

Peer Leaders – FYE Website Content

I. About the Peer Leader Program

Program Description

Peer Leaders (PLs) are experienced undergraduate students who serve as mentors and role models for first-year students. As part of the First-Year Experience (FYE) program, PLs work closely with faculty and staff to support students' academic and personal transition to college. They attend FYE classes, facilitate discussions, and help build a sense of community.

Evidence of Effectiveness

Research shows that peer mentoring significantly improves student engagement, retention, and academic success. At WCU, students who engage with PLs report feeling more connected, confident, and prepared for college life. National studies also highlight the positive impact of peer-led support on first-year student outcomes (e.g., [Bergey, et al., 2019](#); [Shook & Keup, 2012](#); [Vandervelden et al., 2023](#)).

Highlighted Skills and Benefits of Being a Peer Leader

- Communication: PLs learn to lead discussions, present ideas clearly, and listen actively.
- Leadership: PLs take initiative, guide peers, and serve as positive role models.
- Organization: PLs manage schedules, plan activities, and balance multiple responsibilities.
- Time Management: They learn to prioritize tasks and meet deadlines effectively.
- Mentorship: PLs build meaningful relationships and support students through challenges.

These skills are developed through a combination of formal training (including the FYE 350 course, "The Peer Leader Experience") and hands-on experience in the classroom.

"Being a Peer Leader helped me grow into a more confident communicator and leader. I use these skills every day—in class, at work, and in life."

— Former Peer Leader, Class of 2024

II. Meet the 2024–25 Peer Leaders

Photos

[Insert headshots or group photo gallery here]

Bios

Each Peer Leader brings a unique perspective and passion for helping others. Click on a photo to learn more about their major, interests, and why they chose to become a PL.

III. Testimonials

From FYE Students

- [The PLs'] simple advice and honesty really helped me. Additionally, their involvement in school inspired me to look into opportunities outside of the classroom.
- [No resource] really helped me except my Peer Leaders. They truly helped me get back on track by helping me with assignments and even teaching me how to study.
- I talked to my peer leader... and she told me going to the gym can help you get motivated and also get you out of bed. When I tried this, I found myself having less anxiety, and being focused better in class. It also helped me connect better with people and make more friends.
- A big help were the peer leader meetings. Having a student "advisor" made me feel more comfortable to talk about anything I was struggling with whether it was classes I was taking, how to not fall behind, or just simple stuff like note taking strategies. Knowing you have someone you can talk to whenever made the transition a lot better.
- After getting help with an assignment from my peer leader one time, it was way easier to ask for help, not just in FYE, but even in my other classes.
- Going to the peer leader meetings even if I didn't have any academic questions was still beneficial because talking to someone close in age, who also went through the same things you are currently experiencing, is very comforting.

From Former Peer Leaders

- The PL experience for me was very beneficial, it honestly has helped me in so many ways. It helped me become a great student, come out of my shell to develop confidence, and most importantly it helped me harness leadership skills. It was an amazing opportunity that I am extremely grateful for, it has helped me develop a more mature and successful work ethic and that it something I will be forever great for.
- The PL experience has definitely changed me for the better and allowed me to grow in many different fields. As I have mentioned many times throughout this endeavor, I believe I have truly sharpened my soft skills to help better prepare myself for the real world beyond college. As you know, it has given me opportunities to improve my public speaking to big crowds, I have collaborated with professors and fellow PL's, I helped to solve problems for the new freshman students, and it solidified my time management skills since it is a big responsibility that takes a good-sized chunk of my time each day.

IV. How to Become a Peer Leader

Application Process

Applications open each spring for the following academic year. Eligible students must:

- Have a 3.0+ CGPA
- Have received a B+ or higher in FYE100
- Demonstrate leadership potential and a commitment to student success

Steps to Apply:

1. Complete the online application
2. Participate in an interview

Training Info

All selected Peer Leaders enroll in FYE 350: Peer Leadership in the First-Year Experience, a **300-level Speaking Emphasis course** that prepares them for their role. The course covers mentoring strategies, communication skills, and inclusive leadership practices.

V. Nominate a Future Peer Leader

Faculty Nominations

Faculty members can nominate outstanding students who demonstrate leadership, empathy, and a passion for helping others.

[Nominate a Student → Button/Form]

Student Self-Nominations

Interested in becoming a Peer Leader? We encourage students to nominate themselves and share why they'd be a great fit.

[Apply Now → Button/Form]

VI. Skills and Benefits of Being a Peer Leader

- Confidence in public speaking and group facilitation
- Experience working in diverse teams
- A strong sense of purpose and community
- Resume-building leadership experience
- Letters of recommendation and networking opportunities