MENTOR HANDBOOK

2018 – 2019

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You are expected to read and understand this handbook as part of your introduction to becoming a mentor within the Eagle Connections Program at Tallahassee Community College (TCC). You may also find it helpful to use the handbook as a reference throughout your time as a mentor with the program. The handbook is designed as a communication tool that should address most of your inquiries, although it is not an absolute replacement for direct face-to-face communication. This handbook applies to all Eagle Connections mentors and supersedes any previous oral or written statements or policies regarding the Eagle Connections Program, including prior Eagle Connections handbooks. Any updates to policies or procedures outlined in this handbook will be communicated by the Eagle Connections Coordinator. An electronic copy of this handbook may be found in the Eagle Connections Activity group within the TCC SharePoint. If you have any questions or concerns about this handbook, the mentor position, or other program-related issues, we invite you to speak with the Eagle Connections Coordinator or Lead Program Mentor.

Program Introduction

The Eagle Connections Program at Tallahassee Community College (TCC) is a postsecondary transition program for individuals with intellectual disabilities. The program's mission is to provide a course of study that includes career exploration, work experience, and social activities while empowering young adults with significant cognitive disabilities to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to become independent and productive citizens. In addition, the program offers these young adults an opportunity to experience life on a college campus while developing self-determination, independent living, and employability skills.

When the program was established in 2011, it recruited fellow students, staff, and other community members to take on the role of program mentors. Mentors help guide students through college life and learn to take on the responsibilities that come with being a successful college student and adult. Mentors play a crucial role in the process of providing students with disabilities a smooth transition into higher education, as well as encouraging them to think about future job prospects and work to achieve a rewarding career after postsecondary education. Eagle Connections mentors wear many hats while on the job, and they are not only there for the students as a role model, but also as a friend.

Job Description & Expectations

Mentors are one of the core aspects of the Eagle Connections program and serve an important role. Mentors act as positive role models for the students and help them navigate new responsibilities that come with being a college student. It is a rewarding experience that helps guide students with disabilities towards a brighter future. Mentors will engage students in a wide variety of areas involving academics, social etiquette, healthy living, and more.

Mentors responsibilities include the following:
- Accompanying students to class and exams and meetings with professors
- Serving as an on-campus study buddy for homework, projects, exams, etc.
- Assisting students with planning their schedule and staying on task with assignments
- Helping students navigate TCC campus and resources (advising, testing center, career center, library tutors, etc.)
- Attending workshops, lunchtime, and on-campus social events with students
- Encouraging positive life skills such as proper nutrition, fitness, money management, stress management, etc.

Important daily tasks to support these responsibilities and help ensure students are getting the most out of their college experience include the following:

- Scheduling – check in with students to find out their schedule for the day, ensure they are using an effective means of organizing their schedule (planner, phone, etc.), and use student schedules and TCC calendars to help students prepare for what is next
- Canvas & TCC email – aid students in checking their TCC email and Canvas for the latest updates on assignments, deadlines, or changes to the course schedule
- Guiding - prompt students to select seats and get out supplies before class start, redirect if they are falling asleep or get distracted, and encourage students to ask you questions first, then the instructor
- Note-taking – model skills for taking notes in class, yet have students take their own notes in a way that most benefits them. Use your notes as a reference if needed.
- Engaging – engage students during class and activities, teach techniques to fight boredom or anxiety, and converse about their interests, hobbies and career goals

Also, keep in mind that mentors are NOT tutors, parents, social workers, counselors, romantic interest, or supervisors. The goal of a mentor is to aide students during this transition to become self-advocates and independent.

In addition, mentors are part of the support team for Eagle Connections students. As a team there are certain expectations of mentors, but also keep in mind that you are not alone.

Consistent and intentional communication between you and your fellow mentors, the Program Coordinator and the Lead Program Mentor is essential to ensure we support our students well. We are addressing their needs as a team. You are contributing to a groundbreaking program and your work is valued and appreciated!

Mentors expectations include the following:
- Completing Mentor Academy training
- Maintaining consistent communication (checking emails, Activity Group)
- Arriving on-time to scheduled shifts
- Conducting yourself in a professional and courteous manner towards all
- Attending mentor team meetings
- Submitting reports and time sheets in a timely manner
- Taking initiative to find another mentor to cover your shift if you are unable to work and notify the Lead Program Mentor and Program Coordinator of the change. Let the student know of the change as well and update the mentor on coursework.

Meetings & Schedules

The Eagle Connections Coordinator and Lead Program Mentor work with your availability to create a schedule that works with all students and mentors to ensure every class and activity is covered accordingly. If your availability changes or you are unable to come in for your time slot, it is important to communicate these changes as soon as possible so adjustments can be made to prevent any schedule issues. If you know in advance of an upcoming schedule conflict or absence, make the proper arrangements ahead of time as discussed. Please contact and/or leave a message with Marisa Vaughn, Lead Program Mentor, at 201-8479 or vaughnma@tcc.fl.edu, or Amanda Warren, Eagle Connections Coordinator, at 201-8432 or warrena@tcc.fl.edu. If neither are available, please contact Emily Rattini-Reich at 201-9484 or rattinie@tcc.fl.edu. Please provide notification within one business day of your shift start time. The schedule is subject to change at any time based on student class schedules and/or the Eagle Connections curriculum. Our program adheres to the college schedule and is inactive during college closures such as breaks, holidays, faculty work days, etc.

- ❖ There will be regularly scheduled meetings for the Eagle Connections Coordinator, Lead Program Mentor, and mentors to consult on student progress and/or address any issues or concerns that may arise. This also helps to stay on track with student schedules since students may have multiple mentors throughout a week. These meetings are mandatory and any changes to the date, time, or frequency will be communicated promptly. If you cannot attend a meeting, give proper notice as mentioned above and catch up on all information discussed upon your return. It is crucial to keep an open line of communication with the Eagle Connections Coordinator, Lead Program Mentor, fellow mentors, and students.

- ❖ There will be mentor volunteer opportunities throughout the semester, such as tabling for Eagle Connections, workshops and/or additional training provided by TCC or

- ❖ third-party entities, and many events on and off campus. These opportunities allow mentors to get more involved and gain knowledge that can assist in the mentoring experience. Mentors will be notified when opportunities become available and kept up-to-date on the latest schedules and locations since they are subject to change.

- ❖ Attendance is a major part of being involved with the Eagle Connections program. Coming in when scheduled is key to staying up-to-date on student progress, demonstrating consistency and commitment to the students, being an effective team player, and fulfilling your role as a mentor.

Student – Mentor Relationship

- ❖ Due to all students in the program being 18 or older, they can make their own choices regarding who they want to be friends with. Hanging out away from TCC campus and developing closer friendships can add to the student-mentor relationship in a positive way, but it should not create a gateway for cliques, exclusion, or favoritism.

- ❖ Friendships between students and mentors that develop through mentor guidance, support, and encouragement of the student's goals and aspirations is welcomed. However, it is important to maintain appropriate boundaries between yourself and the students. As stated in Policy 04-18, Professional Relationships – (Employees/Students, Supervisors/Employees), the initiation of or consent to an intimate or sexual relationship between an employee and any current student of the College for whom the employee has direct professional responsibility is unacceptable. Such an intimate or sexual relationship may have the effect of undermining the atmosphere of trust on which the educational process depends. If a complaint is filed by the student, it is defined as a complaint of sexual harassment.

- ❖ TCC is committed to having a learning and working environment that is free of discrimination, sexual misconduct, and unlawful harassment. Discrimination, sexual misconduct, or harassment of students or employees, or by students or employees, in the learning and/or working environment will not be tolerated. Please see Policy 03-01, Equal Access/Equal Opportunity, Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, and Unlawful Harassment.

- ❖ TCC values the well-being, welfare and safety of the college community and the integrity of its learning environment, while balancing the needs and rights of the student. There are situations that may arise where the behavior of a student due to medical or psychological reasons jeopardizes the well-being, welfare or safety of the college community and/or the student. In any case where the behavior of a student, regardless of reason or circumstance, substantially disrupts the orderly processes of the classroom or college and/or if a faculty/staff member has reasonable cause to believe the behavior has resulted in or may result in threatening or harmful conduct, the faculty/staff member should contact Campus Police at 201-6200 or 911 for immediate assistance as stated in Policy 10-14.

People First Language

"People with disabilities are – first and foremost – people who have individual abilities, interests and needs. People-First Language emphasizes the person, not the disability. By placing the person first, the disability is no longer the primary, defining characteristic of an individual, but one of several aspects of the whole person" (The Arc). While it is a very minor change in your daily language, it makes a huge impact.

	Affirmative Phrase	Negative Phrase
Example:	Person with a disability	The disabled, the handicapped

When interacting with a person with a disability, speak directly to them. If you wish to offer help to a person with a disability, wait until they accept your offer. After that, wait for them to give you instructions on how to help them. If you are interacting with a person with speech difficulties, be patient and wait for them to finish their phrase. If you did not understand what the person said, do not pretend you did. Instead, repeat what you understood and wait for them to respond (Excerpt from Guide to Peer Mentor Success from the Institute of Human Development and Disability of University of Georgia).

Customer Service

Eagle Connections mentors interact with students who may be new or returning student and in various stages as they work towards program completion, or graduation. In performing your duties, you have numerous "customers," starting with the students you mentor. There may be times when mentoring duties also require you to facilitate conversations or processes for your mentees with others including:

- instructors
- fellow students
- academic advisors
- financial aid advisors
- tutors
- community partners

As a mentor you assist the student's progress not only in the academic arena, but also in the student's social/emotional well-being, life skills abilities, and career/occupational readiness. When you demonstrate that YOU can handle difficult situations, you are a role model, showing not only that problems can be handled, but how to handle them with calm and grace. Below are some tips and suggestions on how to handle "customer relations" problems.

- ❖ Discuss protocols with management. Find out what are you authorized to do, what requires management approval, etc. Avoid making promises you can't keep.
- ❖ Remember that everyone has a cell phone and may be recording or filming you.
- ❖ Have the right attitude: Remember how you feel when you experience poor customer service.
- ❖ Avoid playing the "Blame Game." Your focus is on fixing the problem.

- ❖ Modulate your voice: Tempo-- speak more slowly—don't exaggerate, but slow down; Tone-- not high-pitched, but lower/medium range
- ❖ Listen carefully and exercise patience
- ❖ Understand that you do not have to put up with any form of harassment.
- ❖ Learn as much as you can about the customer's concerns. For example: "Please tell me what happened." Or "Can you tell me what happened first, and take me through the steps?"
  - Repeat what you understand the complaint is: "As I understand you, X happened, then Y happened, and it affected you in A and B ways. You need us to do 1, 2, and 3, to resolve this issue."

Communication is as much non-verbal as verbal.

- ❖ Verbal: Avoid cursing. Renée Evenson, author of *Powerful Phrases for Effective Customer Service,* provides a list of phrases of courtesy to incorporate into your customer service vocabulary:
  - "I apologize. I didn't hear/understand what you said."
  - "Will you?" rather than "You will."
  - "Yes," rather than "Yeah."
  - "I'll check and be right back."
  - "Will you hold for a moment while I check on that?"
  - "Thanks for waiting."

- ❖ Nonverbal Communication

	Do	Don't
Facial expression	Keep a calm, concerned, and interested facial expression.	Roll your eyes, scowl, or look bored.
Eye contact	Maintain a healthy level of eye contact.	Stare too much—you might come off as creepy. But avoid looking down or darting your eyes too quickly as this can be a sign of uneasiness.
Hand and arm positioning	Keep your arms at your sides, with your hands open.	Clench your fists, fold your arms, or point fingers.
Stance	Maintain an upright and open posture.	Slouch or stand too close that you're invading the customer's personal space.

Workshops, Extracurricular Activities, and Internships

The Eagle Connections program hosts a variety of workshops and activities built into student schedules when possible alongside their classes and study time based on student workload and interest. Mentors join students for these workshops and activities including:

- Life Skills
- Fitness
- Nutrition

❖ Life skills can also be promoted beyond the scheduled workshop sessions. For example,

❖ Integrating fitness into the students' schedule promotes healthy lifestyles and stress management. Learn from students how they would like to spend their fitness time. This could be walking around campus, visiting the Life Sports complex, or playing a game in the intermural field.

❖ Students are encouraged to explore their interests and hobbies and participate in extracurricular activities. These can include clubs, sports, or organizations sponsored by TCC or a third-party entity.

❖ Internships are a requirement for program completion that are arranged through the combined efforts of Eagle Connections, TCC Career Center, and organizations or businesses both on and off campus to give students an opportunity to experience work in a job related to their career field. Mentors may accompany students to meeting with the Career Center and to on-campus internships with prior approval to help students adjust. After the adjustment period, mentors only work with students to ensure completion of internship assignments and timesheets.

❖ Mentors are unable to accrue hours by participating with students in off-campus internships or activities or on-campus internships or extracurricular activities outside of pre-approved scheduled time.

Media Release Form and FERPA

❖ Mentors will be asked to sign a Media Release Form. This form allows the program to use any photo, video, or audio of mentors for Eagle Connections purposes. They may be used for various purposes such as training, program advertisement at an event, the TCC website or Eagle Connections Facebook, etc. It is not a requirement to sign this document, but it is encouraged to help the program promote its image and mission, which heavily involves the Eagle Connections mentors.

- ❖ An Eagle Connections mentor is a Tallahassee Community College employee who works closely with students, so it is important for all mentors to be familiar with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Mentors will take a FERPA training course through TCC Canvas to ensure a thorough understanding of the rights of students, parents, and the college, and how they play a role in following FERPA guidelines. Each mentor will sign a form upon completion of the FERPA training and turn this form in to the Eagle Connections Coordinator.

Student Account Access and Documentation

- ❖ As mentioned previously, students at TCC should check up daily on their Canvas and email accounts to stay up-to-date on the latest news regarding assignments, schedules, deadlines, campus events, and more. It is important for students to also use their Canvas and email to keep track of class obligations as well as complete and submit some of their work for courses. Although mentors assist students in navigating these resources, mentors should not have any reason to access a student's account when they are not present. It is acceptable for a student to give a mentor their username and/or password only to be used in their presence for academic purposes.

- ❖ A student's TCC email houses many applications such as OneDrive, SharePoint, Calendar, and more. In these applications, students can store important documents, projects, or anything else for their needs. Mentors should not have a copy of any student projects or documents but are able to help the student with their work through the student's account, flash drive, or other means of storing work.

Office Organization

- ❖ The Eagle Connections office is constantly used for storage, meetings, workshops, study, and down time between classes and activities. Mentors and students alike are responsible for the upkeep of the office and all resources and tools housed within it. Any supplies, books, electronics, or tools provided by TCC for the Eagle Connections program must be used in our office for Eagle Connections business only. Resources may be checked out for on-campus use only if approved by the Eagle Connections Coordinator or Lead Program Mentor.

- ❖ There will be a shelving unit in the office designated for personal belongings such as backpacks, books, lunch sacks, etc. Mentors should not have any of their personal belongings lying around the office or taking up shelf space designated for other supplies or resources. Mentors will have their own work space and bookcase, but these are only to be used for paperwork, office supplies, resources, and other work-related documentation or tools. TCC is not responsible for any lost, stolen, or damaged belongings.

- ❖ It is important to keep the office looking presentable since the program may have visitors such as parents, faculty, other staff, community members, and even potential students. Cleanliness and organization are key factors to an efficient workspace and healthy environment.

Office Use vs. Campus Use

❖ The Eagle Connections office provides a space for students to meet with their mentors daily to go to classes and other activities, attend workshops, and use computers for study time and other assignments. It also provides a work area for mentor organization and correspondence and houses the office space for the Eagle Connections Coordinator.

❖ TCC Campus provides many spaces for students to have quiet study, reach out for academic help, or get a hold of resources needed for their success. The Eagle Connections office may not always have what the student needs and may not always be able to provide an adequate space for certain activities. Mentors should encourage students to explore other options around campus for gathering information, working on class projects or homework, studying, or spending free time between classes and activities.

❖ Mentors should never force a student to study or lounge elsewhere or make students feel unwelcome in the Eagle Connections office. Offering ideas and informing the students of options they did not know they had is sometimes the push needed to let students decide on their own to explore TCC campus and utilize other resources available to them as a TCC student.

❖ Locations to study: Library, Learning Commons, private study rooms are available to reserve, computer lab, food court, outside table

International Mentor Training Program Certification (IMTPC) Code of Ethics

In all campus capacities in which we find mentorship, mentors should demonstrate a commitment to the following code of ethics developed by IMTPC.

1. Respect: Mentors recognize that they are a role model for their peers. As such, effective mentorship relationships will be built on the foundation of mutual respect for all individuals.
2. Professionalism: Mentors are representatives of their respective campus programs and institutions; therefore, mentors' attitudes and behaviors must reflect the highest standard of professionalism. Mentors will act with the understanding that their actions have the ability to influence others.
3. Dignity: Mentors understand that their relationships must be formed on the basis of honor and respect. Mentors will embrace peers for where they are in their development without judgment and act in ways that exemplify dignity.
4. Diversity: Mentorship requires sensitivity to the uniqueness of each situation and each student involved. Mentors will promote an understanding and respect for differences as they relate to race, age, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, socioeconomic status, values, and opinions.
5. Confidentiality: Mentors hold the highest regard for trust and privacy in their relationships with their peers. Mentors will maintain practices that protect the personal information of their peers.
6. Commitment: Mentors understand the obligation they have to their peers, to each other, and to themselves. As such, mentors will fulfill all responsibilities in being helpful and supportive to their peers in addition to maintaining a commitment to furthering their personal development as peer mentors.
7. Integrity: Mentoring requires the establishment of honest, truthful, and fair practices. Mentors will act with appropriate judgment in their approach to providing accurate resources and information to their peers. Mentors will act with consciousness to their abilities, limitations, and their resources.

Information retrieved from http://www.crla.net/index.php/certifications/imtpc-international-mentor-training-program

On and Off Campus Resources

❖ Eagle Connections works closely with a few departments on TCC campus – Student Accessibility Services (SAS), Accessibility Resource Center (ARC), and Student Leadership, Involvement, and Civic Engagement office (SLICE). These are the entities that house our advisors and directors who encounter our students the most throughout each semester.

❖ College-wide resources for TCC students, faculty, and staff can be found on the TCC website at the following ink: http://www.tcc.fl.edu/about/resources

   ▪ Library and Learning Commons
   ▪ Counseling Center
   ▪ Career Center
   ▪ Life Sports Complex
   ▪ SLICE
   ▪ Art Gallery
   ▪ Testing Center
   ▪ Dental Hygiene Lab

❖ Off-campus organizations collaborate with the Eagle Connections program to give our students internships, job coaching, and other opportunities to grow as an individual while attending TCC. Off-campus organizations help us provide resources for our students to ensure a smooth transition into college and prepare for life after graduation. Some of these include:

   ▪ Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)
   ▪ KEYS (Keys to Exceptional Youth Success)
   ▪ Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD)
   ▪ Florida Developmental Disability Council (FDDC)
   ▪ FSU Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD)
   ▪ FSU Best Buddies
   ▪ Special Olympics

We only hope for our resources and connections to continue to grow!

WELCOME TO
EAGLE CONNECTIONS AT TALLAHASSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE!