

GIFTS: Leadership, Engagement And Professionalism (LEAP) Peer Mentoring Program

Dr. Marsha Kowal, University of Houston

Instructional Assistant Professor Director, Honors Engineering Program

Alexandra Maley Landon, University of Houston

Alex Landon is a Professor of Practice at the University of Houston's Cullen College of Engineering, where she teaches freshman honors engineering courses. Previously, Alex worked in education technology, clean energy, and management consulting. She holds an MBA from Harvard Business School and a BSE in Mechanical Engineering from Princeton University.

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We developed a semester-long peer mentoring program within Honors Engineering that matches freshman women with a same-major, female mentor in their junior year. Now in its second year, our program aims to improve retention and student success within Honors Engineering by fostering an engineering identity and building community. The LEAP program has a layered leadership approach where two student directors (themselves a mentor/mentee pair) co-organize the program under the guidance of faculty advisors. Mentors and mentees meet weekly as a cohort for structured professional development workshops that are relevant to both early and late-career students. Workshop topics were selected from student focus groups and representative topics include time management, LinkedIn, resumes, negotiation, career fairs, interviewing, and alumna panels. Each mentor/mentee pair also meets one-on-one three times a semester for unstructured mentoring. LEAP hosts social events where both current and past LEAP students are invited to encourage networking and community building across cohorts. We believe that mentoring is one approach to cost-effective professional development; therefore, we plan to expand our program to all first-year students in the Honors Engineering Program.