Grade 13 Mentoring Program



What is it?

The Grade 13 Mentoring Program works to ensure college continuation for marginalized students who are statistically less likely to complete their higher education.

How does it work?

College-bound students are paired with a supportive adult of their choosing who will serve as a mentor through their first year of college, ensuring a successful transition and increasing the likelihood of the student completing their degree.



Keys to Success

The Student Picks Their Mentor

The student-led design empowers the young person to guarantee their comfort and trust with their mentor from the start.

Mentors Are Compensated

A stipend is formalized in the contract. It holds the mentor accountable and signals the value of their time to all involved. Students report that this compensation, and knowing that it is the trusted adult's job (and not an obligation), makes the mentor more approachable.

A Coordinator Leads the Program

A coordinator works with students, teachers, and mentors to ensure a quality match and to support the relationship throughout the first year of college.

> "It's a hard adjustment changing from a place you know. I've lived in Randolph my whole life so moving away was a lot. My mentor helped me so much to get to where I felt comfortable. It's just really great to know that I have someone that's there for me."
>
> —**Annabelle,** mentee

RU strives to provide equitable access to post-secondary opportunities for all students.

THIS PROJECT IS SUPPORTED BY The J. Warren & Lois McClure Foundation

Mentors Make a Difference

Only **40%** of Vermont high school students continue to college. Of those, **66%** complete their degree. The transition to college requires knowledge beyond academics. While colleges offer resources, some students benefit from extra support during that first year, especially low-income students, multilingual learners, and first-generation college students.

Mentors provide help across the entire transition into college life, including navigating the following:

- Financial aid and scholarships
- Roommates and housing
- Selecting courses and the registration process
- Accessing campus resources
- Making friends and getting involved in the campus community
- Academic support (for IEP/504/ELL learners)
- Academic planning



With support in these areas, students are more likely to stay enrolled, succeed academically, and enjoy their college experience.

Who participates in Grade 13?

- A designated Mentor Coordinator
- Mentors who are adults in the school community
- Students who are referred by their 11th- and 12th-grade teachers. The selected students are from low-income households, are first-generation college students, are on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), or are English Language Learners (ELL).

80% ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED

20% ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

20% STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

80% FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE GOING

In the program pilot, 100% of Grade 13 students persisted into their second year.

This compares to historic Vermont persistence rates of:

82% OF TOTAL STUDENTS

72% OF ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

60% OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

36% OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Tips for Launching a Grade 13 Program at Your School

- Determine your budget and funding source. RUHS' annual program budget is supported by the district and philanthropy.
- Designate a Mentor Coordinator to oversee the program.
- Involve 11th- and 12th-grade teaching team to identify students for program.

"Big picture, my dream is for more kids to access college successfully, and it shouldn't depend on whether their parents know how to navigate this process. They have to feel someone has their back."

—**Kara Merrill,** Randolph Union High School Counselor and Grade 13 Program Founder/Director

If you are ready to start a program or would like more information, reach out to Kara Merrill at Randolph Union High School for tips!

Kara Merrill | **kmerrill@orangesouthwest.org** | **(802) 728-3397 ext 1143**