Academic Success Peer Team 2021-2022

Peer Mentors

Adrienne Sulistyo, Peer Mentor

Adrienne is a Master’s student at the University of Toronto’s Institute of Medical Science. She is currently finishing up her thesis which evaluates the cognitive function of patients with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) through their eyes. Her main research site is at Sunnybrook, which is located about 30 minutes from the St. George campus by bus. She has been a remote student since the pandemic, and she can empathize both with those who experience distractions and procrastination while studying at home and with those who struggle in their writing or balancing social and school life.

Adrienne has extensive knowledge about the ins and outs of the medical science program and has even attended medical school in Indonesia! She hopes to pursue a career in pediatrics or family medicine when she completes her degree here.
Adrienne aims to bring a friendly and positive outlook to her mentorship. She is eager to mentor students who are struggling with transition or with organizing a study schedule. She hopes to answer their questions and help them navigate resources.

When she isn’t studying, Adrienne loves to go out for a walk to enjoy nature, work out (yoga, barre, dance, HIIT, kickboxing), or watch shows on Netflix.

Amara Mohammed, Peer Mentor

Amara is a third-year student at the University of Toronto pursuing a major in Criminology and a double minor in Sociology and Women and Gender Studies. Each year, she has been able to become even more involved in campus than she was in her previous year, creating wonderful memories.

“Gaining new experiences such as working student jobs and getting involved with clubs here at U of T has been vital in improving my student experience and has allowed me to learn valuable skills I believe will help me in my professional life!”

Amara is a commuter student which she believes has been a prominent factor in improving her time management skills. She has experience as an executive member of SMILE U of T and has also worked with New College. She is grateful for this new opportunity as an Academic Success peer mentor that allows her to make students’ experience a little less stressful and be a valuable resource to help students improve their academic, social and professional skills!

In the future, Amara hopes to pursue a career that is research-based or within the legal field. Her current hobbies include reading, writing and photography.
Emma Anderson, Senior Peer Mentor

Emma is a second-year Master’s student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto and is currently working towards earning her MA in Child Study and Education. Emma has thoroughly enjoyed working at Academic Success while completing her Master’s. It has allowed her to see connections between how children and university students can learn best.

Before completing her Master’s, Emma completed an undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto, where she majored in Sociology with minors in Religion and Sexual Diversity Studies. Like many students, Emma found the first few years of university quite challenging. Over time, Emma gained study techniques that worked for her, learned to talk to profs and TAs, and began to use the resources offered at the University of Toronto. Emma stated that “It can take time, but you will adjust to the new learning environment!”

Fun fact: Her cat Teddy is likely to make a guest appearance on Teams.
Gabby Pirvu, Peer Mentor

Gabby is a fourth-year undergraduate student, double majoring in Immunology and Health and Disease at the University of Toronto. She was born in Texas but has always called Toronto her home, having lived here almost all her life. After graduation, she plans to pursue a Master’s degree in immunology and contribute to the growing field of cancer immunotherapy research.

Gabby has always found value in uplifting others and has previously been involved as a camp counsellor, tutor, Study Hubs facilitator and IMMSA immunology peer mentor. “As someone who has personally struggled with procrastination and managing the stress of university life, I am so grateful to have connected with resources like Study Hubs that help keep me accountable and remind me that I am not alone in my experience.” As a peer mentor, she wants to remind others that support is always available and aims to help students navigate the ups and downs of student life.

To wind down, Gabby enjoys trying out new recipe ideas in the kitchen, learning to skateboard and visiting the dog park. She is always happy to recommend new places to eat or visit in the city and hopes to one day travel the world.
Kelsey Gatta, Peer Mentor

Kelsey is doing her Master’s in Social Work, focusing on eating disorders in female youth. Born in Niagara, Kelsey began her academic career at the University of Guelph with an undergraduate degree in Nutrition, and did a second Bachelor’s degree in Psychology at Brock University.

Throughout her undergraduate experience, Kelsey struggled with being able to ask for help. Gradually, she learned ways to study effectively and how to manage her time through trial and error.

Now, Kelsey would like to use her knowledge and lived experiences to guide other students to available resources and to find their own success.
Lavinia Ford, Peer Mentor

Lavinia is a Master of Arts student at the University of Toronto’s Cinema Studies Institute, where her research project will explore the representation of psychiatric patients in films before and after the 1960s deinstitutionalization movement.

Lavinia completed her undergraduate studies at U of T as a Victoria College student. She majored in Cinema Studies and Equity Studies and minored in Sexual Diversity Studies. These three rich, distinct programs of study allowed her to meet students from all types of academic and personal backgrounds, and Lavinia’s five years (so far!) at U of T have allowed her to become familiar with different aspects of student life and resources at the university.

Lavinia works part time as an online literacy tutor with two organizations based in her hometown of Halifax, Nova Scotia. Her love for education and desire to help others achieve academic success means she is excited to take on this role as a peer mentor! When she is not teaching, studying or mentoring, Lavinia loves reality tv, movies (of course!) and trying out new coffee shops across the city.
Maddy de Welles, Senior Peer Mentor

Maddy is in the third year of her PhD in the Social Justice Education department at OISE. She is studying disability studies and childhood studies.

Maddy did her undergraduate in Sociology, Equity Studies and Education in Society. Now, she is very interested in studying children’s artifacts like storybooks, dolls and young adult novels, and how these adult-generated materials represent problems and solutions to children and young adults.

Maddy enjoys helping students navigate their university experience and is very happy to be part of the Academic Success Peer Mentor team! Maddy also enjoys tutoring, volunteering and mentoring students of all ages.

In her free time, Maddy likes to spend time with her cats, Martin and Lucy. She also enjoys going on walks, volunteering and being with her family.
Sadi Loai, Senior Peer Mentor

Sadi is currently doing his PhD at U of T in Biomedical Engineering, focusing on medical imaging and heart disease. He completed his undergrad at McMaster University in Chemical & Bio-Engineering.

Sadi loves the diversity at U of T and getting to meet new people from all around the world. He also thinks the facilities at U of T are amazing and there is so much potential to explore many fields of interest.

Sadi thinks the Math and Science Aid Centres were a great resource in his first year, to help with the transition from high school learning to university learning. “Lots of supports are available for students in all courses, through TAs and office hours.”

Mentors for academic and career advice were essential for helping him figure out his career path and how to navigate through university life. Applying to grad school was nerve wracking for Sadi, since many schools wanted a perfect GPA—but he learned that participating in extracurriculars could help his application and recommends that others do the same.

In his spare time Sadi loves to bake all kinds of desserts from different cultures and to try new recipes. One of the very first things he learned how to make was an apple pie!
Shantel Aboagye-Mensah, Peer Mentor

Shantel is in her second year of the Master's of Social Work Program at Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, specializing in Mental Health and Health. She completed her undergraduate degree in Mental Health Studies (Co-operative) Specialist at the University of Toronto Scarborough. Throughout her studies, Shantel has been involved in various leadership positions addressing mental health advocacy, culturally adapting practice and student empowerment.

As a peer mentor, Shantel hopes to help students find the right balance between their personal well-being and academic goals by building upon existing strengths and working on improving study habits, time management and self-care.

If she could offer three tips to prospective students, it would be to 1) Go at your own pace. 2) Get experience wherever you can! The University provides opportunities for networking, volunteering and learning events that align with your passions. You do not need to be in the co-op program to get hands-on experience. 3) Utilize the various resources provided by the University such as programs offered by Academic Success, Career Exploration & Education and Health and Wellness.

In her free time, Shantel loves watching reality television, engaging in mindfulness walks and listening to 90s RnB music.
Simran Dhir, Peer Mentor

Simran is a fourth-year undergraduate student specializing in Pharmacology and Toxicology. She is also interested in Psychology and Education and seeing how different fields are interconnected. As a peer mentor, she encourages students to keep an open mind regarding courses and programs. She is also a tour guide for the university, Co-Coordinator of PAIR Mentorship, a Study Hubs host and has been a part of U of T’s Research Opportunities Program. In her free time, she can be found binging the latest Netflix show, doodling, or drinking tea in her residence’s common room.
Peer Facilitators

Adela Jeon, Peer Facilitator

Adela is currently pursuing her Master of Arts in English at the University of Toronto where she also completed her bachelor’s degree in English, Philosophy and French. Throughout her undergraduate studies, Adela has been involved with various student life and leadership positions with the University College where she loved finding little pockets of community on such a large campus.

Now, as a peer facilitator with Academic Success, Adela is continuing her work with student life and engagement as she is always looking for opportunities to connect with other students. She is so thrilled to be offering support to students through the various peer-led workshops offered by Academic Success. When she is not reading for her classes, she is most likely trying out a new recipe, listening to KR&B hits, or making jewellery with her sister.
Janita Luanpolcharoenchai, Peer Facilitator

Janita is a fourth-year undergraduate specializing in Global Health alongside a major and minors in Cell & Molecular biology and Psychology. Originally from Thailand, she is interested in exploring the crossroads of healthcare, education and science communication in an international setting.

As a peer facilitator, she hopes to connect with students through workshops (and comments in the Zoom chat!) to help students find calm and resilience during times of turbulence. She encourages students to see university as a learning experience beyond class, an experience where transferable skills do not just apply to coursework and resumes!

Outside of the Academic Success Centre, you can find her trying to learn the guitar and making a long, long list of hiking trails to try in the GTA!
Joyce Luo, Peer Facilitator

Joyce is in her second year of the Master's of Social Work program, Mental Health and Health Specialization. She completed her undergraduate degree in Biomedical Science and Psychology at the University of Waterloo.

“What I found helpful throughout my academia is to walk out of my comfort zone and reach out to people.” Particularly, Joyce found that campus resources have vastly benefited her academic journey. When Joyce struggled with writing lab reports and essays as an ESL student, she was able to enhance her learning experience and improve her language skills by seeking help from peer mentors, writing advisors and other academic resources.

As a university student, balancing study load while having exams and important deadlines can be difficult. Joyce recognized that it can be hard to prepare for everything, hence it is important to be able to face the challenges in the moment and cope with stress using healthy self-care strategies. For self-care, Joyce likes to notice everyday things such as enjoying a cup of fresh coffee or taking the time to care for her succulents. Joyce believes that even the smallest things can have a huge positive impact under stressful periods of time.
Lindsay Eberlin, Peer Facilitation Coordinator

Lindsay is a second-year student in the Master's of Science in Occupational Therapy program. She completed her undergraduate degree in Therapeutic Recreation at the University of Waterloo.

“During my undergraduate degree, I was actively involved in campus life in various areas including recruitment, student advocacy and first year orientation. I also worked part time on and off campus and volunteered in the community. I really enjoyed being busy and actively involved in activities that I was passionate about as they allowed me to connect with others who shared the same interests.

Through my involvement, I learned the importance of time management, balance and organization. I always rely on my colour-coded calendar as a resource that keeps me organized and ensures that I don’t miss anything. I also learned the importance of setting realistic expectations for myself and only taking on as much as I could handle. I have always relied on my social network including friends and family to help me overcome any obstacles that I have faced including the transition to online school. I look forward to sharing my knowledge and experiences with other students to help them achieve their goals!”
Michelle Yan, Peer Storyteller

Michelle is a first-year life sciences student at the University of Toronto. She is passionate in working with children and wishes to contribute to improving children’s lives in the future. She enjoys engaging in different perspectives when learning about global issues and hopes to develop skills that will help her in providing firsthand assistance for communities in need.

As a student life peer storyteller, Michelle organizes promotional materials for the academic success team and works alongside with many peers to help students in navigating resources. She is very happy to have this opportunity that allows her to provide meaningful support for students and get involved in the school community.

Besides engaging academically, Michelle enjoys having meals at different restaurants with her friends, exploring nature parks and watching Korean variety shows. Her all-time favorite is Running Man.
Vurjeet Madan, Peer Storyteller

Vurjeet Madan is in her third year at the University of Toronto. She is double majoring in IRHR and Political Science and minoring in History.

Simply put, Vurjeet is obsessed with stories. Whether it be fictional ones in books and films, very real ones that deserve more attention, or ones about her own experiences, she is a firm believer that stories are what make us human. In keeping with this interest, she is currently working towards becoming a lawyer and a journalist, hoping to bring stories to justice through her work. Though the cumbersome student life keeps her quite busy, she spends her extra time writing articles and working with the Varsity and other journalistic publications. An immigrant kid to two lovely (albeit sometimes loud) Punjabi parents, she is forever grateful for her Indian roots and considers it one of the biggest markers of what makes her, her. A film buff, Frank Ocean fan and fashion-lover are all terms that are synonymous with who Vurjeet is. Vurjeet can be found often contradicting her “living in the moment” mantra with the slightly annoying candid photos and videos she takes of everyone around her. Whether or not anyone will admit it, she’s pretty sure everyone loves it—and she certainly loves capturing the moment.