

A Mentoring Riley Scholars Guide for Departments and Programs

While these suggestions will serve as a useful guidepost, this model may not work perfectly given varying schedules and needs. Still, we recommend you finalize your year-long mentoring plan and share it with the Riley Scholar as soon as possible so you both have a clear sense of what will be discussed each block. Similarly, we recommend giving the scholar a sense of what each mentoring meeting will entail—ideally one week beforehand and no fewer than three days. For example, will it focus on teaching? Scholarship? The academic job market? Other matters? Along those lines, even if you do not necessarily “stick to your script” during the meetings, we recommend giving the scholar a sense of the kinds of the questions you’ll be asking and giving them an opportunity to send you questions beforehand so you both can adequately prepare.

Block 1 – Getting to Know Each Other

If you are hosting a returning Riley Scholar, consider using this time to debrief about their experiences during the previous year, along with addressing their questions and/or concerns about the upcoming year. If you are hosting a new Riley Scholar, consider using this time to address their questions and/or concerns about the upcoming year. You might also use this time to discuss the current state of the college and your department or program, any pertinent changes forthcoming at the college or in your department or program (such as hiring or curricular shifts), and how the relationship between the scholar and the department or program may be shaped as a result. For instance, since the college is steeped in its antiracism initiatives, you might discuss your department or program’s participation in and/or contributions to these initiatives and the Riley Scholar’s potential involvement. Similarly, given the ways COVID-19 is reshaping teaching and learning in many ways that may be temporary and in some ways that may be more permanent, you might discuss your department or program’s responses to the pandemic and how the Riley Scholar’s work may be impacted.

- Generally speaking, what excites and/or worries you about this **fellowship**?
- What are your thoughts about how the **Block Plan** could both pose significant benefits for and challenges to your teaching and research?
- What are your plans for completing your dissertation or making significant progress on your **scholarship**?
- What are your plans for entering the **job market**?
- What are your expectations for our **mentor-mentee relationship**?

Block 2 – Preparing to Teach

Prior to this meeting, review at least one syllabus for a course the Riley Scholar is preparing to teach in the current block or an upcoming one, along with other pertinent teaching materials, such as assignment guidelines or rubrics.

- What’s your **teaching philosophy**? How does it manifest in your classroom and the projects you assign?
- What’s your **favorite project** that you assign? How did you develop that idea?

- What's your strategy for managing **class discussions**, including those that can be contentious?
- If you've never taught at a **liberal arts** institution, in what ways are you planning to adjust your teaching strategies in this regard? Further, in what ways are you planning to adjust your teaching strategies due to the Block Plan?
- What's one thing you want to **improve** about your teaching this year?

Block 3 – Preparing for the Mock Job Talk

Prior to the Mock Job, schedule a meeting during which you will discuss the Riley Scholar's dissertation or postdoctoral scholarship. On that note, please remember the expectation is that at least one chapter of the predoctoral Riley Scholar's dissertation will be reviewed by the department or program mentor in the fall and another in the spring. Similarly, the expectation is that one piece of scholarship being drafted or revised by postdoctoral Riley Scholars will be reviewed by the department or program mentor during the year, preferably one currently being peer-reviewed or that will be. Please also note the questions below aren't specific to the Mock Job Talk because the expectation is you will level those kinds of questions there.

- What inspired you to pursue this **topic**? Are you still excited about it?
- What are the primary **theoretical frameworks and methodologies** guiding your research? What inspired you to choose these?
- How do you **write and revise**? Do you plan writing times? Do you take breaks at particular intervals? Are you particular about your writing environment? Do you prefer to write alone or with others?
- How would you characterize **feedback** you've received from your dissertation committee or other reviewers of your work? How have you responded to that feedback? What kinds of feedback typically gives you anxiety or causes you to shut down? What are your expectations regarding my approach to giving you feedback?
- What are your five and ten-year plans concerning your **research trajectory**?

Block 4 – Entering the Academic Job Market

While academic fields vary greatly regarding job market timelines, we imagine Riley Scholars will at least be submitting applications, and perhaps even preparing for interviews, by this time. During this meeting, then, it would be useful for the department or program mentor to provide guidance regarding their experiences during this process, which could include reviewing cover letters, CVs, teaching statements, research statements, and other commonly required materials with the understanding that it would be unreasonable to expect you to review the Riley Scholar's application materials for each job to which they are applying.

- Early career scholars understandably cast a wide net while they're on the job market. That "said," to what kinds of **institutions** are you most interested in applying? In what kinds of departments or programs are you most interested in working?
- In what ways are you planning to tailor your **application materials** to varying kinds of institutions? For example, how might the cover letter you submit for a job at a public research institution differ from one you would submit to a private liberal arts institution?

How might you revise your CV, teaching statement, research statement, and other application materials along these lines?

- In what ways are you planning to tailor your **application materials** to specific departments or programs regardless of the kinds of institutions to which you are applying? For example, how might the cover letter you submit to a department at one private liberal arts institution differ from one you would submit to a department at another private liberal arts institution? How might you revise your CV, teaching statement, research statement, and other application materials along these lines?
- If you secure a **pre-campus interview**, what kinds of questions are you preparing to ask the department or program considering your application? What kinds of questions do you anticipate them asking you?
- If you secure an **on-campus interview**, what kinds of questions are you preparing to ask the department or program considering your application, along with students, administration, and other community members to whom you might be introduced and/or interviewed? What kinds of questions do you anticipate them asking you?

Block 5 – Teaching in Community

Prior to this meeting, it would be useful for the Riley Scholar to review syllabi their department or program colleagues. Also by this time, the department or program mentor or another colleague in the department or program should have observed one of the Riley Scholar's classes. On that note, please remember the expectation is both courses taught by predoctoral Riley Scholars will be observed and at least two of the three courses taught by postdoctoral Riley Scholars will be observed. Finally, we do recommend Riley Scholars observe a class taught by a colleague in their department or program and another taught by a colleague outside their department or program. The hope is that they would have completed at least one of these by this time.

- What has been your favorite thing about **liberal arts teaching**, including teaching on the Block Plan, up to this point? What are your plans for fueling this momentum moving forward?
- What has been the most challenging thing about **liberal arts teaching**, including teaching on the Block Plan, up to this point? What are your plans for addressing these challenges moving forward?
- Which aspects of your colleagues' **syllabi** excited, confused, or alarmed you? Did reviewing others' syllabi inspire you to make any revisions to your courses?
- Which aspects of your colleagues' teaching excited, confused, or alarmed you during your **observation**? Did observing another class inspire you to make any revisions to your teaching?
- What have been your experiences balancing **teaching and research** demands?

Block 6 – Writing and Revising

This meeting should entail continued discussions about the Riley Scholar's dissertation or postdoctoral research, as well as their other scholarly pursuits, such as conference presentations. You might also use this time to follow-up on the Riley Scholar's experiences on the job market.

- *Predoctoral Riley Scholars*: How close are you to completing your dissertation? Have you scheduled a defense? *Postdoctoral Riley Scholars*: How close are you to having your **scholarship** published? Have you submitted anything yet?
- How would you characterize **feedback** you've received from your dissertation committee or other reviewers of your work since we last spoke? How have you responded to that feedback?
- Have you presented at any **conferences** this year (academic or otherwise)? If so, where did you present and when? Did you present on a panel, roundtable, or in another space? Do you know anything about who attended your presentation? What were the responses to your work? Did these responses inspire you to reconsider any aspects of your scholarship? If you haven't presented at a conference this year, do you plan to? If so, where do you plan to present and when?
- Have you secured any pre-campus or on-campus **interviews**? If you have and those have been completed, how did it go? If you have and they have not yet been scheduled, what are you excited and/or worried about? In what ways are you preparing? If you have not secured any pre-campus interviews, have you started thinking about alternative plans? If not, when might be the time for you to consider alternatives?
- If you receive more than one **job offer**, what kinds of things would you consider while deciding? How would you prioritize those things? For example, does salary matter more than geographical location? Does teaching load matter more than scholarly requirements? What else along these lines concerns you?

Block 7 – Remembering the Personal Is Political; or, Keeping it Flexible

We recommend setting aside one block to meet with the Riley Scholar in a less formal, more flexible way. To the extent they are willing, able, and comfortable, and with deep consideration for the relationship you have been building up to this point, you might consider getting a little more personal while still keeping it professional. Feel free to discuss whatever makes sense for the Riley Scholar—teaching, research, the academic job market, or life in general.

- If you're new to the state, how have you liked **living in Colorado**? What do you do for fun?
- What do you like least about **living in Colorado**? While the college cannot relocate, what kinds of things should departments and programs, as well as the college administration, consider regarding our recruitment strategies along these lines? In other words, how can we make living in Colorado better for people who sometimes struggle here for reasons related to their race, gender, sexuality, religion, or other aspects of their identity?
- How far do you live from your **family and close friends**? How have you been able to maintain connections with them?
- Have you been successfully **building community** with people outside of work? If so, what has that been like? Is there any way the department or program or college could have helped facilitate that more effectively during your interview or your earlier months here?
- Would you say you're someone who does **work-life balance** successfully? If so, what have you done to ensure success in that area? What challenges have you faced in this

regard, and have you thought about how you might address those kinds of challenges moving forward?

Block 8 – Debriefing the Year

This meeting can be focused on discussing the Riley Scholar's experiences. While the scholars will be participating in exit interviews during Block 8 with Heidi R. Lewis, Director of the Riley Scholars-in-Residence Program, it may be useful for the department or program mentor to ask questions about the Riley Scholars-in-Residence Program to provide the scholar with enough opportunities to speak as freely as necessary about their experiences.

- What were your **favorite things** about being a Riley Scholar? What were some of the more challenging aspects of your experience?
- If you could **repeat** this year, what would you repeat? What would you do differently?
- If the **department or program** was granted another Riley Scholar in the future, what would you recommend we repeat? What would you recommend we do differently?
- What would you recommend the **Riley Scholars-in-Residence Program** administration repeat in the future? What would you recommend they do differently?
- What would you recommend the **Colorado College** administration repeat in the future concerning the experiences of Riley Scholars? What would you recommend the administration do differently?