

Student Summer Scholar Program Application Examples

A3. Mentorship/Apprenticeship Plan

Example 1

My mentoring relationship with ██████ began in the Winter of 2022 when ██████ was a student in HST 312, the History of American Women. From the beginning of the course I could see that ██████ was highly motivated to learn about women's experiences and how they shaped our nation. My commitment to fostering student research in the classroom means that all my 300 level course students conduct a research project and many present at Student Scholars Day. Often students struggle with choosing their own research topic, but not ██████. ██████ immediately settled on the history of Homes for Unwed Mothers and eagerly sought my advice about how to research the Booth Home in Grand Rapids. ██████'s interest in a local topic allowed me to leverage my local history expertise to connect ██████ with archival sources. At this time ██████ and I also discussed ██████ plan to become a professor of history and I suggested opportunities to develop ██████ research skills, such as the S3 program. In Fall 2022 ██████ requested I mentor ██████ Student Summer Scholars' project and we got to work on the application.

When the S3 begins ██████ will have been prepared for conducting this expansion of ██████ research through ██████ SSD project and prior course work. ██████'s SSD project successfully used the historical method by identifying arguments in the literature on unwed mothers, gathering and critiquing primary sources and responding to major arguments in the field. It takes another step forward to synthesize those sources and develop a cohesive narrative which recognizes nuance. ██████ is currently enrolled in our departmental methods course, which will help ██████ to learn more about how historical narratives are produced. In addition, ██████ is also currently enrolled in my Latino history course, HST 315, where we are conducting an oral history project in Grand Rapids. ██████ has already conducted one oral history with a family member, but by the time S3 begins ██████ will have conducted one with a stranger and practiced finding local sources for context. While preparing this proposal I also started a shared citation library in Zotero so that we could collaborate on finding sources and using them herein. Historians are known for having many citations in their publications, so ██████ being familiar with Zotero will help ██████ to effectively organize ██████ research.

My extensive experience in mentoring student research has shown me that clear and explicit goals combined with the flexibility to accommodate the discovery process are needed. This discovery process involves not only finding new sources and coming to new conclusions about the past, but also learning new things about oneself. By this I mean that during this process ██████ will be further developing her professional identity and managing its interactions with ██████ personal identity. I have come to this conclusion after mentoring 27 Student Scholar Day Projects, supervising two student researchers at the ██████ Office and a previous S3 project in 2016. My goal for ██████'s learning during this project is for ██████ to see ██████ as a person who possesses both the commitment and skills necessary to produce an original work of historical analysis of 20-25 pages that can be submitted for publication. To reach this goal ██████ will have to grow ██████ research and writing skills.

To provide structure and enhance achievability I have set out more specific, granular objectives for each week in the Project Feasibility timeline. In order to foster ██████'s independence and growth each timeline phase includes a progression of responsibility from myself to ██████ as the learner. For example, in our first oral history interview I will take the lead and ██████ will observe, then ██████ will take the lead and I will observe and ██████ will conduct the final interview on her own. We will use this scaffolded approach throughout so that ██████ may have the chance to develop skills and use them as assets in her individual work. To accommodate the surprising aspects of any research project we will also designate time in person each week to reflect, assess the timeline and make any needed modifications. I have also paid special attention to allotting sufficient reflection time after each oral history interview for us to debrief about sensitive material that may be revealed.

██████'s personal connection to the subject is an asset that gives ██████ both a high degree of motivation and a greater potential to humanize the research subjects. I am well suited to help ██████ through the dilemmas that this personal insight brings because I have faced analogous situations in my research on the ██████ Movement in Michigan. I have interviewed people I consider fictive kin and found evidence of my own ancestors' actions in my research. One aspect of ██████'s growth through this project will be in exploring different ways to reckon with the risks and power of subjectivity in historical study and learning how to acknowledge one's position in an academic manner. In this way I can practice mentoring that validates ██████'s experience and shows ██████ some ways to include it in ██████ scholarship.

Lastly, it is evident ██████ is ready to take agency in the process because ██████ has already shown extraordinary initiative in contacting local museums and libraries and making site visits to examine material unavailable in digital form. In the course of my career, I have encountered only a handful of students who have been willing to leave campus, discuss sources with professional archivists and librarians and generally expose themselves to unfamiliar people, processes and places to do research. Over the summer I will collaborate with ██████ as ██████ furthers ██████ independence by accompanying ██████ to research sites on a gradually diminishing basis. During our site visits I will introduce ██████ to many local history professionals and volunteers, thus fostering opportunities for ██████ to collaborate beyond the university.