PEER MENTORING FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Why and How it Works
INTRODUCTIONS

• Research
  • Motivations
  • Ambitions

• Presentation Plan
  • How undergraduate peer mentoring works
  • Why undergraduate peer mentoring works
  • Recommendations for graduate education
Learning from Others

“Education is all a matter of building bridges”
- Ralph Ellison
HOW IT STARTED

• Established in Fall 2005
• 8 mentors, 6 host instructors

HOW IT HAS GROWN

• Expanded beyond initial arts courses to Haskayne School of Business, Science, Nursing, and the Faculty of Medicine Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies (CRDS)

WHERE IT IS NOW: Program Statistics

• Fall 2012: 209 mentors, 57 host instructors
• Has actively served 4000 students in 97 host course sections at all levels of study across 15 disciplines/programs
U of C Peer Mentoring: Indicators of Success

How did peer mentoring affect the student learning environment of the course? (Fall 2011, 409 Respondents)

- Supporting my active participation in learning within class or outside of class: 57% Significant Benefit, 32% Moderate Benefit, 23% No difference, 6% Moderate NEGATIVE effect, 1% Significantly NEGATIVE effect, 1% I don't know.

- Supporting my morale and self-confidence as a learner: 37% Significant Benefit, 31% Moderate Benefit, 23% No difference, 7% Moderate NEGATIVE effect, 1% Significantly NEGATIVE effect, 1% I don't know.

- Making the learning experience more interesting or enjoyable: 38% Significant Benefit, 37% Moderate Benefit, 18% No difference, 5% Moderate NEGATIVE effect, 1% Significantly NEGATIVE effect, 1% I don't know.

- Making the course more student-friendly: 47% Significant Benefit, 36% Moderate Benefit, 8% No difference, 6% Moderate NEGATIVE effect, 1% Significantly NEGATIVE effect, 1% I don't know.

To what degree did peer mentoring activities enhance your academic learning in the course? (Fall 2011, 404 Respondents)

- My academic skills: 38% Significant Benefit, 34% Moderate Benefit, 22% No difference, 6% Moderate NEGATIVE effect, 1% Significantly NEGATIVE effect, 1% I don't know.

- My understanding of the course material: 32% Significant Benefit, 34% Moderate Benefit, 22% No difference, 6% Moderate NEGATIVE effect, 1% Significantly NEGATIVE effect, 1% I don't know.

- My understanding of teaching and learning methods: 40% Significant Benefit, 38% Moderate Benefit, 22% No difference, 5% Moderate NEGATIVE effect, 1% Significantly NEGATIVE effect, 1% I don't know.
What It Is

Curricular Peer Mentors are:

- **Not** teaching assistants (TAs) or lab assistants
- **Not** volunteers or employees
- **Not** one-on-one tutors
- **Not** limited to providing extracurricular study sessions
Curricular peer mentoring may involve activities such as:

- Facilitating informal break-out groups in class
- Facilitating informal study and exam prep groups out of class
- Facilitating and moderating on-line discussion
- Modeling active participation in class, and giving presentations
- Discussing student research plans and papers
- Responding constructively to ungraded student course work (formative evaluation – no grades given by peer mentor)
**WHAT INFORMS IT**

**Course Integration**
- Peer mentor role supports standard student learning activities within a specific course
  - Best design combines mentoring within a class setting with voluntary extracurricular and/or online engagement

**Instructor Collaboration**
- Instructors, TAs, peer mentors co-design roles
  - Mentors experiment and evolve their role to meet demands

**Peer Mentor Education**
- Service-learning course design combining theory with practice
  - Build both an academic and professional skill set
“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”

- William Butler Yeats
STUDENTS

• Personal Support
  • Respond to non-academic concerns
  • Provide a supportive community/peer network

• Academic Excellence
  • Improve higher-order thinking skills
  • Learn how to engage with lectures, learning materials & processes
## Bloom's Revised Taxonomy

### Cognitive Domain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remembering</td>
<td>Choose, Cite, Enumerate, Group, Label, List, Listen, Locate, Match, Memorize, Name, Outline, Quote, Read, Recall, Recite, Record, Relate, Repeat, Reproduce, Review, Select, Show, Sort, State, Underline, Write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Account for, Annotate, Associate, Classify, Convert, Define, Describe, Discuss, Estimate, Explain, Express, Identify, Indicate, Interpret, Observe, Outline, Recognize, Reorganize, Report, Research, Restate, Retell, Review, Translate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying</td>
<td>Adapt, Apply, Calculate, Change, Collect, Compute, Construct, Demonstrate, Dramatize, Draw, Exhibit, Generalize, Illustrate, Interpret, Interview, Make, Manipulate, Operate, Paint, Practice, Sequence, Show, Sketch, Solve, Translate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing</td>
<td>Analyze, Appraise, Arrange, Calculate, Categorize, Compare, Contrast, Criticize, Debate, Detect, Diagram, Discriminate, Dissect, Distinguish, Examine, Experiment, Group, Infer, Inquire, Inspect, Investigate, Order, Probe, Question, Relate, Research, Scrutinize, Separate, Sequence, Sift, Subdivide, Summarize, Survey, Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating</td>
<td>Appraise, Argue, Assess, Choose, Compare, Conclude, Criticize, Critique, Debate, Decide, Deduce, Defend, Determine, Differentiate, Discriminate, Evaluate, Infer, Judge, Justify, Measure, Predict, Prioritize, Probe, Rank, Rate, Recommend, Revise, Score, Select, Validate, Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating</td>
<td>Act, Assemble, Blend, Combine, Compile, Compose, Concoct, Construct, Create, Design, Develop, Devise, Formulate, Forecast, Generate, Hypothesize, Imagine, Invent, Organize, Originate, Predict, Plan, Prepare, Propose, Produce, Set-up</td>
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MENTORS

• Academic Excellence
  • Enjoy a greater understanding of course content
  • Develop their research skills

• Career Development
  • Shape valuable ‘professional’ competencies
    • Leadership, collaboration, communication
  • Shape valuable ‘academic’ competencies
    • Learn about education methods and teaching practice
  • Enhance their CV
• Benefit supervisor – student relationships
  • Decrease workload
  • Improve communication
  • Navigate hierarchical divides

• Learning Communities
  • Personal/academic support

• Monitoring mechanism
  • Early warning system for struggling students
Peer Mentoring:

- Cost Effective

- Can negate program attrition rates
  - Personal & academic support for junior students
  - Promotes involvement in specific disciplines

- Can improve NSSE survey results
  - Improve student learning outcomes (academic & professional)
  - Improve enrollment (domestic & international)
In the first place, God made idiots. That was for practice. Then he made school boards.

- Mark Twain
Curricular Peer Mentoring directly responds to the five NSSE categories (or ‘benchmarks’) defined as necessary for successful student learning outcomes:

- Level of Academic Challenge
- Active and Collaborative Learning,
- Student-Faculty Interaction,
- Enriching Educational Experience, and;
- Creating a Supportive Campus Environment.
“The illiterate of the future will not be the person who cannot read. It will be the person who does not know how to learn.”

- Alvin Toffler
Graduate Education Today

• Master/Apprentice model

• One dimensional goal
  • PhD & Tenure

• Academic & Non-Academic Careers
  • Core Competencies
Graduate Peer Mentoring Programs

- Social support
  - Incoming students

- Academic support
  - Discipline specific
    - Engineering, Computer Science, Online

- General
  - Thesis/Dissertation
    - PhD Narratives: Heroic, tragic, businesslike, and penal
Recommendations

• Identify what graduate and/or doctoral programs/departments are experiencing high levels of attrition

• Decide whether to focus on social or academic mentoring program

• Decide on a formal or informal mentoring system

• Approach faculty about the utility of the program to their department and if anyone would like to lead it

• Provide an administrative support structure for the program

• Initiate the adoption of a peer mentoring seminar course

• Recruit mentors and mentees with relevant, targeted advertising

• Collect relevant stats!
Education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught.

- Oscar Wilde
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REFERENCES

GRADUATE PEER MENTORING PROGRAMS: SPECIFIC

SCIENCE & ENGINEERING


SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES

ONLINE
BEGINNERS


MINORITIES


OVERVIEW


REFERENCES

GRADUATE EDUCATION: GENERAL DISCUSSION


Get in Touch!

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