
- E. Career Support can be found on the [CMC Career Services website](#). Andrea can also provide job opportunities as well as informational interviews and connections with other mentors. Mentors are encouraged to utilize their own networking and connections for mentee career interests.

VIII. Attachment

Mentoring guidelines in the Mountain Scholars Program Goals, Expectations, and Agreements (attached) should be reviewed and signed by both the mentor and mentee at the start of each year.