Colleague Connection

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of this program?

- The initiative is designed to accelerate employees' personal and professional development within the Division of Finance and the university. The initiative includes a 1-on-1 peer mentoring relationship and cohort-based learning activities to facilitate employee development. The overall goals of the initiative are to:
    - Create a network and structure for employee support
    - Continue to build and enhance workplace community
    - Educate and demonstrate the vision and core values of the organization
    - Offer resources (human, information, documentation) that will enhance the employee's development and experience.

PEER PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

What is my time commitment to participate as a Peer Partner?

- Time commitment varies from the beginning of the program to the end. At the beginning, we expect partners to spend about an hour or two with their new hires to help them acclimate – this includes getting coffee or going to lunch as well as email and other correspondence. As partners move through the program, we expect less time commitment (if desired) as employees move to more virtual interactions. Of course, we want these relationships to develop organically and can remain in-person activities throughout if the partners desire.

How will peer partners be matched to a new employee?

- Employees are matched on multiple criteria including availability, role in the university, and – as possible – shared interests, backgrounds, and circumstances. A survey for current employee volunteers will help us gauge compatibility with new hires as they enter the university.

What is the eligibility for being a peer partner?

- A Virginia Tech employee who has been working in their current department for a minimum of 12 months and who remains in good standing with the university. Those who have been with the university more than 12 months, but in their department less than 12 months, may be eligible to serve as peer partners. All peer partners must have the approval of their immediate supervisor to serve in this capacity.

Will there be training on expectations for peer partners?

- Yes, we will be offering various information sessions for peer partners to set expectations and answer any questions that may arise.

Is there an end date?

- There is no official end date for the program because it will be operated on a rolling basis. The end date for each individual partnership will be one year from the new hire's start date. Ideally, these relationships will continue to grow beyond the completion of the 12-month "formal" part of the relationship.

What resources do I have?

- The Colleague Connection team has created numerous guides for partners to reference. These resources will be available through a Microsoft Teams channel and discussed at upcoming education sessions.

Should Peer Partner checkpoints with new employees be in-person, virtual, phone, etc.?

- Initial meeting(s) between the Peer Partner and the new hire should occur in-person. The program offers flexibility for the Peer Partner and new hire to build the relationship as organically as possible. The modality of these interactions is completely at the discretion of the participants, and we encourage participants to find a method that works best for both individuals.

Does this occur during business hours or is there an extra component outside of work?

- These activities are intended to occur within business hours. This means that both new hires and current employees will need to have open communication with each other and with their supervisors to avoid disruption to any work operations or services.

Do I have to have supervisor approval to participate?

- Yes, supervisor approval is required to serve as a Peer Partner. Additionally, peer partners are expected to proactively communicate with their supervisors about program obligations in order to avoid disruption to work operations or services.

What type of feedback process will be available?

- This process is still under development. There will be opportunities through a feedback survey and/or 1:1 outreach to share feedback about your experience. We want to hear from you about any positives or negatives you see during your partnership so we can continuously improve the program. You can contact the Colleague Connection team at vpfconnections@vt.edu with any additional questions.

What if an issue arises, or a peer partner departs from their job?

- If a partnership is no longer viable, we want to know about it so we can work together and find a new partner. Peer partners, or participants, can contact the Colleague Connection team at vpfconnections@vt.edu for assistance.

What happens if I am no longer interested / able / available to serve as a peer partner?

- As this is a volunteer commitment, you can discontinue being a partner. We do ask that as a courtesy to the new hire, you give us notice so we can find them a new partner to continue the program with.

NEW HIRE NETWORK

Am I required to attend all the sessions?

- New employees should make every effort to attend all of the activities. A schedule of activities will be provided with significant advance notice to allow the employee to reserve time for attendance. Should a scheduling or availability issue arise, the employee should let both their supervisor and Colleague Connection team know if they are unable to attend.

What topics will be covered during the sessions?

- Each session is tied to a core value or strategic priority of the Finance organization or university as a whole. Sessions will be led by Finance leadership.

Are sessions offered in-person?

- The New Hire Network sessions will be delivered primarily in-person. For employees who have approved telework agreements for fully remote work, a virtual option may be available. Employees who work in-person full-time or on hybrid schedules are expected to attend the sessions in-person.

How many sessions will occur?

- On average, sessions will occur once every two months.

What is the time commitment for new employees to participate in these sessions?

- Employees should attend these activities for their first 12 months of employment. Sessions will vary in length, with most ranging from 1-2 hours.

Does this occur during business hours or is there an extra component outside of work?

- These activities will occur within business hours.

Do I need to do anything in advance of attendance?

- No! Come to learn, ask questions, and build relationships with your fellow new employees and our leaders.