

# MSU S-Designation Application Record #3

**Faculty Name**

Meggan Franks

**NetID**

mlh184

**Email**

mfranks@saffairs.msstate.edu

**Department**

Student Leadership/Comm Engagement

**College**

Student Affairs

**Department Head**

Cade Smith

**Email**

cade@saffairs.msstate.edu

**Course Number**

CRM/SO/SLC

**Course Name**

Mentoring for At-Risk Youths

**Course Description**

(Prerequisite: JR/SR Standing and Permission of Instructor). One hour lecture, four hours practical experience. This course trains students to mentor at-risk juveniles to facilitate their successful transition to productive community roles. (Same as SO 4153 and SLCE 4153).

**Seeking a community-engaged learning designation**

every time course is offered

**1. Community engagement describes collaboration between MSU and partnering communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. Please list the community-engaged learning activities students will be involved in and what course objectives these activities will address. How is the community partner involved in project development?**

MSU defines community engagement as the collaboration between MSU and partnering communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in the context of partnership and reciprocity. In this course, MSU partners with Armstrong Middle School to place junior and senior level students in one-on-one mentoring relationships with at-risk juveniles in the community. Students enrolling in traditional college-level social science courses learn ideas and concepts but rarely are afforded the

chance to apply those theories and concepts in real-world experiences. Therefore, this course allows MSU students to learn about mentoring and use those skills in a practical, real-world setting. In addition, research shows that young adults who are at-risk and have a mentor are 55% more likely to enroll in college, 52% less likely than their peers to skip a day of school, and maintain better attitudes toward school (<http://www.mentoring.org/why-mentoring/mentoring-impact/>). Due to these facts, both the mentee and the school benefit tremendously from a successful mentoring relationship.

As part of this course, students will participate in one hour and 15 minutes of in-class lecture per week, and spend four hours per week as a mentor to middle-school youth that are considered high-risk by Armstrong Middle School administrators. During the class, the following course objectives will be addressed:

1. Improve student communication skills
2. Improve student listening skills
3. Team-building
4. Develop student empathy
5. Encourage independent work
6. Improve students' sense of citizenship
7. Develop students' sense of social responsibility

The community partner is involved in the development of the project in numerous ways. During the initial planning period, and before the beginning of each semester, a number of meetings are scheduled with Armstrong Middle School administrators to discuss and plan the semester. Next, Armstrong Middle School administrators spend two weeks of the semester selecting mentees to participate in the program and organize a "Parent-Mentor Meet & Greet" at the school at a convenience of the school and the mentee's families. Next, once the mentors and mentees have been matched, Armstrong administrators are updated weekly on the progress of the mentoring relationships, and on any issues that may arise throughout the semester. Armstrong administrators are also invited to all special events throughout the semester, including sporting events, pizza nights, and the wrap-up party. Once the program is completed each semester, faculty will again schedule a wrap-up meeting with Armstrong to discuss the success of the program, possible changes, and plans for next semester.

## **2. Reflection is an opportunity to analyze and share thoughts on the project experience. Please explain what type of reflection strategies (e.g. written assignments, small group discussion, class discussion, visual art) will be required in the course.**

Every week students in the class are responsible for submitting a completed log sheet and reflection essay that answers the following questions:

- (1) Select an incident that has occurred as part of your mentoring experience. Describe what happened. Include descriptions of your behaviors and the behaviors of others (include verbal and nonverbal behaviors). Give details and be specific.
- (2) Describe your thoughts and feelings about the incident. How do you think the others that were involved thought and felt about the incident? How did this event affect individuals associated with the situation (i.e., at the facility, in the youth's family)?
- (3) What themes from the readings and materials presented in class help you to explain and understand the situation and the dynamics you experienced? Where might your assumptions at the time or afterward have been shortsighted or faulty?
- (4) If you are in such a situation again, what might you try? Think about what you learned from this experience. In what kinds of situations might this learning apply in the future?

In addition to the above weekly written reflection, students also participate in weekly class discussions on their mentoring experiences, reading assignments, and assigned discussion topics. Each of the 15 weekly reflection assignments is worth 10 points (150 points total), and a total of 50 points are awarded for class participation in discussion. Also, students are required to submit a final report (50 points) that helps the student reflect on their semester-long mentoring experience by answering the following questions:

1. List and discuss the primary reasons why you registered for this course.
2. What have you learned about yourself because of your mentoring relationship this semester?
3. What have you learned about middle school children because of your mentoring relationship this semester?
4. Discuss the challenges that you faced in forming and maintaining your mentoring relationship this semester. If you were to start again, what would you do differently to reduce those challenges?

5. Write a promotional paragraph or two for marketing this program to other students that include a personal testimonial about what mentoring has done for you.
6. What advice would you give to your professors to make this class a better experience for the students in the spring semester?
7. If you were designing this program, how would you handle the initial meeting of the mentors and mentees to reduce the awkwardness that is always involved in that meeting?
8. In your case management plan, you listed at least seven goals for your mentee. For each of those goals, describe:
  - A. The current status of your mentee on that particular goal.
  - B. The challenges you believe your mentee will face in reaching that goal
  - C. The likelihood of success (in your opinion) for your mentee in achieving that goal. Justify why you feel that way.
9. Describe your plans (if any) for maintaining the mentoring relationship you have begun this semester in the summer and afterward.
10. Close your report by describing whether the course and the mentoring relationship were what you expected when you registered for the course. Explain why it met those expectations and why it did not meet your expectations.

Using the Final Report, a summary of the program, suggested improvements, and the status of each mentee concerning their goals is generated in a summary format and provided to the community partner at the completion of each semester.

**3. Reciprocity refers to a mutually beneficial exchange between MSU and its community partners. Please describe how the proposed service-learning project will be mutually beneficial for the students and the community partner.**

The youth that are selected by Armstrong Middle School are typically considered high-risk by Armstrong administrators and having a lower than normal chance of being successful in high school and beyond. By placing these youth with a student mentor, the mentee benefits tremendously by having a consistent weekly presence from an adult that cares about their future success. Research shows that young adults who are at-risk and have a mentor have better school attendance, a better chance of pursuing higher education and maintain better attitudes toward school (The National Mentoring Partnership, 2016). Due to these facts, both the mentee, the mentee's family, and the school benefit tremendously from a successful mentoring relationship.

In addition to improved attendance, better attitudes towards school, and a high chance of going on to higher education, the mentee, and the school also benefit significantly from the activities the mentors are required to complete with their mentees. As part of their final grade, the mentor must complete a Life Success Plan with their mentee that includes goal setting activities in five areas, including social skills goals, educational planning goals, financial goals, leisure time goals, and health goals. In addition to developing goals in each of the five areas stated above, the mentor is required to help the mentee develop action steps that they will take in order to meet these goals. On their weekly outings, the mentor is also required to select activities with their mentee that help their mentee make sound decisions and take action steps towards their long-term goals.

MSU students benefit from a successful mentoring experience by acquiring the following learning outcomes:

1. Demonstrate their comprehension of the viewpoints and ideas of criminology, counseling psychology, sociology, and other areas of study and disciplines related to aspects of effective mentoring in society.
2. Synthesize information and readings from the media and research literature and develop models and implementation strategies for effective mentoring relationships.
3. Evaluate both the published and Internet literature and research on effective mentoring for at-risk youths.
4. Compare, contrast, and apply empirically supported and best practice strategies for mentoring of at-risk youths.
5. Demonstrate the ability to integrate an understanding of associated environmental/social factors such as legal, community-based resources, and culture that affects families of at-risk youths.

"Mentoring Impact." MENTOR. The National Mentoring Partnership, 22 Nov. 2016. Web. 23 Nov. 2016. .

**4. Dissemination is the sharing of information obtained in a community-engaged project with the community partner, the university, and/or the broader public. (e.g. presentations, executive summaries, survey feedback, scholarly publications, program/activity outputs) Please address how project results are assessed and shared with the community partner.**

Information obtained from the mentoring relationships is shared with the community partner in a wrap-up meeting each semester, as well as a written summary that is produced from information obtained from the mentor's final reports. This program review includes discoveries, successes and failures, and overall program outcomes. The report also includes the mentor's feedback on how the program could be improved for the future. This report is shared Armstrong administrators and SLCE staff for possible consideration as a portion of the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll application.

**CCEL's support in the following areas**

Assessment of community-engaged learning effectiveness using CCEL's standardized survey