Ph.D. Transitions Coach Training for Ph.D. Student Support

Overview

The Office of the Provost seeks proposals from full-time Duke staff from any unit on campus who, with endorsement from their supervisors, wish to gain further professional development and ongoing opportunities to work closely with Duke Ph.D. students as certified coaches. Because this work requires in-depth knowledge of the different stages of Ph.D. training, only staff with an earned doctorate (in any discipline) will be eligible for this opportunity.

- **RFP released:** August 6, 2021
- **Deadline for submission:** August 30, 2021, 5:00 p.m.
- **Anticipated notification:** September 15, 2021, 5:00 p.m.

Rationale

In alignment with a national conversation on graduate education reform, the Provost’s committee on Reimagining Doctoral Education (RiDE) called in 2019 for expanding advising and mentoring resources for Ph.D. students across the university. In response, Duke has developed a distinctive group coaching program, “Ph.D. Transitions,” overseen by Maria Wisdom, Director of Interdisciplinary Advising and Engagement and certified coach. This program, which has now served 200+ Ph.D. students across Duke, supports students at every stage of doctoral training.

Participants convene in small (4-5 person) interdisciplinary groups (each focused on a stage in the trajectory of Ph.D. students) which meet for a total of six hours (4 90-minute sessions) across an academic semester or summer. Each student identifies an overarching goal, such as improving relationships with advisors and other faculty, expanding peer mentoring networks, developing strategies for productive exam preparation or dissertation writing, or achieving better work-life balance. Participant evaluations have highlighted: 1) the power of interdisciplinary peer mentoring networks; 2) the effectiveness of a coaching framework to help students experience agency and confidence in facing Ph.D. program challenges; and 3) the importance of a safe, confidential space in which students can raise issues that may be too uncomfortable or sensitive to address within Ph.D. program cohorts. (For additional details, see this overview by Wisdom in The Chronicle of Higher Education.)

Our goal now is to identify and train additional Ph.D.-holding staff to coach for Ph.D. Transitions and possibly other constituencies on campus, such as postdocs.

Candidates for this opportunity should be productively engaged in their current roles, keen to incorporate group coaching of Ph.D. students into their portfolios (at approximately 10-15% of overall effort), and able to articulate how professional coach training would help them in other aspects of their jobs and careers.

For each selected participant, supported activities include:
1) Funding to enroll in the 2021-22 Transformation Edge Business & Professional Coach Training Certificate Program (October 2021 through July 2022): $9,500
2) Membership fees to join the Raleigh and Global chapters of the International Coaching Federation for one year: $310

We seek proposals from full-time staff who hold a Ph.D. in any field, currently working in any unit at Duke. Applicants will need to make a compelling case for how the proposed coaching would align with, enrich or otherwise complement their current job duties and future professional development goals. Applications must also include a letter of support from the applicant’s immediate supervisor and the department/unit head that explicitly commits the applicant to 4-6 hours per week of dedicated Ph.D. student, and possibly postdoc, group coaching.

Information Session

An information session will be held on Friday, August 13, at 11:30 a.m. Register in advance: https://duke.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJIvdumsrTMvEtdvon83WH0_x_jlQXADRqM0. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing details for joining the session.

Restrictions and Parameters

- Funding will only be provided for up to three applicants.
- All selected participants must commit to enrolling in and completing all requirements for the Transformation Edge Business & Professional Coaching Certificate Program. These requirements consist of:
  - Attending sessions regularly (both in person and virtual) over the duration of the program, including one Friday and Saturday per month for ten months
  - Completing an additional 40 hours of independent one-on-one coaching (practicum)
  - Completing a final group project.
- After completing the coach certification course in July 2022, the new coaches must dedicate 10-15% of their total effort to Ph.D. student coaching engagements. (Leading three small coaching groups, each meeting four times, over the course of a three-month period would likely meet this effort while allowing time for minor administrative tasks related to each group.)
- After an individual completes the training, we anticipate a two-year pilot period in which the Provost’s Office will provide funding to cover effort devoted to coaching. This funding can come either to the individual’s unit (if the unit reconfigures core job responsibilities to incorporate coaching work) or to the individual as a supplement (if the individual takes on coaching in addition to core job responsibilities).
- Certified coaches are expected to solicit regular feedback from student participants and conduct formal assessments of their programming.
- Certified coaches are expected to convene 2-3 times each semester with Maria Wisdom to share perspectives, exchange ideas and discuss current challenges, as appropriate for a community of practice.
Eligibility

All current Duke full-time staff who hold a Ph.D. in any field of study are eligible for the program.

Selection Criteria and Review Process

Proposals should specify the applicant’s interest in adding this competency to their skill set. The letter of endorsement from the applicant’s immediate supervisor and the department/unit head should demonstrate support for the application and explicitly commit the applicant effort to devoting 4-6 hours per week of group coaching of Ph.D. students (and possibly postdocs).

Since the program provides training in one-on-one coaching but not group facilitation, the strongest applicants for these positions will highlight evidence of extensive prior experience with teaching, training and/or facilitating diverse groups of all sizes. Demonstrated success in one-on-one advising, mentoring, counseling or other kinds of “helping” work will also contribute to a competitive application.

The selection process will be overseen by the Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Studies and The Graduate School’s Senior Associate Dean for Graduate Programs.

Proposal Requirements

- Resume (maximum two pages)
- Personal statement (maximum three pages) that articulates interest in this opportunity and explains how the applicant’s background, experiences and skill sets would help them flourish in the role of both doctoral student coach and small-group facilitator. The statement should also explain how this opportunity would align with, enrich or otherwise complement current job duties and future professional development goals.
- Letter from the head of the department/unit and the applicant’s immediate supervisor that offers details about how the anticipated professional development fits with overall plans of that unit, and that commits to reconfiguring job responsibilities to allow 4-6 hours per week of doctoral group coaching. This letter should be sent separately to Amy Feistel (amy.feistel@duke.edu) by the application deadline.

How to Apply

1) Visit https://dukeinterdisc.formstack.com/forms/phd_transitions_coach_training and complete the online application.
2) Send letter from the head of the department/unit and the applicant’s immediate supervisor to Amy Feistel (amy.feistel@duke.edu).

The online application and letter are due by August 30 at 5:00 p.m.
Resources
The following links provide additional resources for those interested in this opportunity:

- Transformation Edge Coaching & Consulting: Business Coach Institute
- International Coach Federation (ICF)

Contact
For questions related to the online application and/or other logistical questions, please contact Amy Feistel, amy.feistel@duke.edu.

For questions about whether to pursue an application, or to talk through specifics about coaching, please contact Maria Wisdom, maria.wisdom@duke.edu.

For department/unit leadership questions about reconfiguration of responsibilities, please contact Ed Balleisen, eballeis@duke.edu.
Ph.D. Transitions Coach Training FAQ

What kind of credentials will I have upon completion of the training?
Graduates will meet requirements for the International Coaching Federation (ICF) Certified Professional Coach (PCC) designation with specialty designation of Business Coach. Graduates will also have ICF Associate Certified Coach credential credits.

What is the program/training structure?
Trainees meet one weekend each month (Friday-Saturday) in person or online for ten months, from October 2021 through July 2022. The program includes peer coaching, a practicum and coaching supervision. The weekend sessions are held retreat-style for community building.

What is unique about the Transformation Edge program?
The program faculty have been training coaches in the Triangle area for 20+ years, and the program has graduated over 20 coach cohorts. Transformation Edge faculty can connect graduates to a larger community of practice in the region.

Is the Transformation Edge program accredited?
Yes, the Transformation Edge program has received ICF Accredited Coach Training Program (ACTP) accreditation. This accreditation is for inclusive training programs with a minimum of 125 student contact hours, mentor coaching and a performance evaluation process for approval. Graduates of an ACTP program such as the Transformation Edge program may apply for individual ICF Credentials.

If I am selected for participation in the pilot program, how will salary support be provided once I begin coaching as a certified coach?
Salary support will be provided to certified coaches in one of two ways depending on your unit. If your job responsibilities are reconfigured to include your coaching work, the Provost Office will cover a fraction of your salary during the pilot. If you take on coaching responsibilities in addition to all of your current responsibilities, you will receive a supplement as an hourly rate.

I am a faculty member. Am I eligible for this opportunity?
This opportunity is for full-time non-faculty staff only. Faculty are not currently eligible.