

# THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS OF BEING AN UNDERGRADUATE PEER MENTOR

Sarah Orban: [seorban@iastate.edu](mailto:seorban@iastate.edu)

Dr. Michael Retallick

Dr. Jennifer Bundy

Dr. Scott Smalley

Department of Agriculture Education and Studies

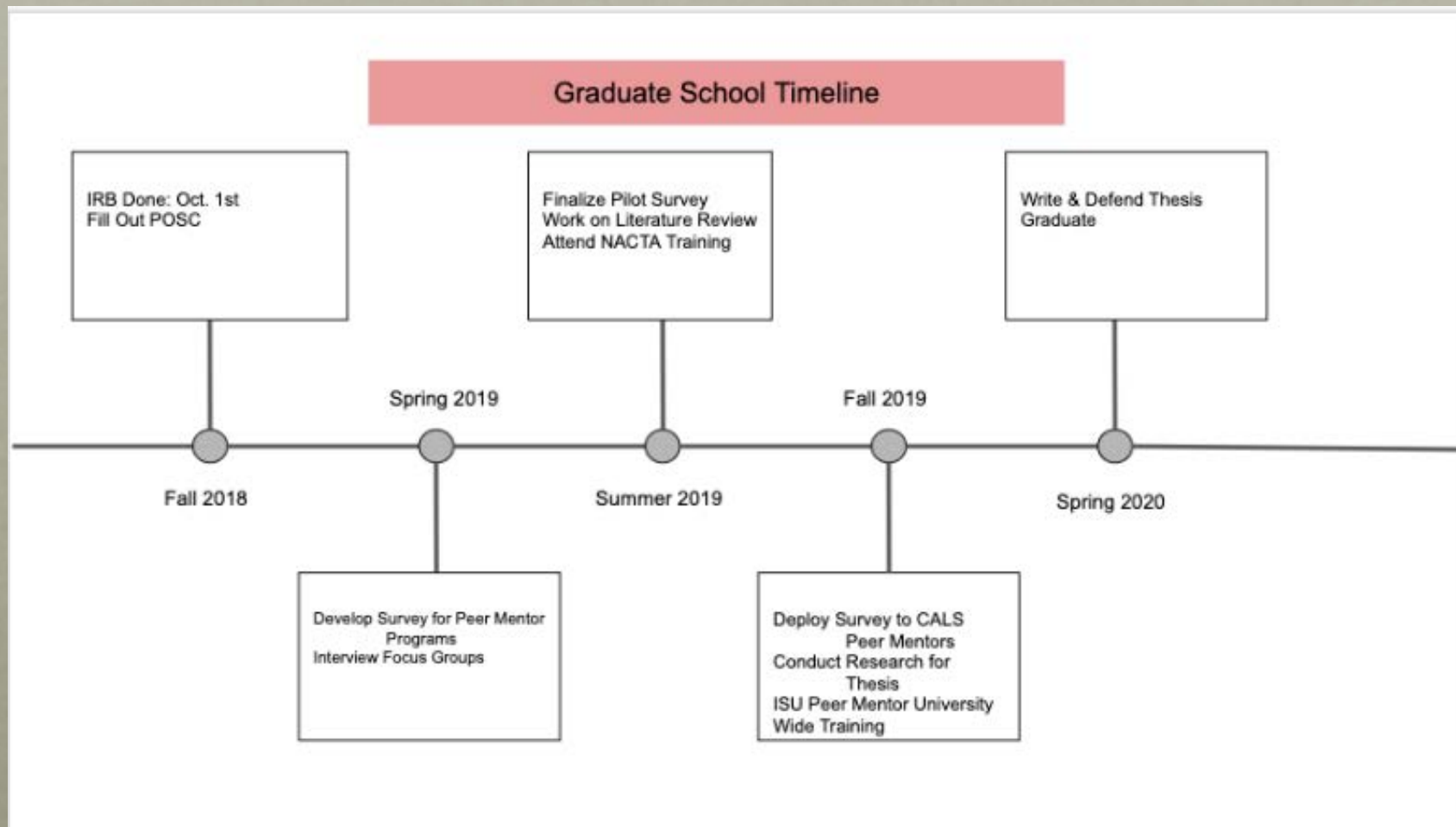
Iowa State University

# BACKGROUND INFORMATION



- Research has shown that peer mentor programs are very beneficial, but little is known about the effects that mentoring experience has on the mentors themselves
- Iowa State University Department of Animal Science has an extensive peer mentor program that equips incoming students with information and resources to be successful as a college student
- Required Course: Animal Science 110
- Department of Animal Science is 8/10 female; so program both mentee and mentor is heavily female

# TIMELINE OF RESEARCH





# PEER MENTOR PROGRAM



## December 2017 Information

- Mentors
  - 65 interviews, hired back 16 previous; ~20 remaining spots
  - Interview: 10 min; describe qualification and desire
  - Kept in mind difference career paths and species interests within Department of Animal Science
  - Complete 4-session training about peer mentor requirements
- Mentees
  - All incoming freshman within the Department of Animal Science
  - Addressed their species interest and career paths though a form given before course
  - Based on interests; matched with peer mentor of similar backgrounds





Why do we need to  
research peer mentors?



# PURPOSE



- Explore the effects of the peer mentoring on the student mentors
- This study has three objectives:
  1. Determine the benefits of the peer mentor program
  2. Explain the professional growth that resulted from becoming a peer mentor
  3. Describe the personal growth that resulted from becoming a peer mentor
- This study received IRB approval from Iowa State University

# LITERATURE REVIEW



- Peer Mentor Benefits
- Focus Group
- Survey Development
- Learning Community Benefits for Incoming Students
- Learning Community Benefits for Mentor Students



# FOCUS GROUPS



- Conducted in the Fall 2018 Semester
- Group of 37 mentors in the Department of Animal Science
- 4 focus groups total, consisting of 6-9 peer mentors in each group
- Audio recording that was transcribed as well as a moderator to conduct the focus groups

# FOCUS GROUPS



- Started by advising the anonymous nature of the focus group
- Importance and purpose of study
- Food was provided throughout one hour sessions
- Provided list of probing and relevant questions to the research such as:
  - How have your experiences as a peer mentor impacted your college career?
  - Describe your comfort level with facilitation of your group at the start of your mentee meetings (first semester as a mentor)?
  - How have your experiences in this program impacted/diminished from your own personal growth?
- Moderation process:
  - Ask questions provided- same questions for each group
  - Access any facial expressions or audio that the recording would not pick up

# SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS



- Reoccurring themes were pulled from the focus groups by highlighting the reoccurring topics in the manuscripts:
  - Gain leadership skills
  - Improved self-confidence
    - Leading a classroom
    - Communication with peers
  - Career skill development
    - Interviewing techniques
    - Time management improvement
  - Overall higher level of communication with peers and professors



# CONTINUATION OF STUDY



- Create Survey to distribute to the department of Animal Science Peer Mentors
  - Measuring their growth, if any, that occurred from the peer mentor program
- Further gather information on the effects this study has on the peer mentors
- Incorporate this survey for the whole College of Agriculture and Life Sciences- aiding the different peer mentor groups to see where growth can be established

# REFERENCES



Benjamin , Mimi. “Focus Group Questions .”

DeVellis, Robert F. *Scale Development Theory and Applications* . 4th ed., SAGE Publications, 2017.

Dillman, Don A, et al. *Internet, Phone, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys*. 4th ed., Wiley, 2014.

Questions?