



# Parent Guidebook

## FIRST-YEAR DATA SCIENCE PROGRAM



UNIVERSITY OF  
ARKANSAS

Data Science

# First-Year Data Science Program Directory

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## This guidebook will...

Teach you about the First-Year Data Science Program (FYDS)

Share ways and resources to support your student

## Still have questions...

Students can contact FYDS by sending an email from their UARK account to [datasci@uark.edu](mailto:datasci@uark.edu)



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# Supporting Your Student with Orientation Advising

Even though much of this orientation experience is geared towards your student, there are still ways you can help them get the most out of this experience. Below are a few tips:

- Watch videos with your student to learn about the First-Year Data Science Program and how to prepare for advising. Remind your student to complete the Fall Math Verification and Pre-Advising Forms **at least two days prior** to their advising appointment.
- Read through the Student Guidebook with your student and ensure that both of you understand requirements.
- As questions arise from you or your student, encourage them to write down a list so they can ask during the advising appointment. This is a great practice to start now and continue throughout their college experience.
- If your student has any incoming college credits from dual enrollment or AP exams, confirm with your student that transcripts and scores have been sent to the Office of the Registrar. [registrar.uark.edu](mailto:registrar.uark.edu)
- If your student has earned any scholarships, it is important that they know what they are and the requirements to keep them. Many scholarships have GPA and/or credit hour requirements that are important to know when talking with an advisor.
- Encourage your student to **download** and open Microsoft Teams prior to their advising appointment. This will help eliminate additional technical difficulties and avoid cutting into their 30-minute advising appointment. Please **do not** use the web version of Microsoft Teams to reduce appointment issues. If your student will not have internet access and requires a phone advising appointment, they can indicate that on the Pre-Advising Form.
- Remind your student to check their UARK email daily for important updates about orientation and advising. This is another important habit they will need to continue after advising.

# First-Year Data Science Program Overview

The First-Year Data Science Academic Program is a two-semester program required for all incoming freshmen starting in the Data Science Program and all transfer students. Students are initially declared as "Data Science First Year". During the spring semester, students will select their concentration and may begin concentration-specific courses their second year.

The two-semester curriculum includes the following:

- Introduction to Data Science
- Role of Data Science in Today's World
- Programming Languages for Data Science (Python, R)
- Object Oriented Programming for DASC
- Two mathematics courses
- Science courses based on student's math progress
- Composition I and Technical Composition II
- At least one university core elective

FYDS is designed to provide proactive support for all new freshmen entering the Data Science Program. Particular emphasis is placed on academic, personal, and career success, which leads to student success. The Peer Mentoring Program is a major component of helping students transition successfully into the Data Science Program.

## Peer Mentoring

To help first-year students ease the transition from high school to college, each student is paired with an upperclass data science student who helps with academic, professional, and personal development. Students are required to meet weekly with their Peer Mentor through the fall and spring semesters.

## Academic Advising

During orientation students are advised one-on-one with an FYDS academic advisor. Students do not have to decide on a data science concentration at that time. Advisors will help students select classes to meet requirements for multiple data science concentrations. Students will be assigned an FYDS academic advisor in early August in not before. Until then, students can contact the First-Year Data Science Program for assistance.

During the first week of fall classes, we have walk-in advising from 8:00 am – 5:00 pm to help with changes or clarifications for class schedules. Students do not need to see their assigned academic advisor during this week unless you need help or clarifications. In October, students will meet with their assigned FYDS academic advisor to plan for spring classes.

# **Peer Mentoring Program**

## **What is Peer Mentoring?**

Peer Mentors are an important component of the First-Year Data Science Program. Our Peer mentors are upperclass students who are trained and supervised by our Student Services Specialist. Your student will be paired with a Peer Mentor through a matching survey they will complete this summer, and then will start meeting with their Peer Mentor weekly for 30 minutes during their first and second semester. Peer Mentors are trained to facilitate conversations using a weekly topic or designed theme and also encourage their students to speak up and lead the conversation based on their own personal needs. Largely, Peer Mentors are a resource for your student to help them gain insight into learning at the college level, transitioning to find their place at the university, and giving them a firsthand look at what they can expect while pursuing a Data Science degree.

## **What does Peer Mentoring cost me/my student?**

There is no additional monetary cost. Peer Mentoring is a graded component of your student's introductory data science courses. While this will not cost your student any money to participate in, it will cost them 30 minutes of their time each week and **participation is mandatory**.

## **What does my student gain from this?**

We consistently have students that struggle. Our Peer Mentors are here to help them through these hurdles. The matching survey we use to pair mentors with their mentees is designed to place your student with a Peer Mentor that had a similar starting point. Because of this, your student's mentor will understand some of the challenges your student will face in a more in depth way. Encouraging your student to utilize time with their mentor to help them when they reach a point of confusion, a difficult situation, or an academic struggle is not only appreciated, it is by far one of the most effective ways to help your student. Whether it is a question about a specific class, how to navigate the university, or just simply some tips and tricks to pushing through a tough semester, our Peer Mentors have experienced it, and have experienced it recently. Your student's easiest access to "insider information" is through their Peer Mentor.

## **What kinds of topics will Peer Mentors cover in meetings?**

The transition from high school level studying and course work to the university level is expected to be a challenge by the majority of our incoming students, but many seem to underestimate the true degree of difficulty in this change – even the best and brightest students can struggle during their first year. To help students adjust to this new and often demanding workload, Peer Mentors will guide their mentees through topics such as time management, developing relationships with professors, and effective study habits. Peer Mentors help students to build an understanding of the campus resources and strengthen our first-year students professionally, through resume building and



interview prep. While they will have a topic of the week to cover, ultimately these meetings are dependent upon your student's needs and questions during that given week – they are here to be a resource and guide for your student.

## Does my student really need Peer Mentoring?

This is a difficult question to answer because every student is going to have a unique collection of past experiences and will go through this first year differently than their peers. There will, however, be similarities, and through these shared similarities some common challenges will appear. Read the following and make a mental note if this sounds like your student:

- Will your student be the first in your family to attend or complete college?
- Will your student be the first in your family to pursue a data science degree?
- Does your student know what it means to be a Data Scientist or were they pointed towards this degree because of an aptitude test, high ability in math or science, or promise of future monetary gain within this career path?
- Is your student planning on living off-campus their first year?
- Will your student need to work while also attending college full-time?
- Does your student struggle with managing their time or holding themselves accountable without some degree of involvement from you?
- Is your student the only one of their current friend group coming to the University of Arkansas or the only one pursuing data science?
- Is your student from out of state?
- Did your student struggle with academics in high school?
- Does your student understand that the level of studying drastically differs from what was expected of them in high school to receive a similar letter grade?
- Has your student never experienced a grade lower than an A in high school?
- Does your student seem to struggle with asking for help or has never sought help independently outside of your own guidance or intervention?
- Does your student have limited-to-no understanding of the process for getting an internship? Study abroad? Co-ops? Interviewing? Writing a resume? Research?

If any of the above fit some aspect of your student, then they have something to gain through our Peer Mentoring program. The above list is not an exhaustive one, but rather a snapshot of the complications and trials regularly faced by first-year students, and the types of issues that are presented to our Peer Mentors on a weekly basis. Please remind your student that they are not alone, that their Peer Mentor is here to help them and all they must do is be willing to open up.

# Data Science Academic Coach

The Academic Coach provides individualized academic support to students in the Data Science Program to improve student persistence and degree completion. The coach offers services to build skills and self-advocacy by co-creating a success plan that considers life experiences, academic goals, and long-term professional aspirations. Scheduled one-on-one sessions are available Monday through Friday or during weekly drop-in hours.

Support services include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Learning Strategies
- Effective Studying Techniques
- Getting the most out of homework and class
- Test Preparation
- Emotional Wellness
- Organization Skills
- Time Management
- Test Anxiety

The coach can also connect students to appropriate services on campus, such as:

- Counseling and mental health services (CAPS)
- Tutoring (Success+)
- Career Guidance (DASC Career Services)
- Learning Accommodations (CEA)

Academic coaching is offered in partnership with the First-Year Data Science Program, but students of all classifications are invited to use coaching to assist in their academic success.

Students who could benefit from academic coaching are encouraged to attend between 3-5 meetings throughout the semester, although each student is evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Students can make appointments by logging into UASuccess and searching for "Rachel Piontak" under "My Success Network."

Drop-in hours vary by semester, but will be posted in the DASC Academic Coaching Blackboard page before classes begin. For more information, visit [first-year-engineering.uark.edu/academic-coaching.php](http://first-year-engineering.uark.edu/academic-coaching.php)

# **Advisor vs Coach vs Mentor**

When your student is struggling, it can be difficult to know how to provide support from afar. We hope this chart will help you and your student determine where to turn in times of confusion. While the chart does not contain an exhaustive list of duties and there may be overlap, it can help guide your student towards the most effective assistance in times of need:

<b>Academic Advisor</b>	<b>Academic Coach</b>	<b>Peer Mentor</b>
Identifying courses required for their major	Learning study strategies	Interacting with professors
Planning courses for future semesters	Preparing for college-level courses	Transitioning to college
Dropping a class	Developing effective note-taking methods	Utilizing campus resources
Changing their class schedule	Coping with test anxiety	Finding student organizations
Asking GPA questions	Developing an organization system	Getting involved on campus
Changing their major	Helping with time management	Succeeding as a data science student
Adding a minor	Managing stress	Getting involved in research

On the next page, we outline additional services for students to utilize while exploring their future career opportunities, seeking assistance for mental health related issues, and much more.

# Campus Resources

Below are a list of some of the campus resources available for your student. We will be sharing these resources with your student this fall. Visit the websites to learn more about information their services, hours, and location.

<b>Academic Scholarships Office</b> <i>scholarships.uark.edu</i>	Resource scholarship information, eligibility and renewal criteria
<b>Office of Financial Aid</b> <i>finaid.uark.edu</i>	State and federal aid questions, renewing aid, changes to aid, work study program
<b>Office of Registrar</b> <i>registrar.uark.edu</i>	Academic standing, transfer credit, test credit, registration, transcripts, and graduation
<b>Career Services for Data Science</b>	Resume review, job search strategies for internship or full-time jobs, mock interviews for data science students
<b>Career Development Center</b> <i>career.uark.edu</i>	Career counseling, resume reviews, mock interviews, and job search strategies for all students
<b>Academic Coach for Data Science</b> <i>first-year-engineering.uark.edu/academic-coaching.php</i>	Academic success plans, study strategies, time management, and anything else related to a student's academic success
<b>Data Science Librarian</b> <i>uark.libguides.com/c.php?g=940044</i>	Data Science has a librarian who can help students find and use the library resources
<b>Center for Educational Access</b> <i>cea.uark.edu</i>	Helps students with disabilities obtain accommodations for equal access to classroom activities
<b>Student Success Center</b> <i>success.uark.edu</i>	One-on-one or small group tutoring, supplemental instruction, writing help, and learning coaches who help develop plan for academic success

<b>Mathematics and Resource Teaching Center</b> <i>mrtc.uark.edu</i>	Provides support, tutoring and testing services and help within the realm of Mathematics
<b>Pat Walker Health Center</b> <i>health.uark.edu</i>	Immunizations, illness and injury treatment, lab & x-ray, wellness exams, allergy shots, women's health
<b>Counseling &amp; Psychological Services (CAPS)</b> <i>health.uark.edu/mental-health</i>	Counseling, group therapy, mental health crisis intervention, and psychiatry
<b>Off-Campus Student Services</b> <i>offcampus.uark.edu</i>	Assistance, resources, and referrals to support off-campus and commuting students
<b>Veterans Resource and Information Center</b> <i>veteranscenter.uark.edu</i>	Campus resources and help with financial aid and scholarships for veterans, current service members, and dependents of veterans
<b>Center for Multicultural and Diversity Education</b> <i>multicultural.uark.edu</i>	Provides academic, cultural and social programs intended to promote inclusiveness, foster achievement and assist in the development and advancement of a diverse student body
<b>U of A Cares</b> <i>uofacares.uark.edu</i>	Connects students with needed resources to support physical, emotional, and academic well-being; anyone can submit an emergency or non-emergency concern through the website.
<b>Tech Store</b> <i>its.uark.edu/software-equipment/tech-store/index.php</i>	The tech store serves as the on campus resource for Apple and Dell repairs, sales, and support.

# **Supporting Your Student During the Semester**

Great, your student is enrolled, packed, and about to begin their college journey. Now what? Here are some tried-and-true tips from our team to yours to best support your student:

## **Remind them that you care**

Texts, notes, and care packages are just some ways to show your support from afar! Plus, a little extra quadruled paper or technical notebooks never hurts.

## **Help them identify their “why” for attending college**

What is the reason for pursuing a data science degree and what impact do they want to make on the world and within themselves? Understanding their “why” can help them, and you, pull in extra strength when the going gets rough.

## **Encourage self-advocacy**

This is a leap of independence for many students and managing the class rigor and the freedom of time can be both exciting and scary for them. Encourage your student to seek tutoring, counseling, academic coaching, or attend their professor’s office hours when they’re unsure. Advocating for their own academic development is a skill best learned in the first year of college and will serve them well down the road.

## **Promote the power of organization**

The effective use of planners, schedules, and calendars are often overlooked tools for success. The love of learning is no match for learning the skills of time management. By encouraging them to make, and keep, a schedule, you are helping them build a structure for success. For example, the UASuccess website has a feature that can put all their courses onto their Microsoft Office Outlook calendar.

## **Ask more, guide less**

This can be a tough one, but asking your student powerful, open-ended questions about their college experience can create more opportunities for their growth not only as a student, but as an emerging adult. Asking questions that begin with “how” or “what” instead of yes/no questions can provide you with insight for how they best receive support.

# Important Dates for Your Student

If your student currently qualifies for **College Algebra or Precalculus**, we strongly encourage your student to take the **Math Placement Test** to increase their math preparedness and possibly initial math class.

## **WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 10**

Deadline for transcripts to be received for students granted a temporary math override

## **MONDAY, AUGUST 22 – FRIDAY, AUGUST 26**

Open walk-in Academic Advising in FYDS main office

## **Important Academic Calendar Dates**

### **MONDAY, AUGUST 22**

First day of classes

### **FRIDAY, AUGUST 26**

Last day to add a full semester class

### **SUNDAY, AUGUST 28**

Last day to drop a full semester class or all classes with 100% fee adjustment (\$45 fee for withdrawing)

### **FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2**

Last day to drop a full semester class without a "W" on transcript

### **MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 5**

Last day to drop a full semester class or all classes with 75% fee adjustment (\$45 fee for withdrawing)

### **MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 5**

Labor Day, no classes

### **TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6**

11th day of classes (important date for scholarships with semester hour requirements)

### **MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12**

Last day to drop a full semester class or all classes with 50% fee adjustment (\$45 fee for withdrawing)

Full semester calendar can be found on the Registrar's website [registrar.uark.edu](http://registrar.uark.edu)

Encourage your student to check their university email account regularly over the summer



Visit our website to learn more information about FYDS  
***datascience.uark.edu***



Visit Computer Store website for technology questions  
***its.uark.edu/software-equipment/tech-store/index.php***



**Wednesday, August 10**  
Deadline for Math Overrides

**Monday, August 22**  
First Day of Classes

**Friday, August 26**  
Last Day to add/drop a full semester course



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