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
THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
PEER MENTORING NETWORK

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)

- Significant Benefit: 37%
- Moderate Benefit: 32%
- No difference: 23%
- Moderately Negative effect: 7%
- Significantly Negative effect: 6%
- I don’t know: 1%

- Supporting my active participation in learning within class: 0.5%
- Supporting my morale and self-confidence as a learner: 1%
- Making the learning experience more interesting: 0.7%
- Making the course more student-friendly: 1.2%

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

- Significant Benefit: 23%
- Moderate Benefit: 38%
- No difference: 34%
- Moderately Negative effect: 22%
- Significantly Negative effect: 22%
- I don’t know: 1%

- My academic skills: 6%
- My understanding of the subject matter: 6%
- My understanding of the course teaching and learning methods: 4%
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
WHO BENEFITS & WHY

“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
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<th>Category</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
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<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>
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<td><strong>Understanding</strong></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>
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<td><strong>Applying</strong></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>
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<td><strong>Evaluating</strong></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>
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<td><strong>Creating</strong></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
Educators

- 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
REFERENCES

BEGINNERS


MINORITIES


REFERENCES

OVERVIEW


References

Graduate Education: General Discussion


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