Si Se Puede Foundation
Mentor's Handbook

(Rev. 2.1)

The Si Se Puede Foundation

The nonprofit, **Si Se Puede Foundation (*SSPF*)**, is widely recognized as a **STEM** (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education organization that has served Chandler, AZ and the East Valley communities since 1998.

SSPF's **Mission** is *to bridge the STEM divide in underserved populations in our communities to prepare them for the 21st century workforce*.

SSPF's **Vision** is *to foster an interest and proficiency in STEM in order to grow the STEM ecosystem. We aim to support a new generation of active participants from all backgrounds as they build their competence, self-confidence, and leadership skills in an inclusive, challenging, and creative environment.*

To further this mission, we provide free, year-round STEM programming, including robotics, in our 5,200-square-foot STEM Center. This facility boasts a Fabrication Lab with manufacturing equipment and tools, 3D printers, Computer-Aided Design (CAD) computers and software, a video studio, and a classroom. With the guidance of dedicated mentors and coaches, our students gain confidence, resilience, and a passion for lifelong learning. Through their commitment to their projects and passion for STEM, our robotics teams have earned recognition in regional and international robotics competitions. Si Se Puede offers robotics teams for junior high, high school, college students, and beyond.

SSPF has a set of 6 core **Values** that we adhere to. These Values are the main principles that guide and direct us and form the foundation of our overall culture. Mentors should strive to live these Values, especially within our interactions with students, each other, supporters, and others we work with. The Values and brief descriptions are:

- **Leadership**: We prepare our staff, volunteers, and the youth of today to be tomorrow's leaders by giving them opportunities to find their authentic voices.
- **Inclusion**: We value the diversity found in every human and welcome everyone in a safe, nonjudgmental environment.

- **Community**: We exist to serve our communities, especially those underserved, to strengthen them, educate them, and provide them with valuable life skills and opportunities.
- **Education and Learning**: We believe that Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) proficiency is a gateway to success in the 21st century economy and work to build appreciation, experience, and recognition of education and learning in our participants.
- **Integrity**: We strive to be exemplary role models to our communities, donors, and to each other by conducting ourselves with the highest integrity, values, and transparency in what we say and do.
- **Curiosity**: We foster an environment that enables participants to unlock their curiosity and inspiration, to explore the unknown, and to solve problems by discovery.

SSPF operates multiple different programs and mentors are generally assigned to assist with one or more of them. Below is a diagram showing the hierarchy of the organization and the programs we operate (subject to change at any time). All programs report to the SSPF CEO, who in turn reports to the SSPF Board of Directors.

Si Se Puede Foundation Organization
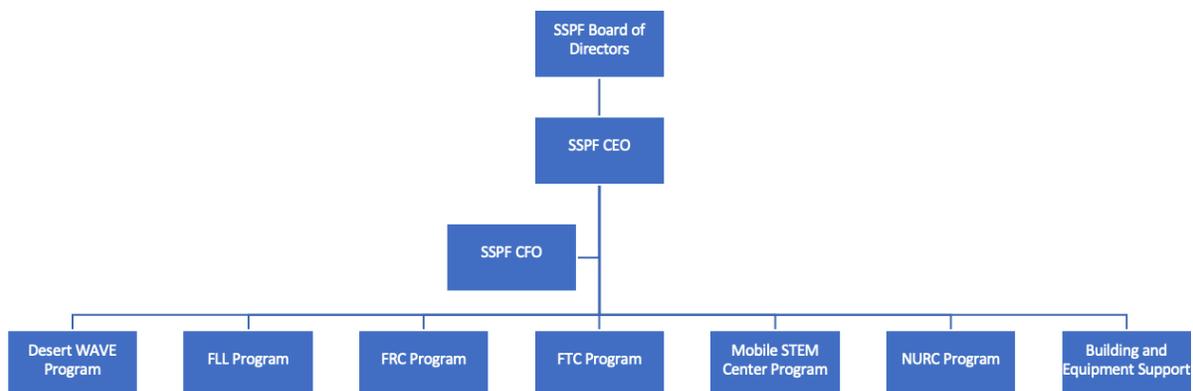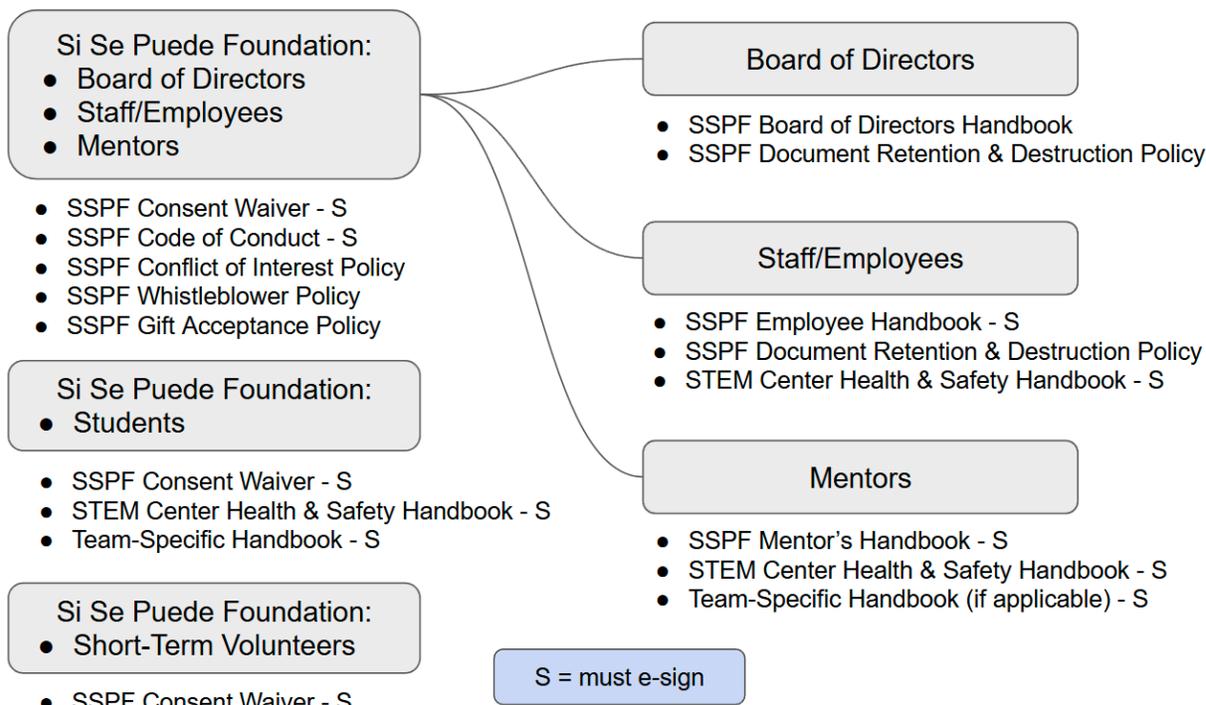
Mentor's Handbook

This handbook outlines the expectations, roles, and responsibilities of the mentors who volunteer their time with Si Se Puede Foundation. Most of our mentors' time will be spent around minors, so it is very important to read and understand this handbook and abide by these rules and expectations. Each of our major programs will also have their own student or team handbook with additional specific expectations, but this mentor handbook applies regardless of which program you work with. Mentors will be required to acknowledge they have read and understood this handbook as well as other policies associated with SSPF. If you have any questions or need clarifications on any part of this handbook, please contact your program coordinator or the Si Se Puede Foundation CEO.

Si Se Puede Foundation Policies

It is important to recognize that as a mentor, you represent Si Se Puede Foundation first and foremost, and then the particular program you may be associated with. SSPF has its own Code of Conduct and associated policies which apply to all mentors, volunteers, staff employees, and Board of Directors and provide the baseline expectations for everyone. In addition, this Mentor's Handbook provides additional policies, clarifications, and requirements specifically for mentors. Please familiarize yourself with both sets of policies as the expectation is that you adhere to both. Finally, your particular program may have its own student or team handbook, detailing additional expectations and guidelines specific to that program. See the diagram below for further clarity on which policies apply to you as a mentor. If at any point you believe there is a conflict between the different documentations, please bring it to the immediate attention of the SSPF CEO.

Si Se Puede Foundation Policy Chart

Si Se Puede Foundation:
- Board of Directors
- Staff/Employees
- Mentors

- SSPF Consent Waiver - S
- SSPF Code of Conduct - S
- SSPF Conflict of Interest Policy
- SSPF Whistleblower Policy
- SSPF Gift Acceptance Policy

Si Se Puede Foundation:
- Students

- SSPF Consent Waiver - S
- STEM Center Health & Safety Handbook - S
- Team-Specific Handbook - S

Si Se Puede Foundation:
- Short-Term Volunteers

- SSPF Consent Waiver - S

Board of Directors
- SSPF Board of Directors Handbook
- SSPF Document Retention & Destruction Policy

Staff/Employees
- SSPF Employee Handbook - S
- SSPF Document Retention & Destruction Policy
- STEM Center Health & Safety Handbook - S

Mentors
- SSPF Mentor's Handbook - S
- STEM Center Health & Safety Handbook - S
- Team-Specific Handbook (if applicable) - S

S = must e-sign

New Mentor Onboarding

Si Se Puede Foundation has a formal application and onboarding process for anyone interested in becoming a mentor, including those who mentor one of our robotics teams. The first step is to apply by filling out the Si Se Puede Program Mentor Volunteer form. Once the application has been received, SSPF staff will reach out to the applicant to set up an interview. If the interviewers agree that the applicant is a good fit for the program, a background check request will be sent to the applicant. Upon successful review and approval, the applicant will be notified and be placed into one of SSPF's programs.

If mentoring one of SSPF's robotics programs, you may be required to register as an official FIRST mentor in the FIRST portal at https://www.firstinspires.org/ and be added to your assigned team.

Mentor Conflict of Interest Policy

Mentors may not serve on a robotics team while there is a conflict of interest with any of the students on that team. This includes situations such as (but not limited to) having a child or other family member as a student on the team or mentors that have a relevant outside relationship with a current student. Conflicts of interest are determined by a committee consisting of the team's program lead(s) and SSPF staff.

If 2 mentors have a potential conflict of interest with each other (e.g. are in a relationship with each other or have some other familial relationship), they must disclose this to the team's program lead(s). This does not necessarily prohibit them from mentoring together on the same team or program, but it does require additional considerations and actions when working with students together. See "Mentor Relationships" section below for more information.

New Mentor Probationary Period

Starting in July 2025, all new SSPF volunteer mentors will serve a 90-day probationary period beginning on their first day of service. This period is designed to provide both the mentor and the organization an opportunity to determine whether the placement is a good fit.

The probationary period allows time for:

- The mentor to become familiar with their role, responsibilities, and our organizational culture.
- SSPF staff and lead mentors to evaluate the new mentor's performance, reliability, communication, and alignment with the mission and values of the organization.

During this period, the new mentor is expected to:

- Attend any required training and orientation sessions.
- Follow and sign all policies and procedures, including the SSPF Code of Conduct and the Mentor Code of Conduct that's detailed later in this handbook.
- Demonstrate Gracious Professionalism, a positive attitude, and a willingness to learn.
- Communicate openly with their program's lead mentor(s) and SSPF staff personnel, especially with any concerns or questions they may have.

New mentors will receive guidance and regular check-ins from their program's lead mentor(s) or SSPF staff during this time. Constructive feedback will be provided to help the new mentor succeed in their role.

At the end of the 90-day period, the program's lead mentor(s) and/or SSPF staff will conduct a brief evaluation. Possible outcomes may include:

- Continuation in the volunteer role.
- Reassignment to a more suitable role.
- Extension of the probationary period (if additional time is needed for evaluation).
- Discontinuation of the volunteer relationship if it is determined that the placement is not a good fit.

This process helps ensure a supportive and effective volunteer experience for everyone involved.

Mentor Code of Conduct & Expectations

Mentors are an integral part of SSPF's programs and a foundation for its successes. They usually interact closely with our students and assume an important leadership role within the various programs we support. Mentors are expected to adhere to the following guidelines to ensure a safe and productive environment for students to learn and grow. In addition, if they are mentoring with one of our robotics programs, they are also required to follow the Youth Protection Program guidelines outlined by FIRST.

➔ **Health > Family > School/Work > Robotics:** This is the priority order for all participants of Si Se Puede Foundation's programs, which includes both students and mentors. Mentors are encouraged to role model these priorities and ensure students are remembering to keep these priorities in order as well.

➔ **Be a Role Model:** Mentors shall recognize that they are role models to the students, their parents, our donors and supporters, our local community, and the communities of the programs we participate in. Mentors must act accordingly and professionally when mentoring or representing Si Se Puede Foundation and/or their associated team, along with recognizing that perception matters. The role of the mentor is not to serve as a peer or friend to the student, but to act as a positive role model who engages with them in a respectful, professional manner. Mentors must lead by example.

➔ **Gracious Professionalism:** Mentors must be respectful to all students, their families, SSPF mentors, sponsors, and the communities we serve and represent. Exemplifying ***Gracious Professionalism*** as mentors is important as we hold the students to the same standard. In addition, mentors shall ensure that all invited guests to either the SSPF STEM Center or events attended by SSPF or its teams abide by Gracious Professionalism as well.

➔ **Share Expertise:** Mentors are encouraged to share their relevant technical and non-technical knowledge, including robotics, academics, engineering, & careers, with the students.

➔ **Show First, Watch Second:** Many of SSPF's programs are student-led teams. If a mentor is doing a task that can be done by a student, mentors are obligated to involve those students. Students are expected to do as much of the work as possible in all circumstances. A mentor should never work on the robot without any students present unless there is a potential issue regarding safety. In that case, once the issue is resolved, it should be reported to the team.

➔ **Tolerance:** Mistreating any students, mentors, parents, other volunteers, or people we serve in the community is unacceptable and will not be tolerated, and will be immediately addressed by the organization and the proper authority, if necessary.

➔ **Safety Net:** In certain situations, mentors must allow students to fail in a safe way, using that experience as a teaching opportunity to help said students learn and grow. This does *not* include any instance where the student or those around them are put in harm's way.

➔ **Independence & Guidance:** Mentor input prior to any student-led, team decision-making process is highly valued, but no mentor should pressure the decision-making process of the students to the mentor's personal bias, unless it is to prevent someone from being harmed.

➔ **Looking Out for Students:** SSPF looks to provide a safe environment to help students develop critical skills like time management and decision-making. However, as students develop these skills, they may sometimes take on more than they can handle. If a student is overcommitted, struggling, or heading toward a situation that could harm their confidence or affect the team, mentors either should step in and help redirect them or bring this to the attention of the program leads and/or SSPF staff so they can take the appropriate action. The goal is to protect students' well-being (health) and help them learn and grow in a positive way.

➔ **Outcome and Success:** Any and all robot design, control, manufacturing, award submission, marketing, etc, must be the outcome of the students' efforts. Decisions involving the previously-stated must go through student leadership, the team, and the mentors. Based on the age group and experience of students, mentors may be needed to provide structural support to help students in decision-making and every effort should be made to include students in these decisions.

➔ **Communication:** Mentors must follow the following communications requirements:
   ◆ Mentors are only permitted to communicate directly with students outside of meeting times via Slack. This may be through Slack channels or direct messages on Slack.
   ◆ If direct messaging is needed, at least two mentors must be included in the communication. The two mentors in the communication should not be in a relationship to prevent a potential conflict of interest (see **Mentor Relationships** section below).

◆ No one-on-one messaging with students is permitted in any medium. This is for the safety of our students and mentors alike.

◆ Mentors and students should not be friends on or follow each other on social media platforms.

◆ Announcements and key logistical information may be sent to students as a group distribution email by the lead mentors as needed.

➔ **Students First:** Mentors are expected to maintain a student focus. When there is a potential conflict between the needs of the students and the needs of the mentors, the students' needs should be prioritized. The students' needs don't always mean what the students want, but rather what the mentors believe is in the best interest of the students.

➔ **Team First:** All mentors are expected to have a team-first attitude. The team will always try its best to make sure everyone's needs are being met throughout the season, but when this is not possible, the team's needs should be prioritized over those of the individual. Exceptions to this rule may be made if there is an emergency and an individual needs immediate assistance.

➔ **Present a Unified Voice:** Mentors recognize that we are all part of the same team and should be working towards a common goal. Mentors should reflect the values of SSPF and be conscious that their actions, word choice, and attitude directly influence and affect their students and fellow mentors, the end goal being that all interactions continue to promote a safe learning environment and comfortable workplace for students and mentors alike. Creating divisiveness or undermining the efforts of others, including program leads or fellow mentors, will not be tolerated. If a mentor disagrees with a team decision, they should bring it up either privately with the program lead(s) or during a team mentor meeting. It is important that the mentors have a unified front with the students. Thus, if a mentor disagrees with a decision, they are encouraged to voice their concerns privately and should not express it in front of the students or people outside of the team.

➔ **Conflict Resolution:** Mentors are expected to bring any and all concerns or conflicts directly to the program lead(s) for resolution. If they are not able to resolve the conflict and escalation is required, the next step is to bring the conflict to the CEO of the SSPF. If they are not able to resolve the issue, the matter should be brought before the SSPF Board. Potential conflicts include any difficulties between mentor/student, student/student, and mentor/mentor relationships.

➔ **Finances:** Each program has a yearly budget that mentors must adhere to. To prevent overspending, any mentors needing supplies for the team must request materials be ordered directly from the program leads or their designated procurement lead. For full transparency and for all mentors to be aware of what is being purchased, the items/materials need to be shared in the designated Mentor Slack channel.

➔ **Mentor Meetings:** Mentors are expected to attend mentor meetings that discuss the team's current position and future plans. This does not include any extraneous circumstances that may require a mentor to miss any of these meetings, but communication with your fellow mentors is necessary to make everyone aware of any absences. Alongside this, the mentors must work as a team, documenting what was

discussed at the meetings and to help bring any missing mentors up to speed. Mentors who miss a meeting are responsible to learn what they missed by reading the meeting notes, which are recorded here.

➔ **Safety:** Mentors and students alike are expected to follow and practice safety protocol, including wearing proper clothing and safety equipment while in the Fabrication Lab. This protocol can be accessed in the STEM Center Safety Handbook, as well as in the Student Handbook for your particular robotics program. If students or fellow mentors are being unsafe, becoming a danger to themselves or others, mentors are expected to provide immediate intervention and report any incidents if necessary.

  ◆ It is crucial that there is constant mentor supervision when students are using any powered tools and machinery. They must be within arm's reach of the students using machinery to intervene in the case of any incidents.

  ◆ No team members, student nor mentor, should be using power tools in the Fabrication Lab without another adult **on site** in case an accident happens and they need emergency help.

  ◆ Operating certain machinery, such as the chop saw, manual mill, and manual lathe, due to the higher potential of injury, requires another adult **in the Fabrication Lab** in case an accident happens and they need emergency help (exceptions for certain qualified individuals may apply).

  ◆ No student(s) should be working alone in the Fabrication Lab without a mentor present.

➔ **Common Courtesy:** If you need to leave a meeting early for any reason, please let the rest of the mentoring team know.

➔ **Attendance Requirement During Build Season:** To be considered for a lead mentor position and to have travel costs paid for by the team, mentors are expected to have an availability of at least 70% of the meetings during the season. Mentors are responsible for signing in each meeting to help with tracking attendance, using the lobby's iPad Google sign-in form.

➔ **Attendance Requirement During Off-Season:** Mentors who have not attended a meeting for 2 months without an explained absence will no longer be considered a mentor of the team and will be removed from the team Slack and Google Workspace until they are able to be an active mentor again. They should have a formal meeting with the program lead(s) to identify what was causing them to miss meetings and then let them determine if it makes sense to reinstate them.

➔ **More Than Robots:** Mentors are also expected to support the students in their outreach efforts. Each mentor is expected to help with outreach events as their schedules allow.

➔ **Appropriate Behavior:** Mentors shall not expose students to adult activities. In general, mentors must not participate in adult activities nor talk about adult activities around students.

➔ **Mentor Relationships:** Under no circumstances should a mentor be romantically involved with a student. We understand that students may form intimate attachments with each other while participating in FIRST activities.

◆ If a student transitions to a volunteer coach/mentor role, they are not permitted to work with a team which still has members (romantic or otherwise) they had participated with previously. We also discourage adult volunteers from initiating romantic relationships with recent alumni to avoid the appearance or perception that grooming may have occurred while the alum was still a youth participant.

◆ Dating amongst mentors is permitted and the following conditions must be followed:

- Any private communication between a mentor and student must include another mentor with whom they do not have any familial/romantic relationship.
- Any time a mentor is supervising students (including transporting students in a vehicle), they need to have at least one other mentor present with whom they do not have any familial/romantic relationship.

➔ **Student Interactions**: To ensure a safe, respectful, and professional environment, physical contact between students and mentors is strictly limited to the following circumstances:

◆ A mentor is providing necessary first aid or medical assistance to a student.

◆ When brief, appropriate gestures such as a high five, fist bump, or handshake are exchanged.

◆ When incidental and non-intentional contact occurs while a student and mentor are in close proximity to one another.

◆ This policy is intended to clearly define appropriate boundaries between students and mentors in alignment with current best practices. As such, forms of contact such as hugs, pats, or other physical gestures not listed above are not permitted between students and mentors. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action and/or permanent dismissal in accordance with the team's code of conduct and applicable organizational policies. This policy does NOT apply to physical contact between students, which is addressed separately in each individual teams' handbook.

Disciplinary Actions

In the case of any mentor who violates or does not comply with the Code of Conduct, SSPF policies, or other expectations described in this handbook, disciplinary actions will be taken according to the severity of the situation. Below are the different methods of discipline that can be used for mentors:

➔ **Verbal Communication:** In conflicts involving mentor-to-mentor or mentor-to-student issues, it is encouraged that there be a discussion between the parties to try and come to an agreement. Program lead involvement is encouraged if necessary, especially if a

student is involved. If the affected party (or parties) do not feel comfortable or see this behavior repeated, the next step would be to report to the SSPF staff directly.

➔ **SSPF Staff Involvement:** At this stage, disciplinary actions will be at the discretion of the SSPF staff with reports from involved parties. SSPF staff may speak to the disciplined mentor with the outcomes of this meeting documented in the Mentor Disciplinary Notebook, owned by SSPF staff. Reprimands may include but are not limited to:

◆ Travel and/or meeting restrictions
◆ Loss of mentor leadership roles
◆ Limit student interactions, etc.

➔ **Expulsion:** Expulsion is at the discretion of the SSPF CEO, with possible input from the program lead(s) and/or SSPF staff, depending on the circumstances. All mentors are expected to lead by example. Any illegal actions, continuous breach of the Code of Conduct and SSPF Mentor Expectations, and/or putting students or other individuals in immediate danger are grounds for expulsion. This is applicable in and out of **SSPF** and the **STEM Center**.

Each Team Handbook will detail the disciplinary actions and processes for students. Mentors who are part of a team are responsible for being aware of the student discipline process for that team. Please see their Team Handbook for specific details around student discipline.

Travel Expectations

To travel, mentors and students are expected to be current with their corresponding Code of Conduct. The following rules are implemented for the safety of the students and mentors.

➔ **Buddy System:** Students will be paired in batches of 2 or 3 and are required to stick with their buddy group for the duration of competition. This includes when traveling from the pits to the stands, exploring the pits, bathroom breaks, and so on. If a buddy group is going to travel from any point A to point B, they must communicate with their Big Buddy.

➔ **Big Buddy (Mentor):** Depending on the number of students attending a competition, 1 to 2 mentors will be assigned to a buddy group. Said Big Buddy will be in charge of: keeping track of their designated student group, making sure they are accounted for arriving and departing the event, ensuring that the students had lunch and are drinking water, and help provide necessary Stim Breaks (see below section) when applicable.

➔ **Stim Breaks/ Overstimulation:** Having such a diverse group of students includes having students with different needs. Overstimulation is common, and we encourage students to communicate with mentors to express when quiet time is needed. Many FIRST events have quiet rooms for students to refocus. If none are available at an event, walks around the venue, inside or outside, are alternatives.

➔ **Car Travel:** There should always be 2 mentors present when carpooling students to/from an event. If both mentors are dating each other or in a familial relationship, they need to have at least one other mentor present with whom they do not have any familial/romantic relationship (see "Mentor Relationships" section above). No students should travel with a singular mentor unless in an emergency situation. If such an emergency occurs, they should call the SSPF CEO or program lead and remain on the line for the duration of the trip.

➔ **Additional Logistics**: The program lead(s) will work in conjunction with the Logistics Lead Mentor or other assistants to help establish any additional travel requirements or guidelines, which may be specific to the event we will be attending. A Family Letter will be sent to parents and guardians prior to any travel, outlining all travel arrangements and logistics.

APPENDIX A: VERSION HISTORY

Revision History	Description / Key Changes	Published By	Publication Date
0.1	● Initial draft version	Glen Pohle	08/02/2023
1.0	● First published version	Glen Pohle	08/20/2023
2.1	● Added more details about SSPF ● Added clarifications on SSPF's Code of Conduct and the CoC expectations in this document ● Added section on SSPF's Policies, Mentor Conflict of Interest, Onboarding, and New Mentor Probationary Period ● Added a few more Mentor expectations and further clarified some others ● Removed the Student section of the Disciplinary Actions section and placed it into the FRC Handbook ● Removed original Appendix A (Mentor roles) and placed this into the FRC Handbook.	Glen Pohle	07/22/2025

This document is subject to change and may be updated after mentor review and Foundation approval. The Change Control Process for this document is as follows:

● Any mentor can propose changes to this document.
● Mentor shall bring the proposed change to the weekly mentor meeting.
● Mentors will discuss the change and if a majority of those present agree to it, they will recommend the change to SSPF staff.
● SSPF staff will be the final decision-maker on whether to implement the change or not.