

Wake “Wingman” Program



Introducing our new Wake “Wingman” Program!

What is a “Wingman”?

We enhance the new hire onboarding experience by assigning a “wingman”. A “wingman” is someone who partners with a new employee during his/her first 3 months of employment. While primarily responsible for offering advice and guidance regarding the day-to-day aspects of working within University Advancement (UA) at Wake Forest University (WFU), the wingman may also offer encouragement and knowledge of resources, as they help introduce the new employee to the UA culture. A wingman is also a sounding board who offers encouragement as the new hire acclimates to the new culture and workplace, providing informal counseling about key tasks, key players, unspoken rules, obscure acronyms, and more. Interested in becoming a “wingman”? Read about key attributes of the type of people we are looking for [here](#) and what a “wingman” is NOT.

Why Have a “Wingman” Program?

Successful “wingman” programs are intentionally designed with components to create a supportive and engaging experience for new hires, fostering a sense of belonging, accelerating their integration, and ultimately benefiting the organization’s overall success. This program will go beyond simple introductions and is designed to facilitate smooth integration, enhance productivity, and boost employee morale and retention. The wingman program will help welcome employees and reaffirm their decision to join the UA team. It provides new employees with a reliable, motivated, single point-of-contact for their basic questions regarding their work experience at UA. Details below:

- Structured Onboarding Support -
 - Dedicated Guidance: Assigning a more experienced colleague as a wingman to a new hire provides a dedicated point of contact for navigating the initial stages of employment.
 - Informal Knowledge Sharing: Wingmen offer insights into company culture, unwritten rules, and day-to-day operations that might not be covered in formal training or handbooks.

- Practical Assistance: Wingmen help new hires with finding resources and navigating the physical workspace.
- Focus on Relationship Building and Social Integration -
 - Sense of Belonging: Wingmen help new hires feel welcome and included in the team and the broader organization.
 - Safe Space for Questions: The wingman relationship provides a comfortable and confidential environment for new hires to ask questions and share concerns without fear of judgment.
 - Building Connections: Wingmen facilitate introductions to key colleagues and departments, helping new hires expand their internal network.
 - Encouraging Social Interaction: Wingmen can encourage new hires to participate in social events and team activities, promoting a stronger sense of community.
- Learning and Development -
 - Knowledge Exchange: Wingmen share their expertise and insights with new hires, facilitating faster learning and skill development.
 - Two-Way Learning: Wingman programs encourage knowledge sharing in both directions, where new hires can also share their experiences and perspectives, potentially leading to new ideas and innovations.
 - Informal Learning: Wingmen can model desired behaviors and provide guidance through practical demonstrations, fostering informal learning.
 - Boosting Confidence: Wingmen provide support and encouragement, increasing the new hire's confidence in their abilities and speeding up their acclimation to the role.
- Emphasis on Peer-Level Support (not managerial) -
 - Informal Relationship: Wingmen are colleagues, not managers or supervisors, creating a less intimidating relationship for the new hire to ask questions and seek support.
 - Safe Environment: Wingmen provide a non-judgmental space for new hires to express themselves honestly.

It also helps establish orientation as a process, rather than a single learning event. Other advantages of having a wingman can be found [here](#).

“Wingman” Responsibilities and Notes:

In assisting a new hire, a wingman’s responsibility is to help welcome the new hire and reaffirm their decision to join our team. The wingman also serves as a valuable resource by creating a trusting relationship and maintaining confidentiality.

- Meet with the new hire during the first week of employment at WFU; if possible on the first day.
- Establish a rapport with the new hire.
- Have a check-in or coffee chat with the new hire once a week for six weeks. You can switch to a monthly check-in or as needed for three to six months.
- Remind new hire to use the University Advancement Mine.
- Please remind him/her that s/he can contact Talent Development for tools, guidelines, and procedures.
- Relationships aren’t immediate. Some new hires won’t develop relationships immediately. Be patient and available.
- Take it slow. Don’t overwhelm the new hires with information and processes. Allow them to make a slow, steady transition into their roles.
- Take time to listen. Listen to the new hire and use what they say to adjust in the future. This includes learning how to communicate effectively and discovering what motivates the new hire.

- Record new ideas. Part of the program is to learn what you can from the new hires, so the buddy should be taking notes about tips and ideas to improve the business.
- Remain positive. Wingmen shouldn't criticize their supervisors or company culture. Doing so can make the new hire feel uncomfortable and question whether they accepted the right job.

Possible Structure of Wake "Wingman" Program:

Two Weeks Before the New Hire's Start Date:

- Meet with hiring manager and Talent Development to plan the new hire's onboarding process and to better understand the supervisor's expectations.
- Work with hiring manager to see how the "wingman" can help with the new hire's welcome.

Prior to the New Hire's First Week:

- The "wingman" reaches out to the new hire after manager introduces the "wingman" to the new hire (either via email or zoom).
- "Wingman" introduces themselves; establishes and confirms check-in schedule for the next six weeks/months and organizes first meeting.

During the New Hire's First Two Weeks:

- The "Wingman" is incorporated into the first day schedule for the new employee in some way. During the first day meeting with the new employee, the "wingman" provides an overview of the organization, its purpose, organizational structure, and goals. We may potentially ask "wingmen" to take them on a tour of our building or campus. We ask that you discuss our organizational culture and values.
- Schedule a coffee chat or lunch. Share information about yourself: how long you've been at Wake Forest/University Advancement; what it was like when you first started; your role, interests, and hobbies. The "wingman" also learns about the new hire's background and interests.
- Make key introductions.

During the Following Weeks/Months:

- Check in with the new hire between regularly scheduled meetings to see how things are going and if they have any questions.
- Provide direction regarding resources.
- Continue introducing the new hire to others.
- Continue to invite new hire to relevant business or social events.
- Monitoring and Feedback: Regular check-ins (30, 60, and 90-day check-ins) and feedback mechanisms with Talent Development and supervisor help ensure the program is running smoothly and allow for necessary adjustments.