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Bridging the Gap for First Generation Students (BG4FGS): An Occupation-Based Peer Mentoring Program at Dominican University of California

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Bridging the Gap for First Generation Students (BG4FGS):
An Occupation-Based Peer Mentoring Program at Dominican University of California

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree

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School of Health and Natural Sciences

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This thesis, written under the direction of the candidates' thesis advisor and approved by the Chair of the program has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the Occupational Therapy Department in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Occupational Therapy. The content and project in this work represent the work of the candidates alone.

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Abstract

Attending college is a major milestone in the lives of students. The transition to college can be a challenging process for new students, particularly first-generation students, impacting their ability to meet the more rigorous academic demands and to integrate socially into the campus community (Prospero & Vohra-Gupta, 2007; Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007). To ease the transition to college, peer mentoring programs can assist new college students by offering guidance, one-on-one and group sessions, providing information about campus life and resources, and referring them to support services (Ferrari, 2004; Lennox & Leonard, 2007).

The project developers collaborated with Dominican University of California to create a peer mentoring program geared specifically for its first-generation student population called Bridging the Gap for First-Generation Students or BG4FGS. We used an occupational therapy lens to help these students succeed in college by addressing areas including academic performance, social participation, occupational balance, stress management, time management, and college finances. The first outcome of this project was the development of a peer mentor training manual. Mentors received their manuals during the training program in mid-August 2012. The second outcome was the creation of group modules that were implemented during one-hour monthly sessions with the mentors and mentees in September, October, and November 2012. Overall, the mentors reported that the training program and manuals were effective in helping them understand the objectives of BG4FGS and adequately prepare them for their roles. This project has demonstrated that occupational therapy plays a vital role in consultation and training to prepare peer mentors for implementing an effective peer mentoring program, in which first-generation students at Dominican University can benefit from.

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Introduction

The transition to college is challenging for most students. It can be exciting for some and quite overwhelming for others. College presents a time during which many students analyze their academic and personal interests, strengths, and weaknesses, and begin to ponder their future successes as a college graduate. However, for those who identify as “first-generation college students”, the idea of completing a college degree may seem impossible due to additional risk factors and barriers when compared to non-first-generation college students (NFGS). Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, and Leonard (2007) define first-generation college students (FGS) as students who are the first in their families to attend a postsecondary educational institution and whose parents did not obtain a college degree. Graduating from a college or university provides a person with greater opportunities, knowledge, and a wide range of experiences that contribute to personal development and academic growth. According to the United States Census Bureau (2010), obtaining a college degree is valuable because a person’s annual income is twice as much when compared to high school graduates. The experience of going to college is also important because it can provide students with the opportunity to explore their own identities, and introduces them to new and diverse populations (United States Census Bureau, 2010).

As of October 2010, 56% (12.4 million) of our nation’s young adult population, ages 16 to 24, were enrolled in college (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011). The National Center for Education Statistics (2011), reported that in 2009, approximately 62.3% of college students were White, 14.3% Black, 12.5 % Hispanic, 6.5% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1% Native-American. Nearly 30% of these students are considered FGS (Ramsay & Peale, 2010). Not all FGS are of ALANA (African-American, Latino-

American, Asian-American, and Native-American) background, but the majority of college students who identify as being part of an underrepresented population are more likely to be of FGS status, come from low-income households, have less knowledge of how to apply for financial assistance, and be less academically prepared for school (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Prospero & Vohra-Gupta, 2007; Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007). According to Ramsay and Peale (2010), 89 % of FGS who also come from a low-income household will drop out of college without a degree. This may lead to further implications for students and their families because they will still need to take care of student loan debt, and without a college degree, it may be difficult to acquire a high-paying job.

According to Dominican University of California's institutional research, 38% of Dominican University's students are of African-American, Latino, Asian-American, and Native-American cultures (Dominican University Fact Book, 2011). In 2011, students who were the first in their families to attend college accounted for 28% of the student body population at Dominican University of California. In 2010, approximately 25% of first-generation college freshmen did not continue their education at Dominican after the first year (J. Li, personal communication, September 28, 2011). These statistics have raised a level of concern among faculty, staff, and students because if a student leaves school during his or her freshman year of college, then he or she is less likely to return.

Occupational therapy, in a school-based setting, is commonly seen in elementary schools, and services are rarely justified within higher level, educational institutions.

However, there is a need for occupational therapists at a university because the focus of occupational therapy in any school setting is to support student engagement and

participation (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2002). Occupational therapy is a profession that uses a holistic approach to address the psychosocial, physical, and environmental barriers that students may face during their transition to college.

The purpose of this project was to develop, create, and implement a comprehensive mentorship program at Dominican University of California for first-generation college students, in order to increase the retention rate among the university's student population. The project consisted of the development of a training manual and program for the peer mentors. A series of specialized workshops and group seminars provided the infrastructure for the mentorship program. This project was specifically tailored for first-generation, undergraduate, college students enrolled at Dominican University.

Literature Review

This literature review is organized into three sections. The first section will address the issues that all students face during the transition to college and discuss the major factors that contribute to positive outcomes for these students. The next section will address the issues that are specific to FGS during their transition from high school to college, including the major contributing challenges and the resulting outcomes. The final section will address the strengths of peer mentoring programs as a possible approach to enable the successful transition into college for all students.

General Issues of the Transition to College

Entering college is a major milestone for students. The review of the literature indicates that an easier and more successful transition to college is marked by the following outcomes: lower levels of stress, greater academic achievement and persistence, greater sense of university belonging, lower levels of mental health

problems, and lower levels of risky and problematic behaviors (Hicks & Heastie, 2008; Pritchard, Wilson, & Yamnitz, 2007). This section will examine the internal (self-esteem, perceived academic control, confidence in academic ability, and personality factors), external (institutional and faculty support, family, housing and roommate issues, peer support, and quality friendships), and behavioral (participation in extra-curricular activities and engagement in risky behaviors) factors that contribute to the aforementioned positive outcomes.

Self-esteem influences a student's performance in academics and interactions with peers (Ruthig, Haynes, Stupnisky, & Perry, 2009; Tieu et al., 2009). Students with higher self-esteem project confidence in their capabilities, therefore enabling them to do well in school. Higher self-esteem is associated with more positive peer interactions and quality friendships (Ruthig et al., 2009; Tieu et al., 2009). Students who are confident and accepting of themselves are more likely to seek out and interact with peers.

Cognizant of their value as individuals, they know themselves and are confident in what they can offer to others, such as knowledge or humor. Frequently engaging with their peers, they are able to establish and maintain quality friendships and build a strong support system. This validates their self-worth and boosts their self-esteem, increasing their sense of university belonging (Ruthig, et al., 2009; Tieu et al., 2009).

Higher levels of perceived academic control and confidence in academic ability are positively associated with achievement in academics and persistence in college (Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007; Ruthig, Haynes, Perry, & Chipperfield, 2007; Ruthig et al., 2009; Ruthig et al., 2008). Students with perceived academic control hold themselves accountable for their academic performance and do not attribute it to external

factors, such as professors. This sense of control can empower a student and may contribute to his or her self-efficacy. Students' occupational performance is influenced by their belief in their abilities and is the driving force behind their pursuit of academic excellence and achievement (Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007; Ruthig, et al., 2007; Ruthig et al., 2009; Ruthig et al., 2008). Without self-efficacy, students would not begin the work towards accomplishing their goals, which in this case includes doing well in school and achieving good grades.

Personality factors, such as optimism, also contribute to a student's adjustment to their new college environment (Pritchard et al., 2007). According to Pritchard et al. (2007), students with higher levels of optimism reported fewer physical and psychological health problems. Optimism affects students' perspective and they are able to judge what they can do realistically, considering their strengths and weaknesses. Students with a realistic positive mindset do not let their weaknesses discourage them. Rather, they continually seek ways to compensate and to improve themselves, such as seeking academic assistance when needed. This positive attitude helps reduce stress because students recognize and understand that they are in control and are able to find solutions to identified problems (Pritchard et al., 2007).

A key factor in a student's academic success is institutional and faculty support (Hurtado et al., 2007). If students are struggling in any area of academia, they can seek and obtain assistance from professors and tutors. Taking advantage of these resources not only helps students improve academically but also facilitates a sense of university belonging. According to Hurtado et al. (2007), students who interacted with and sought advice from professors, teaching assistants, graduate students, and upperclassmen

reported a higher sense of university belonging. Establishing a positive relationship and maintaining regular contact with professors and knowledgeable peers provides students the support and encouragement they need to succeed academically and continue pursuing their college education (Hurtado et al., 2007). Awareness and utilization of on-campus resources gives students the confidence that help is available and the university or college wants them to do well (Hurtado et al., 2007).

According to Ames et al. (2011), students who have a positive and supportive relationship with their families reported an easier transition to college than those with disconnected familial ties. Families can support the college student in a variety of ways. Parents or other relatives can provide monetary support, assisting their sons or daughters in paying for tuition and other school-related expenses. Families can also provide emotional support, offering words of encouragement and advice when students are stressed or dealing with problems. However, some students may be subjected to family obligations, such as devoting time to help out with the family business, taking care of a family member who becomes ill, or providing childcare for younger siblings. Hurtado et al. (2007) found that students concerned with interfering familial responsibilities were more likely to experience difficulty in managing their college transition. The interference of too many familial responsibilities can negatively impact a student's occupational role and overall university adjustment. It can also decrease the time for studying, which may have an effect on a student's grade point average (Ames et al., 2011; Hurtado et al., 2007). Also, students may go home more often to attend to family needs. This leaves less time for them to interact with peers, and they may face challenges in regards to establishing a supportive group of friends.

Housing and roommate issues can be a source of stress for college students living on campus for the first time (Hicks & Heastie, 2008). According to Hicks and Heastie (2008), better housing (i.e. adequate space, clean environment, and good quality room furnishings) and a positive relationship with roommates (i.e. open communication and mutual respect) are associated with lower levels of stress. The lack of these two elements can interfere with a student's academic performance and contribute to decreased physical, mental, and psychological health (Hicks & Heastie, 2008). An unsanitary environment, such as a bathroom infested with mold, can make students sick, possibly resulting in absence from class and postponement of assignments until they recover, which may negatively impact their grades. Inadequate space can be a source of conflict for roommates if they do not communicate effectively and are not willing to compromise. Problems with roommates can lead to emotional stress, affecting a student's ability to concentrate in school (Hicks & Heastie, 2008). Students may also leave campus or go home more frequently to avoid roommates, which can disrupt their adjustment to college life.

Peer support and quality friendships contribute to an easier transition to college (Pittman & Richmond, 2008; Ruthig et al., 2008). Greater social support and quality relationships (as measured by trust, communication, and inclusion) positively influence a student's sense of university belonging, which is linked to positive mental health (Pittman & Richmond, 2008; Ruthig et al., 2008). University adjustment can be a stressful process, and peers and friends can ease this transition in different ways. For example, students can tutor each other and hold study group sessions, therefore lowering academic stress. Students may also offer emotional support by listening to each other,

providing advice, or cheering each other up during difficult times. Having a strong and positive social support system decreases feelings of loneliness and isolation, which helps lower the risk of dropping out of college (Pittman & Richmond, 2008; Ruthig et al., 2008).

Students benefit from quality participation in extra-curricular activities (Tieu et al., 2009). Involvement in structured organizations (i.e. athletics, student council, youth groups, and campus clubs and organizations) is correlated with lower levels of stress (Tieu et al., 2009). Extra-curricular activities enable students to continue engaging in their interests and passions. A variety of on-campus organizations also provides students the opportunity to explore other possible interests and help them find their niche (Tieu et al., 2009). Commitment and active involvement in structured organizations gives students a sense of purpose and a feeling of camaraderie as they collaborate with other members to achieve common goals. Groups in which members share common interests or passions can also be an additional resource of social support for students (Tieu et al., 2009).

Drug use, alcohol consumption, sex, aggression, and rule-breaking are some of the most prevalent risky and problematic behaviors among college students. Lower levels of these risky and problematic behaviors and engagement in health-promoting behaviors are associated with a smoother and more successful transition to college (Fromme, Corbin, & Kruse, 2008; Vaughan, Corbin, & Fromme, 2009). Bray and Born (2004) found that regular and active exercise is a healthy way for students to relieve stress, and active students reported higher levels of energy and lower levels of fatigue and tension than less active students. However, if students use drugs and alcohol as coping

mechanisms, they may develop addictions, which can interfere with their studies and isolate them from friends and family.

The Transition to College for First-Generation Students

All students, regardless of their generational status, may face psychosocial, physical, and environmental barriers during their transition to college. However, first-generation students (FGS) encounter a greater risk for additional challenges during their transition to college, potentially leading to negative outcomes such as lower grade point averages, lack of academic and social integration (Prospero & Vohra-Gupta, 2007; Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007), and decreased retention rates (NCES, 2005; Eitel & Martin, 2009). Students are considered high-risk when they exhibit characteristics such as lack of college preparedness, lack of financial support and guidance, work more than 30 hours outside of school, and are the first in their families to attend college (Collier & Morgan; Kin & Sax, 2009; Prospero & Vohra-Grupta, 2007). Contributing factors such as being underprepared for college level work, lack of academic, peer, and family support, lack of financial literacy, low levels of self-efficacy, and a student's housing situation correlate with the negative outcomes mentioned above (Barry, Hudley, Cho, & Kelly, 2008; Collier & Morgan, 2008; Eitel & Martin, 2008; Prospero & Vohra-Gupta, 2007).

Lack of college preparedness impacts a student's academic performance in college, which may lead to lower grade point averages, resulting in decreased retention rates among FGS (Collier & Morgan, 2008). College preparedness has an influence on how well students manage their college workload and academic expectations. Therefore, students who lack skills in areas such as math, writing, and critical thinking may have

difficulty mastering the “college student role,” which may affect their overall performance in school (Collier & Morgan, 2008).

Lack of family support is another contributing factor that leads to poor academic performance among FGS (Barry, Hudley, Cho, & Kelly, 2008). Students whose parents are unable to provide their children with the “college knowledge,” due to the fact that they have never had any prior experience with post-secondary institutions themselves, are less likely to receive the guidance and support needed to navigate the college application process. Students may become overwhelmed and confused when trying to figure it out on their own (Barry et al., 2008). This additional obstacle can negatively impact a student’s performance in a classroom setting.

Lack of financial support among a low-income FGS can mean that a student may need to learn how to become financially independent within the context of his or her new environment. According to the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (2006), retention and graduation rates are impacted by employment status. Past literature has characterized FGS as being from a lower socioeconomic background; therefore, the need to work and become self-sufficient individuals is important (Collier & Morgan, 2008). Working several hours each week along with being a full-time undergraduate student can be time-consuming and difficult to manage, which contributes to lower retention rates among this identified population (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Eitel & Martin, 2009).

Lack of financial literacy among FGS is an attribute to lower retention and graduation rates (Eitel & Martin, 2009). Therefore, financial literacy is an important factor in determining the success of FGS. Eitel and Martin (2009) analyzed results from

the Jump\$Start survey and determined that FGS lack financial knowledge. Lack of financial knowledge correlates with a student's age, ethnicity, and generational status, and can lead to overwhelming feelings of stress. Students are expected to know and understand their new and complex environment as soon as they begin college. This is not the case with many students, especially FGS when comparing their knowledge, or lack of, with other White-American college students (Eitel & Martin, 2009). Financial literacy, such as money management and financial budgeting, are barriers to degree completion, therefore, it was important to address these barriers.

Levels of self-efficacy also contribute to a student's ability to socially integrate, which may lead to increased levels of satisfaction of time spent at school. FGS reported having significantly lower levels of self-efficacy when compared to their NFG college peers (Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007). Self-efficacy is the belief and confidence in one's capabilities to accomplish a task. FGS lack self-esteem and many have a difficult time expressing concerns, impacting their overall college experience. Ramos-Sanchez and Nichols (2007) suggested that FGS perceive themselves as less capable in their academic performance than NFGS. Therefore, FGS may isolate themselves because they may not be able to relate to peers within their new environments. Students who lacked the confidence needed to succeed in college had a difficult time becoming successful and effectively adjusted students, which led to other challenges throughout their time spent in college (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Eitel & Martin, 2009).

In addition, a student's living situation affects how he or she will integrate onto his or her university campus. Prospero and Vohra-Grupta (2007) reported that FGS had a difficult time integrating into their campus communities because they were more likely to

live off campus. FGS are less likely to live in college dormitories because it is often more expensive to live on campus. Living off campus leads to less participation in extracurricular activities with peers, which can further increase feelings of isolation and loneliness (Prospero & Vohra-Grupta, 2007). Therefore, a student who is unable to integrate socially due to his or her housing situation, has a greater risk of leaving school altogether.

In conclusion, the transition to college is a difficult time in the lives of college students. Independence marks responsibility, and some students are not ready for those challenges. Aside from having the responsibilities and expectations to do well in school, FGS are also faced with additional risk factors that must be addressed so that one day our society may achieve increased retention rates among all college students nationwide.

Benefits of Peer Mentoring

College campuses have implemented several interventions to help students transition and progress toward graduation including academic workshops, tutoring services, counseling and psychological services, and student clubs (Solburg, Evans, & Segerstrom, 2009). However, the most commonly used intervention approach to assist in easing this transition process is peer mentoring (Ferrari, 2004; Lennox & Leonard, 2007). Peer mentoring is described as a relationship between a more experienced individual who acts as a guide and role model for a less experienced individual (Ferrari, 2004). Studies suggest that this type of student support service improves retention, academic success, and enhances the students' college experience by allowing fellow students to support and guide incoming freshmen through the transition process (Lennox & Leonard, 2007). There are several positive outcomes associated with peer mentoring (Ferrari, 2004;

Lennox & Leonard, 2007). The four discussed in this section of the literature review are a sense of university belonging, academic success, social support, and mentor benefits.

Peer mentoring programs can increase students' sense of university belonging (Hughes & Fahy, 2009; Pittman & Richmond, 2008). Students' sense of university belonging has been linked to higher self-esteem, academic confidence, and increased retention of college freshmen (Pittman & Richmond, 2008). Students' feelings of school belonging lead to increased social and academic adjustment and decreased dropout rates (Pittman & Richmond, 2008). Students' connectedness to the university is often correlated with having strong peer support (Hughes & Fahy, 2009; Pittman & Richmond, 2008). Hughes and Fahy (2009) studied the impact of a department sponsored peer mentoring program. The upper classmen mentors acted as resources and supports for the freshmen mentees. Mentors were also in charge of planning group activities throughout the semester (Hughes & Fahy, 2009). The mentees indicated the activities put on by the department helped them get to know the faculty, upperclassmen, and other freshmen in the major, which allowed them to become more involved in the program. These freshmen felt a sense of connectedness to the department and to the university, which assisted in their smooth transition to college (Hughes & Fahy, 2009).

A sense of university belonging and connectedness goes hand and hand with students' satisfaction with the university. Freshmen who were peer mentored had an increased satisfaction with the university (Sanchez, Bauer, & Paronto, 2006). Sanchez et al. (2006) implemented a peer mentoring program that required freshmen to attend a weekly class about university activities, requirements, and resources and to meet up once a month with their mentors to discuss issues related to university life and adjustment

during their first semester of college. Results indicated that being mentored and having a more experienced peer to talk to about college life was significantly related to the freshmen students' satisfaction with the university (Sanchez et al., 2006).

Increased academic support is another benefit of peer mentoring programs. Universities have implemented several types of peer mentoring programs that provide this support. These include classes, workshops, and seminars that focus on academic skill development, strategies for test taking, and accessing academic resources (Budge, 2006; Ferrari, 2004; Smith, 2007). Regardless of the approach used, peer mentoring programs have increased freshmen students' academic self-efficacy, grade point average, and perceived enhanced learning which all affect satisfaction with their academic programs (Budge, 2006; Ferrari, 2004).

An increase in academic self-efficacy was reported by mentees participating in peer mentoring programs. Campos et al. (2009) and Rodger and Tremblay (2003) found that freshmen students' academic self-efficacy increased during peer mentoring programs. These programs promoted positive academic outcomes for freshmen students by advising, supporting, and informing the freshmen of the academic resources available to them. The students' increased knowledge and awareness of the university resources resulted in students feeling supported and more confident in their academic pursuits (Campose et al., 2009; Rodger & Tremblay, 2003).

Higher grade point average is another positive academic outcome of peer mentoring programs. Studies have shown that peer mentoring programs that provide additional academic support such as informing students of campus tutoring services and academic workshops can influence grade point average (Campos et al., 2009; Rodger &

Tremblay, 2003). According to Rodger and Tremblay (2003), students reported that the additional academic supports were beneficial to their learning. The students who participated in peer mentoring programs had significantly higher grades during their second semester of school compared to those students who did not participate in the peer mentoring program. In addition to higher grade point average, peer mentoring programs also influenced students' perception of learning (Smith, 2007). University courses and programs often collaborated with peer mentoring programs. This allows students to receive more direct academic support with the use of in-class and extra-curricular activities. Peer mentors organized study groups, facilitated online chat groups, and planned interactive learning activities. Smith (2007) found that 70% of participants who utilized an academic-based mentoring program perceived their learning as being enhanced by the peer mentors. Even among those students who did not actively consult with the peer mentors, 53% were confident that the peer mentors cared about their academic performance and felt that the support was there even though they did not take advantage of it (Smith, 2007).

Peer mentoring has a large impact on perceptions of social support. Social support can be defined as feeling cared for or having assistance from an individual or group (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). Research suggests that having social support eases adjustment difficulties and decreases attrition among undergraduates (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). Companionships are often developed as a result of peer mentoring programs (Packard, Walshm, & Seidenberg, 2004). Peer mentoring programs plan gatherings and events for their mentees to socialize and provide opportunities to meet and develop friendships with other mentees, students, and mentors (Meyers, Silliman, Gedde,

& Ohland, 2010). Packard et al. (2004) revealed that friendship, encouragement, being counseled and listened to were highly valued in mentoring relationships. Furthermore, Meyers et al. (2010) found that freshmen mentees were most comfortable seeking out their upperclassmen peer mentors for social support and advice rather than faculty members. This meaningful relationship between the mentor and mentee allowed better adjustment for freshmen (Meyers et al., 2010).

Peer mentoring programs can also provide social support online. E-mentoring refers to a mentoring relationship through electronic communications (Perren, 2003; Shrestha, May, Edirisingha, Burke, & Linsey, 2009). In E-mentoring programs, mentors act as guides for the first-year students. Academic and life skills support can be provided using discussion boards, e-mails, and chats (Shrestha et al., 2009). Studies on e-mentoring suggest the benefits of these programs include increased self-esteem and confidence, as well as being a convenient way of relaying information. E-mentoring programs provided first-year students more opportunities to network, socialize, and create virtual relationships with one another (Perren, 2003; Shrestha et al., 2009).

Mentors also have several of the same positive outcomes and experiences as their mentees (Colvin & Ashman, 2010; Gilles & Wilson, 2004). Acquiring new skills and knowledge is one benefit of being a peer mentor. Much like the mentees, mentors are constantly learning. Peer mentors often have to attend training, workshops, or seminars to meet the requirements to become a mentor. The additional education and training instills confidence and provides extra support for the mentors (Fox, Stevenson, Connelly, Duff, & Dunlop, 2010). Mentors found that interacting with other mentors and mentees encouraged constant learning about themselves, others, and the university (Colvin &

Ashman, 2010; Heirdsfield, Walker, Walsh, & Wilss, 2008). They reported reapplying the concepts they learned and taught to their mentors to their personal lives (Colvin & Ashman, 2010; Heirdsfield, Walker, & Walsh, 2005).

Mentors displayed an increased sense of accomplishment and satisfaction throughout the peer mentoring process (Gilles & Wilson, 2004; Heirdsfield et al., 2008). Mentors want to make a difference and contribute to their mentees' success. They work hard to provide a support system and environment that allows their mentees to grow and succeed. When they were able to see how their contributions impacted the mentees they felt accomplished. Research indicated that mentors gain self-worth and satisfaction when their mentees displayed more enthusiasm or confidence during and at the end of the program (Gilles & Wilson, 2004; Heirdsfield et al., 2008).

Serving as a peer mentor provided opportunities to network and make new friends. Mentors reported that developing friends among mentors and mentees was most beneficial from their experiences with the program (Colvin & Ashman, 2010; Heirdsfield et al., 2008). It was an opportunity to meet and connect with new peers whom they may have never encountered on campus. Colvin and Ashman (2010) reported that interacting and working with other mentors helped students develop strong support systems between one another. Friendships were easily made because of the commonalities between one another.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this project was to create, develop, and implement a peer mentorship program for first-generation students at Dominican University of California. Various studies have shown that during the transition to college, students can experience the following issues: isolation, academic challenges, decreased mental health, and

engagement in risky and problematic behaviors. The review of the literature indicated that peer mentoring is effective at addressing these issues.

This peer-mentoring program addressed these factors by guiding FGS who may lack faculty, peer, and family support. The objectives of this project were to gain knowledge about the needs of Dominican's first-generation students through surveys, focus groups, and interviews; provide the support and resources needed for the peer mentors who facilitate this program including the development of a training manual for the peer mentors and creating modules for the monthly seminars.

Theoretical Framework

In a new college environment, there are many contextual factors that can enhance or constrain a student's occupational performance. The Ecology of Human Performance (EHP) explains the relationship between these contextual factors and how they affect a person's performance and behavior. This model of practice guided our project because it emphasizes the connectedness between the person, task, and context, and how these factors interact and affect overall performance.

In this framework, the person has unique experiences, interests, and abilities as well as cognitive, sensorimotor, and psychosocial skills (Dunn, Brown, & McGuigan, 1994). The person can only be viewed within the context. Context plays a significant role in EHP. According to this model, the context is not only the physical aspects of the environment but also the social, cultural, and temporal factors that influence and determine behavior (Dunn et al., 1994). Dunn et al. (1994) reiterate that the only way to understand performance is within the context. Individuals are embedded in their contexts and depending on how they choose to interact within their context may support or hinder performance.

Surrounding the person are tasks which are defined as “objective sets of behaviors necessary to accomplish a goal” (Dunn et al., 1994, p. 599). The number of tasks vary person to person, however every individual has the opportunity to strive and perform as many tasks as he or she would like. In order to perform tasks, the person must utilize skills and abilities. Oftentimes, when individuals use these skills, environmental aspects and features of the context support their performance (Dunn et al., 1994). If a person utilizes multiple contexts to support performance, this allows him or her to have more opportunities to engage in new tasks (Letts, Rigby, & Stewart, 2003).

A specific set of tasks that constellate is described as a role. A person can take on several roles and some may overlap or occur simultaneously. Roles vary according to the person’s skills, experiences, desires, and the contextual demands (Rempfer, Hildenbrand, Parker, & Brown, 2003).

The performance range refers to the number and availability of tasks (Dunn et al., 1994). The performance range is determined by the interactions of the person’s skills and abilities with the variables of the context. Only tasks that are in the person’s performance range are obtainable. If a person has more task opportunities and interactions within his or her context, then the performance range will be larger. When a person is unable to incorporate the tasks within his or her context, the performance range may be decreased, which leads to a decrease in occupational performance (Dunn et al., 1994).

EHP has five different intervention strategies, establish/restore, alter, adapt, prevent, and create (Dunn et al., 1994). The five intervention options allow the occupational therapist to look not only at the underlying issues of the person but also at the task and contextual factors that may be influencing the performance.

The objective of the establish/restore intervention strategy is to remediate or improve the person's abilities and skills in order to support an individual's performance (Dunn et al., 1994). This approach focuses on the development of skills that are barriers in the person's performance. The contextual factors are modified in this intervention approach, which allows for reinforcement and the development of the person's desired skills needed for the proper outcomes (Dunn et al., 1994).

The alter intervention approach emphasizes finding the appropriate context for the person, to support and further develop abilities and performance. Rather than changing the person or the skills required for the task, this approach suggests that identifying the aspects of the context that support or inhibit performance and finding that "best match" between the person and the available context will facilitate a successful performance (Dunn et al., 1994). The adapt intervention strategy is similar to the alter intervention strategy, but rather than finding alternative context options, occupational therapists use this strategy to modify the current context to enhance the person's abilities and skills (Dunn et al., 1994).

The prevent approach focuses on predicting possible problems and outcomes that may arise and impact performance negatively. By identifying the abilities and skills required for the task, occupational therapists can apply their knowledge and strategies to create interventions that prevent maladaptive skills from developing so functional performance can be maintained (Dunn et al., 1994).

Lastly, the create intervention allows the occupational therapist to enrich contextual and task opportunities to enhance more adaptable or complex performance within a certain context (Dunn et al., 1994). This intervention does not assume that a

disability is present within the person or affects his or her performance (Dunn et al., 1994) but instead further enhances his or her performance (Dunn et al., 1994; Letts et al., 2003).

The goal of this thesis project was to develop a peer-mentoring program for FGS within their new environment and provide the contextual supports that are needed to ease this transition process and enhance school performance. The EHP model guided this project by utilizing the intervention approaches within the physical, social, cultural, and temporal aspects of the context that FGS may face.

The two EHP intervention approaches that were used in this project are create and establish/restore. The purpose of this project was to design and create a peer mentoring program. In addition, we created a training manual for peer mentors to guide and assist the mentors as they support their mentees in this crucial transition process. By examining the issues FGS face in the transition to college, this project identified and anticipated the problems that are likely to occur for FGS. This mentoring program will provide strategies and assistance to change those expected outcomes. Training workshops were implemented to focus on skill-building by modifying and creating environmental supports, providing knowledge and practice that facilitate the wanted outcomes needed to be successful in this environment. By establishing a program that provides additional environmental support around the tasks and performance barriers within their new environment, we hope this program will optimize the students' performance range.

Methodology

Agency Description

This project was developed and implemented at Dominican University of California to address the need to increase retention among the school's student

population, as well as to provide support for FGS. Dominican University is a small, private, liberal arts university located in San Rafael (Marin County), California.

Dominican is nestled in an affluent community, located 12 miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge. Dominican was first established as an all-women, Catholic school in 1890 by the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael, who originally arrived in California from Fanjeaux, France. Although this institution is no longer denominational, students are influenced by the school's Catholic heritage to incorporate the Dominican values of study, reflection, community, and service into their everyday lives.

Dominican University offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in a wide variety of programs, with nursing, biology, psychology, and business being the most popular. Dominican has an 11:1 student to faculty ratio, 3:1 female to male student body, and averages 16 students per classroom. In the fall semester of the 2011 – 2012 school year, Dominican had 1,395 traditional, degree-seeking, undergraduate students who represented a wide range of cultures and backgrounds. According to institutional research, 38% of Dominican University's students represent African-American, Latino, Asian-American, and Native-American cultures (Dominican University Fact Book, 2011). This project-based thesis was implemented in conjunction with Christina Jimenez, First Year Student Advisor, and Academic Advising and Support Services.

Project Design

This project proposed a peer mentor training for the peer mentors and a series of group seminars for the mentor and mentee pairs during the 2012 – 2013 academic year. Peer mentors were provided with the tools and resources necessary to facilitate one-on-one and group peer mentoring. Workshops and group seminars included guest speakers from different campus departments, including financial aid, academic support services,

and the alumni association mentoring program. This project aimed to structure a community composed of FGS to provide a safe and supportive environment where mentors and mentees can learn from one another. The workshops and seminars were structured meetings where students are encouraged and motivated to succeed by their peers. Our project's design provided the peer mentors and mentees the opportunity to give each other feedback, advice, suggestions, and recommendations on how to overcome challenges they may face or are currently struggling with. Peer mentoring was an effective strategy because it provides academic and social support from other students who may have had similar experiences within the same environment.

Target Population

The target population for this project was current first-year, first-generation, undergraduate, college students at Dominican University of California. In Fall 2011, students who were the first in their families to attend college accounted for 28% of the student body. This unique group of students has a higher risk of dropping out of college due to factors such as lack of guidance and support (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Prospero & Vohra-Gupta, 2007; Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007). Peer mentors were FGS in their third and fourth academic year.

Project Development

Informal surveys about students' college experiences were collected in September, 2011. These surveys were distributed and collected on September 14th and September 20th by setting up a table outside of the school's cafeteria and inviting students to answer the following five questions: 1) "Are you a first generation college student?" 2) "What year are you?" 3) "Why did you decide to attend Dominican University?" 4) "What are the challenges you faced (or are currently) in the first year?"

and 5) “What support would you like to see for first generation students?” (see Appendix A) It was observed that some students had a difficult time self-identifying as a FGS when the first question was verbally asked. Therefore, surveys were distributed to several students and students were asked to fold up the half-sheet of paper before placing it in the collection bowl to avoid compromising anonymity. There were 43 student participants that answered “Yes” regarding their first-generational status. We collected surveys from 9 freshmen, 11 sophomores, 14 juniors, and 9 seniors. Some of the reasons why students decided to attend Dominican included the small class sizes, personal attention in a classroom, location, and quality education.

Challenges that students reported included: adjusting to their new environment, financial and academic challenges, time and stress management, feelings of alienation and confusion, lack of knowledge about on-campus resources, personal and roommate issues, and college expectations. The reported challenges corresponded with student responses regarding the type of support they would like to see for FGS. Common responses included: freshman orientation catered to FGS and their families, more information on financial aid and financial expectations, encouragement to persevere and graduate through motivational sessions, informational workshops focused on the transition to college, opportunities to become more involved on campus, guidance and peer support, and specifically a mentorship program where students “can come together and talk about their struggles with college as a first-year generation student.”

Focus groups were conducted so that we could gain further insight and knowledge about the FGS experience at Dominican University. Focus groups provided an opportunity for disclosure among students who can relate to one another. Group

discussions produce insight and inspire other participants to share their thoughts, ideas, and opinions on a selected topic. Students were personally selected and invited to the focus groups. Two focus groups were held in the month of November, 2011.

Participants had the opportunity to discuss anything they would like, regarding their experiences at Dominican.

Based on the literature and information gathered from the surveys and these two meetings, we developed and advertised a series of monthly seminars to be implemented during the Fall semester, 2012 (see Appendix B and Appendix C). The potential topics for these seminars included: stress management, time management, financial literacy and budgeting, on-campus resources, on-campus extra-curricular activities, and interpersonal communication skills. The occupational therapy graduate students, occupational therapy faculty member, and first-year academic advisor led the discussion of each one-hour seminar, opening with a check-in to see how both the mentors and mentees were doing, leading the group activity, and closing with reflections and a preview of the next seminar.

Additionally, a training manual was created and developed as a resource for the peer mentors (see Appendix D). Several steps were taken to create the training manual to guide the training program for the mentors. First, review of the literature helped identify the most pressing concerns and issues faced by first-year college students, and specifically FGS. Next, findings from surveys and the two focus groups determined the needs of Dominican students. In addition, Resident Advisors and several Dominican faculty and staff members were interviewed and surveyed in the 2011 fall semester to acquire further insight. The 31st Annual Conference on the First-Year Experience and other universities' peer mentor training manuals (CSU Northridge's Peer Mentoring

Resource Booklet, Iowa State University's Peer Mentor Handbook, and University of Illinois at Chicago Mentor Manual) also provided valuable knowledge. Additional research was conducted to find successful peer mentoring programs at other universities, which we used to model our training manual and mentorship program. The Dominican Resident Aide training manual and peer mentor training guides were also used as resources. Data collected from all these sources guided the selection of the major topics to be addressed in the mentor training and the mentorship program.

This training manual guided the peer mentors in their efforts to serve as peer supports for the incoming freshman class. The manual consisted of the following major sections: Mentor Roles and Responsibilities, Building a Helping Relationship, Cultural Competence and Diversity, Communication, Language and Etiquette, Code of Conduct in the Peer Mentor-Mentee Relationship, Conflict Resolution, Goal-Setting, Occupational Balance, Time Management, and Stress Management. The training manual included activities and handouts that the peer mentors used during their session meetings with their mentees. The training manual included a guide on how to establish an effective peer mentor and mentee relationship. This was discussed during meetings that occupational therapy graduate students facilitated with the peer mentors. Further research was conducted to determine the best way to successfully train peer mentors so that they feel a sense of guidance and support throughout the mentoring process.

Ethical and legal considerations.

The program developers adhered to the American Occupational Therapy Association of America (AOTA) Occupational Therapy Code of Ethics and Ethic Standards (2010) which "addresses the ethical concerns of the profession in education,

research, and practice” (p. 1). Under this code of ethics, occupational therapists have an ethical responsibility of their recipients of service and society (AOTA, 2010).

Beneficence and nonmaleficence are two ethical principles that occupational therapists should be concerned with when individuals are receiving occupational therapy intervention (AOTA, 2010). Beneficence involves the concern of well being and safety of the participants in this project. This ethical principle was applied to the mentees and mentors participating in this peer mentoring program. The peer mentoring program was intended to benefit all the participants and promote a better good. This program educated mentors and mentees and allowed them opportunities to apply and practice these newly acquired skills and knowledge in a safe environment. This project was a learning process that all the participants benefited from. All mentees and mentors were treated equally and fairly. Their safety and wellness was a priority throughout this process.

Nonmaleficence refers to preventing harm and intentionally refraining from causing harm on the participants (AOTA, 2010). This principle ensured that that the participants were protected. Any possible issues that may arise and cause potential harm were addressed before the program began. A presentation and group discussion took place during the peer mentoring training to address issues and concerns that mentors’ may encounter during the program. This peer mentoring program was intended to identify and assist students with issues that arise in the transition process and possible solutions to overcome these issues. The peer mentoring seminars may bring up personal experiences and problems so addressing these possible outcomes will be done prior to the program. Peer mentors were familiar with possible topics and issues they may come

across and how to approach these types of situations. Faculty supervisors may be consulted if needed.

Confidentiality and autonomy are ethical principles that were protected within this program. This program “ensured that confidentiality and the right to privacy was respected and maintained regarding all information obtained about the participants” (AOTA, 2010, p. 5). Participants were notified in the first group meeting that all names, any identifying information, written forms, any discussions held in the seminars will be kept confidential. The peer mentoring program was voluntary, therefore, the students had the right to refuse to participate or stop participating in this project at any time. In the first group meeting, all participants were asked to sign a consent form stating they are aware that their confidentiality and autonomy will be protected throughout this program.

Copyright issues were also addressed throughout the development of the training manual project. The project developers received permission from the creators of other universities’ peer mentoring training manuals and educational websites to use any materials in their manual (see Appendix E). All other resources were cited in the manual.

Project Implementation

To promote awareness about the mentorship program, we advertised it in four ways. To recruit mentors, flyers and posters (see Appendix F) were created and posted up on bulletin boards in every building on campus by the end of the 2011 Fall semester. At the same time, notifications and invitations were sent through campus-wide e-mails (see Appendix G) and Facebook. The program was announced and flyers and applications were distributed during the Latinos Unidos club meeting and in Fanjeaux, an all-freshmen dormitory (see Appendix H). Applicants for the living learning community mentor and resident aide positions were also encouraged to apply. By the end of the

2011 – 2012 academic year, eight individuals of different majors, including OT, nursing, political science, and psychology, were recruited to be mentors.

The mentors participated in a day-long training workshop on August 14, 2012, which was facilitated by an occupational therapy faculty member, a first-year advisor from Academic Advising and Success Services, and an occupational therapy graduate student. The structure of the training workshop consisted of skill-building activities and discussions focusing on the major topics, such as communication and conflict resolution. Information sessions were also provided by speakers from different campus departments, including financial aid, academic support services, and the alumni association mentoring program. Training manuals were given to each mentor to refer to as a resource when guiding their mentee students.

From September to December 2012, mentors and mentees were invited to attend 1-hour monthly seminars led by the occupational therapy graduate students, an occupational therapy faculty member, and a first-year advisor from Academic Advising and Success Services. These monthly seminars were structured as informal discussion groups, beginning with a check-in, introducing the topics, leading the group activities and discussions, concluding with reflections, and providing an overview of the next monthly seminar. The first monthly seminar was held on September 28, 2012 and focused on university resources, occupational balance, and time management. The second monthly seminar occurred on October 26, 2012 and offered information about financial literacy and academic advising. During the final monthly seminar on December 3, 2012, students discussed finals, stress management, family, and holidays. The students, both mentors and mentees, enjoyed participating in the discussions and having the opportunity to

express themselves. Through this group process, the members were able to share and validate each other's experiences and learn from one another.

Project Evaluation

To evaluate the outcomes of the peer mentor training session, a pre-test and post-test were conducted with the mentors to assess their knowledge, skills, and preparedness both before and after the training using the Mentoring Competence Inventory from the Peer Mentor Training Companion (2012) (see Appendix E). Out of the eight mentors who attended, seven completed the pre-assessment and six completed the post-assessment. Peer mentors were asked to rate themselves on a scale from 0 to 5 (with 0 being Not Confident and 5 being Completely Confident) on the following topics: Becoming a Peer Mentor, Helping Students Make the Transition to College, Defining Roles, Establishing and Maintaining Relationships, Becoming a Role Model, Developing Cultural Sensitivity, Communicating Effectively, Planning and Problem-Solving, Utilizing Campus Resources, and Evaluating Your Mentoring. The scale had a total of 25 statements, such as: I understand the benefits of diversity on a college campus; I understand how communicating as a mentor is different than communicating in other relationships; and I know how to evaluate my skills and performance.

Prior to the training, not a lot of the mentors fully knew and understood the purpose of BG4FGS, most likely because it was brand new. On the pre-assessment, the mentors gave themselves ratings ranging from 0 – 4 for the statement, “I am aware of the objectives of the first-year experience program on my campus.” On the post-assessment, the mentors gave themselves ratings of 4s and 5s for the same statement. One of the objectives we wanted to achieve with our training was for the mentors to understand their role in BG4FGS. For the statement, “I understand my role within the peer mentor

program,” the mentors gave themselves ratings as low as 2 on the pre-assessment to 4s and 5s on the post-assessment. Therefore, the training helped in clarifying the program’s objectives and they left with a clearer picture of what was expected of them as mentors.

The mentors rated themselves highly on most of the statements on the pre-assessment. There were many 4s and 5s, indicating high confidence in nearly every area except for Planning and Problem-Solving – but even those self-ratings were 3s and 4s. Generally, the mentors seemed already somewhat confident in their ability to be good mentors. For the statement, “I know what it means to be a mentor,” the mentors gave themselves ratings ranging from 3 – 5 on the pre-assessment. On the post-assessment for the same statement, the mentors gave themselves ratings of 4s and 5s. Overall, the mentors felt the training and the activities were helpful and that the training manual provided useful information that broadened their knowledge and answered the questions they had, particularly about communication, campus resources, and self-awareness. Table 1 shows the results of the pre-assessment and post-assessment.

Table 1

Pre-/Post-Assessment Scores of Mentors on Mentoring Competence Inventory

Mentoring Competence Inventory Peer Mentor Training Companion (2012)	PRE-Assessment (7 Mentors)			POST-Assessment (6 mentors)		
	Mean	Median	Range	Mean	Median	Range
1. I know what it means to be a mentor.	3.93	4	3 - 5	4.83	5	4 - 5
2. I know why I want to become a mentor.	4.57	5	4 - 5	5	5	5
3. I can explain why college students need peer mentors.	4	4	3 - 5	5	5	5
4. I am aware of the objectives of the first-year experience program on my campus.	2.71	3	0 - 4	4.83	5	4 - 5
5. I understand how involvement can affect my development as a student.	4.14	4	3 - 5	4.83	5	4 - 5
6. I understand my role within the peer mentor program.	3.71	4	2 - 5	4.83	5	4 - 5
7. I am capable of fulfilling the different roles of a peer mentor.	3.79	3.5	3 - 5	4.67	5	4 - 5
8. I know what students are looking for in a mentoring relationship.	3.71	4	3 - 5	4.33	4	4 - 5
9. I know how to establish an effective mentoring relationship.	4.14	4	3 - 5	4.5	4.5	4 - 5
10. I am comfortable being honest about my strengths and weaknesses.	4.71	5	4 - 5	5	5	5
11. I can identify my own personal values.	4.57	5	4 - 5	5	5	5
12. I understand the benefits of diversity on a college campus.	4.57	5	4 - 5	4.83	5	4 - 5
13. I am aware of my own attitude toward cultural differences.	4.71	5	4 - 5	4.67	5	4 - 5
14. I understand how communicating as a mentor is different than communicating in other relationships.	4.29	4	4 - 5	5	5	5
15. I have effective listening skills.	4.43	4	4 - 5	4.67	5	4 - 5
16. I am aware of my verbal and nonverbal messages.	4.43	4	4 - 5	4.67	5	4 - 5
17. I understand how to effectively give and receive feedback.	4.29	4	4 - 5	4.5	4.5	4 - 5
18. I know how to plan to be an effective mentor.	3.57	4	3 - 4	4.83	5	4 - 5
19. I can demonstrate effective goal setting for other students.	3.71	4	3 - 4	4.83	5	4 - 5
20. I can explain to students why it is important to be aware of campus resources.	4.43	4	4 - 5	5	5	5
21. I am familiar with student support services available on campus.	4.29	4	3 - 5	4.83	5	4 - 5
22. I can recognize the signs of stress and help students identify the resources that can help them manage their stress.	4.36	4.5	3 - 5	4.67	5	4 - 5
23. I know how to evaluate my skills and performance.	4.29	4	4 - 5	4.5	4.5	4 - 5
24. I am comfortable asking others for feedback.	4.57	5	4 - 5	4.83	5	4 - 5
25. I am aware of how my motivation can change.	4.57	5	4 - 5	4.83	5	4 - 5

The mentors were also asked to give feedback through written surveys about the effectiveness and quality of the training session and manual at the end of the training.

When asked about which areas they felt most confident regarding their mentoring knowledge and skills, one said, “Becoming a role model, establishing a relationship, utilizing campus resources.” Another expressed the most confidence in listening skills and time management. Some areas in which the mentors expressed the least confidence included conflicts, addressing boundaries, and approaching and talking to new people. One mentor reported that communication was the most helpful section in the manual, saying that it “helped give more ways to approach different types of students/personalities.” Another said, in general, “All the tips and tricks were good.”

The mentors first received their manuals on the day of their training, so they were not able to go over them in depth and provide more detailed feedback about what they thought needs to be improved. Therefore, in a future training, manuals will be provided beforehand to give mentors adequate time to thoroughly review them. Overall, there was positive feedback about the training. One mentor said it was “Great! I enjoyed everything we did and I’m excited for the program!” Another said it was “Successful, a lot of good info to help us!” A third said, “I enjoyed the peer mentor training. It was very informative and the activities helped us to be more self-aware and how we can become effective mentors to our mentees.”

Conclusion

Discussion

The overall goal of our peer mentoring program was to optimize occupational participation for FGS in a higher education setting. The program developers identified challenges in the transition process for FGS, such as financial, social, and academic issues that might influence educational participation. Based on these factors, the program developers developed a peer mentoring training manual to provide additional supports and resources on these topic areas. The manual acted as an educational tool and resource for the peer mentors. In addition, monthly seminars were held for the mentors and mentees on relevant topics to the transition process.

The process of creating the peer mentor manual required extensive research of the literature as well as other established peer mentoring manuals from other universities. In the early developmental stage, the project developers met with a first-year freshman academic advisor at Dominican to discuss the content that may be beneficial to include in the manual. The project developers also reflected on their first-year college experience

and analyzed what resources they had or would have liked to have during this transition process. Other resources on peer mentoring and first-generation students were gathered in February 2012, at the 31st Annual Conference on the First-Year Experience in San Antonio, Texas. The monthly seminars topics were determined based on the review of the literature and the feedback from the focus groups.

The project underwent some changes from what was originally proposed. The implementation of the mentor workshop took place the summer of 2012 rather than the end of April as the project developers had originally proposed. The reason for this change and the major challenge of this project was recruiting enough peer mentors. There were a total of eight peer mentors. Originally the project developers intended to pair one mentee with one peer mentor but due to the limited number of mentors, some mentors were assigned to have two or three mentees. The project developers believed that even though some peer mentors were responsible for more than one mentee, the outcome would still be beneficial for the mentees because they would have someone act as a guide and also a new friend that may be experiencing several of the same issue.

Overall, the mentors were receptive to the workshop training and the supplemental resource manual. The mentors found that the information that was provided was beneficial and also demonstrated increased knowledge on self-awareness, communication, and available campus resources. The project developers felt that the mentors learned and demonstrated the needed skills to become effective mentors.

Limitations

This project encountered several limitations that impacted its creation and implementation. The first limitation concerned students' self-identification as first-generation status. To gather information about the needs of first-generation students at Dominican without compromising identity, anonymous surveys were created for students to complete. Another related potential limitation is low participation of first-generation students in the peer mentoring program, due to fear of self-disclosure and stigma.

The second limitation was the possibility of having an insufficient number of peer mentors to lead the mentoring program. Flyers and posters were posted around campus and applications were distributed in the occupational therapy department, academic advising and support services office, the freshmen dormitory, and to a campus club. Fifty mentors were expected to be recruited for the program, and five applications were received by the application deadline. To increase the pool of potential candidates, the application deadline was extended. Applicants for the living learning community mentors and resident advisor positions were also encouraged to apply. The project developers believe that the timing of the application deadline resulted in a limited number of applicants. The resident advisor position and living learning community mentors were in the process of being selected and many of the potential mentors may have been waiting to hear on those programs, which may have caused students to become hesitant when considering an application submission for this program. Another reason for such a low number of applications received was that, in addition to upcoming midterms, potential mentors were asked to write a 500 word essay on why they would be a good mentor. Students already have several demands with classes so that may have determined their decision to apply as a mentor.

The third potential limitation concerned the adequacy of training for the peer mentors and their ability to apply their newly gained knowledge in carrying out the peer mentoring program. To ensure that mentors were adequately trained and prepared for their roles, several steps were taken to guide the design of the training. A review of the literature was conducted to analyze various models of effective peer mentor training. Dominican resident advisors were also interviewed about the training they received. Data about the specific needs of Dominican's first-generation students were collected from anonymous focus surveys. The findings from research, interviews, and surveys guided the creation of the training manual and the selection of module topics.

Implications for Occupational Therapy

The college transition represents a major life and occupational transition. Students who have difficulties with this transition are at risk for occupational challenges. This project was specifically catered toward first generation college students; however, this demonstrates that occupational therapy has a role to play in the higher education setting.

During any major life transition, stressors may arise and lead to occupational imbalances. Occupational therapists are capable of guiding young adults through these transitions and teaching students how to cope with their stressors. This may include providing knowledge, resources, and additional environmental supports as well as developing the skill set needed to be a successful college student. By taking a holistic approach and using the guiding principles of the Ecology of Human Performance (EHP) Model, we recognized the students as individuals with unique abilities, skills, and interests navigating through their first year of college. To optimize the students' occupational performance within all areas of college life, we founded a peer mentoring

program to ease the college transition by establishing a fit between the students and the task of succeeding academically and socially within the college environment. We designed a peer mentor training program and manual focusing on the major issues that concerned Dominican first-generation students. We also implemented monthly seminars for the mentors and mentees, facilitating a group process in which students shared personal experiences and participated in reflective discussions and activities. Through community building, students were able to offer and receive support by sharing knowledge and learning from each other, therefore contributing to their growth and providing strategies to optimize their occupational performance in college.

Recommendations

This project gained strong interest on behalf of several staff members, within different academic departments, among the Dominican University community. Due to generated interest and positive feedback, we recommend that additional efforts are invested towards the establishment of this peer mentoring program geared towards first-generation college freshmen students. Past literature and current trends show that Dominican would benefit from this peer mentoring program due to the growing number of first-generation students on campus. We recommend that all freshmen, who self-identify their generational status, are given the opportunity to participate in this program, by advertising this program at freshmen orientation. It is also recommended that this project continue to be further developed by future graduate occupational therapy students.

We also recommend that occupational therapy students find a better way to recruit peer mentors and advertise this program on campus. Due to a low number of applications received, it is recommended that occupational therapy students who continue with this project reach out to professors on campus who may nominate first-generation students as

potential peer mentors for this program. It would also be beneficial to include a description of the peer mentor position and what the title entails onto the application. We encourage future students to look into reformatting the peer mentor application and setting a deadline early on in the recruitment process, in an attempt to increase the return rate.

Once peer mentors are paired with their peer mentees, it is recommended that an activity log is kept and that each meeting is documented. It is suggested that each peer mentor meet with their peer mentee at least once per month outside of the scheduled monthly sessions. In order to promote solidarity among students, it is also recommended that off campus outings take place at least twice during each academic semester.

If there was more funding for this program, the project developers would recommend offering more incentives and rewards for the mentors and mentees. It would be nice if the mentors were able to receive a larger stipend for dedicating their time and effort to this program. Simple rewards such gift cards, money for textbooks, snacks, and such may encourage students to participate but also is a way to show your appreciation for the students.

Further research is needed on the effectiveness of this peer mentoring program. This program focused on the creation and development of the peer mentoring program and the training manual. The mentors' satisfaction of the workshop training was discussed but the actual effectiveness was not.

Summary

The transition to college can be an exciting yet challenging time for first-year students. A smooth and successful transition is influenced by various factors, such as self-esteem, social support, and perceived academic control (Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols,

2007; Ruthig et al., 2009; Tieu et al., 2009). The quality of a student's transition largely impacts his or her decision to continue pursuing a college education and getting a degree. First-generation students are at a higher risk of dropping out of college than non-first-generation students (Prospero & Vohra-Gupta, 2007). Factors contributing to this higher risk include lack of family support, financial illiteracy, and socioeconomic status (Barry, Hudley, Cho, & Kelly, 2008; Collier & Morgan, 2008; Eitel & Martin, 2009). To support students, various universities have implemented peer mentoring programs to facilitate a smooth and successful transition to college. Numerous studies have found these types of programs to be beneficial (Ferrari, 2004; Lennox & Leonard, 2007).

The current low retention and graduation rates of first generation students at Dominican University are consistent with research findings pertaining to this population, and this issue specifically concerns faculty, staff, and students. Therefore, to address this issue, this project utilized the guiding principles of the EHP Model to create and establish a peer mentoring program for first-generation students at Dominican University. The outcomes of this project were to develop a training manual for the peer mentors; implement the peer mentor training, and develop monthly seminars, in order to develop and increase the skills necessary for the trainees to become effective and knowledgeable mentors to their mentees as they navigate through the different arenas and processes of college life. Occupational therapy can help yield the success of this project by facilitating first-generation students' achievement of optimal educational participation within their new environment through the instruction of essential skills and education of the university's academic and social supports.

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Appendix A

First-Generation Mini-Survey Questions

- 1) Are you a first generation college student?
- 2) What year are you?
- 3) Why did you decide to attend Dominican University?
- 4) What are the challenges you faced (or are currently) in the first year?
- 5) What support would you like to see for first generation students?

Appendix B

Sample Group Modules

In addition to the peer mentor training, the project developers want to implement the following group modules to supplement the manual. Other departments and resources will be asked to present on these specific topics.

The Financial Aid Office will be asked to speak on the topic of Financial Literacy. Topics such as budgeting, FAFSA, loans/grants/scholarships, as well as work-study opportunities will be discussed. Literature displays that FGS need additional information and supports in this area.

Additional academic supports will be provided by Academic Advising and Support Services/TLC. The mentors and mentees need to be updated on the academic resources on campus. It is important that these students are aware of how to access tutors and any other test taking or academic workshops so they are able to succeed in their academics.

Career Services would also prepare a presentation for the mentors on how to search for jobs in the community as well as what to expect and how to prepare for an interview. Assistance will also be provided with writing resumes.

Student Life and various on-campus organizations and extracurricular activities will also be invited to speak at one of the group sessions. Students need to be informed of how to get involved on campus and in the community.

Occupational Balance/Time Management would be presented by the occupational therapy students. Time management would be a major focus since this is common challenge students face their first year of college. The mentors and mentees need to understand the importance of occupational balance and how to maintain leisure activities with school and work.

Example 1: Occupational Balance/Time Management

- Ice Breaker: What is your favorite leisure activity and how often do you get to participate in it?
- Content
 - Education and definition of occupational balance
 - Importance of occupational balance
 - How to schedule and plan a weekly schedule
 - Students reflect on time management skills
 - Educate on how to prioritize and include leisure activities into your schedule
 - Students create weekly schedule using strategies learned from group
- Discussion
 - Group discussion and sharing will take place throughout this group because participants are to reflect on their habits and routines and may utilize other student's scheduling and planning techniques or adapt their own strategies to be more organized and efficient so one can maintain occupational balance.

Example 2: Stress Management

- Icebreaker: What do you do to manage and decrease stress?
- Content

Relieving Exercises

Take a Deep Breath and Count to Ten - Taking a deep breath or two adds oxygen to your system, which almost instantly helps you relax! Deep Breathing is an excellent stress reducer. Breathe in while tucking in your tummy and feel the air as it expands your lungs and your chest. Breathe in to the count of four and hold it for two counts. Then exhale to the count of four. Try this breathing techniques two to three times daily and see if you notice any changes.

Stretch - Allowing your body and mind to relax for a few minutes. Try some yoga poses or even a yoga class!

Take a Short Walk - Getting fresh air and some physical activity allows you to get your mind off your problems for a bit.

Progressive Relaxation - Start at your toes and “tell” them to relax. When you feel them relaxing move to your feet, ankles, calves, knees, thighs and so on up your torso to your shoulders and finally to the top of your head.

Dance - Dancing makes everything better! Take a Zumba or aerobics class or just turn up some music and let loose! Dancing has a double advantage in that along with exercise, music is a great stress reducer.

Other Helpful Tips:

- Get a good night's rest.
- Eat healthily.
- Listen to your favorite music.
- Exercise, participate in a sport or engage in fun activity.
- Plan out your time and prioritize.
- Talk to a friend about your problems.
- Take a nap.
- Read a book or watch TV.

Source: <http://collegelife.about.com>

Reflect on Your Stress Management Techniques

Stress is your body’s response to some kind of demand. Some stress can be beneficial but too much is unhealthy. Use this worksheet to identify the stressors your mentee is experiencing and how together you can find useful coping strategies when times get tough.

Causes of Your Stress

What causes your stress? Make a list of what has caused you stress over the past two weeks:

Do you have any major stressors lasting over the past month or year? If so make a list:

What is bothering you the most today?

Stress Symptoms

How do you know when you are feeling stressed? Any type of warning signs?

Coping Skills and Habits

How do you handle your stress? List your usual coping habits:

How effective are these coping habits?

Are there any techniques that you were using before that you are not using now?

List three new copying strategies you would like to try. Examples: exercising, breathing techniques, journaling, etc.

How do you think these new copying strategies and your other effective copying habits can be used to handle your stress?

- Discussion

Example 3: Maintaining Balance Between School and Family

- Ice Breaker: How do you keep yourself organized and what recommendations can you provide your peers? How often do you go home and how often does your family expect you do go home?
- Content

Plan, Organize, & Prioritize

Plan

- 1 Make a “to do” list every day.
 - a Make a list the night before.
 - b Don’t forget to reward yourself.
- 2 USE A PLANNER.
 - a Schedule in school and school related activities
 - b It is very important to stay consistent.
- 3 Plan Review Time
 - a Glance over class notes before class and plan on asking questions if needed

Organize

- 1 Keep an organized work station & always stay organized!
 - a Dedicate a space and a place for everything – this way you will know where everything is at when you need it.
 - b Highlighters? Color pencils?
- 2 Use your time wisely.
 - a If you ride the bus, review your notes!
- 3 Identify resources to help you.
 - a Partner up with a mentor, tutor, librarian, etc – DO NOT BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP!

Prioritize

1. Prioritize your assignments.

a. Always start with the most difficult assignment first – your brain will thank you!

2. It's OK to say NO!

a. Keep your priorities in mind at all times – do not bite off more than you can chew.

- Discussion

- Think of a goal that you want to accomplish within the next week or over the weekend. (This goal probably has at least two things that need to be achieved before the goal can be accomplished.) What is your **long-term goal**? (What is your *deadline* for accomplishing this goal?) What steps must you take to achieve this goal? (*When* will you take them?)


Short- term goal #1:

Short-term goal #2:

Short-term goal #3:

Appendix C

Monthly Session Flyers



- Where mentors and mentees come together -

**Monthly
Get
Together**

**Friday,
Sept. 28, 2012
@ 1:00pm
Garden Room in
Edgehill Mansion**

Discussion Topics:

- On-campus resources
- How are you spending your time?

Questions:

415-257-1380

415-458-3781

Dominican Peer Mentorship Program: A program made by students for students.





Monthly Get Together

- Where mentors and
mentees come together -

Discussion Topics:

- Financial Literacy
- Academic Advising

Friday,
Oct. 26, 2012
@ 1:00pm
Garden Room in
Edgehill Mansion

Questions:

415-257-1380

415-458-3781

Dominican Peer Mentorship Program: A program made by students for students.





Monthly Get Together

Last one of the year!

Discussion Topics:

- Finals:
- De-Stress*
- Family
- Holidays

Monday,
Dec. 3, 2012
12:00 - 1:00pm
in **Caleruega
Dining Hall**

Questions:

415-257-1380

415-458-3781





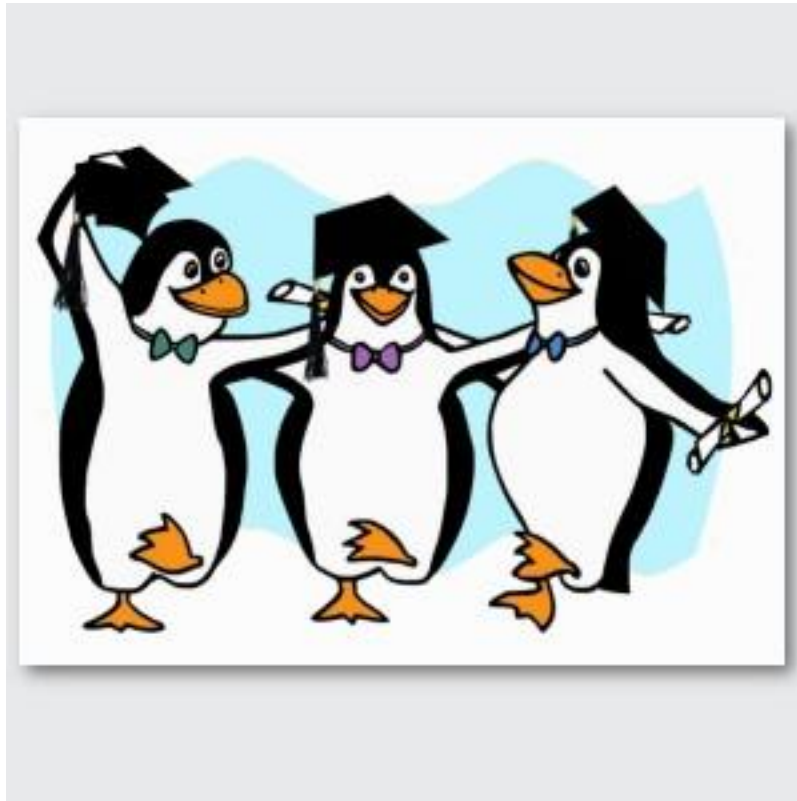
**DOMINICAN
UNIVERSITY**
of CALIFORNIA
1960

Dominican Peer Mentorship Program: A program made by students for students.

Appendix D

BG4FGS: Peer Mentor Training Manual

Bridging the Gap for



First-Generation College Students

Dominican University of California

2012 – 2013 School Year

Peer Mentor Training Manual

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“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful,
committed citizens can change the world;
indeed, it's the only thing that ever has”

Margaret Mead

After completing OT 5103: OT Program Development in the Community, I was inspired, by my professor, Susan Schwartz, to give back to my academic community. During the Fall 2010 semester, I had the opportunity to work with two occupational therapy graduate students in creating a four-week college preparatory course for high school students from low-income, immigrant, communities in San Rafael. For ethnic minority students, especially those who live in rural areas and who will potentially become “first generation” college or university students, the idea of attending a university is a rather foreign concept. For four weeks, my classmates and I served as mentors and educated our students about the importance of applying to and attending college. This particular group project led to my curiosity about literature and research concerning first-generation students. Although now I have developed a sense of pride as a first-generation student, I was finally relieved to understand that I was not alone and that my college experiences and feelings of confusion, isolation, shame, and guilt were actually quite “normal”. The students that I worked with trusted me. They shared their personal stories because they were able to relate to me. At that moment, I realized that I might have had a different experience as a college student at Dominican University if I had come into contact with someone I could have related to. I truly believe that I could have benefited from having a peer mentor as an undergraduate, first-generation student on a small college campus. This is how the concept for this project-based thesis originated.

Victoria Rivera, OTS

MSOT Class of 2012

Introduction

The transition to college is challenging for most students, can be full of excitement for some, and quite overwhelming for others. College presents a time in which many students analyze their academic and personal interests, strengths, weaknesses, and begin to ponder their future successes as a college graduate. However, for those who identify as “first-generation college students,” the idea of completing a college degree may seem challenging due to additional risks and barriers when compared to non-first-generation college students (NFGS).

Who is First-Generation?

- Definition: First-generation college students (FGS) are students who are the first in their families to attend a post-secondary educational institution and whose parents did not obtain a college degree (Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, & Leonard, 2007).

Attending and graduating from a college or university provides a person with greater opportunities, knowledge, and experience. According to the United States Census Bureau (2010), obtaining a college degree is valuable because a college graduate’s annual income is nearly twice that of individuals with only a high school diploma. The experience of going to college is also important because it can provide students with the opportunity to self-explore their own identity and introduces them to new, diverse populations.

In Fall 2011, students who were the first in their families to attend college accounted for 28% of the student body population at Dominican University of California. In 2010, approximately 25% of first-generation college freshmen did not continue their education at Dominican after the first year (J. Li, personal communication, September 28, 2011). These statistics have raised a level of concern among several faculty, staff, and students because if a student leaves school during his or her freshman year of college, then he or she is less likely to return.

This manual will serve as a guide and provide resources needed to assist you in facilitating any challenges that may arise for you or your FGS mentee.



Mission:

To support first-generation students to become successful first-generation college graduates of Dominican University of California.

Vision:

Bridging the Gap for First-Generation Students (BG4FGS) will be a recognized model of an effective and comprehensive peer-mentoring program providing peer mentors with strategies and resources to help their peer mentees succeed throughout their first year of college.

The Transition Process

Differences between High School and College

- New Academic Standards
- More Pressure
- Differences in Teaching Styles
- Attendance
- Roommates
- Social Activities
- Time Management
- Change in Routines and Habits (sleeping, eating, studying)
- Questions About Identity and Values

A transition is defined as “any event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles” (Santft et al., 2008, p. 20). Many college students have a hard time with this process because it can be overwhelming due to all of the changes occurring in a new unfamiliar environment.

Factors Affecting the Transition to College

- New Environment
- Time Management
- Studying Effectively
- Meeting New People/Making New Friends
- Accessing Campus Resources
- Involvement in Student Life or Extracurricular Activities

FG Specific Factors Affecting the Transition to College

- Lack of Family Support
- Financial Literacy/Support
- Living Situation (off-campus or commuting)
- Decreased Self-Efficacy



Chilly Says:

“Please refer to Activity 2.1: Analyzing the Transition to College on p. 22 of the Peer Mentor Companion”

How Mentors Can Help Make Successful Transitions

As mentors you are able to help new students make decisions and problem solve as well as provide insight because you have struggled with the same things. Your experiences can help guide your students through the transition process. By becoming a trusted individual, the students you interact with look to you as a role model and seek your guidance and advice.

The ABCs of Mentoring Students in Transition

- **A**cknowledge the student's reality
- **B**e strategic and student-focused
- **C**ommit to a plan of action!



Chilly Says:

“Please refer to p. 26 of the Peer Mentor Companion for a thorough description of the ABCs”

A mentor is . . .

- **A knowledgeable and experienced guide who teaches** (and learns) through a commitment to the mutual growth of both mentee and mentor.
- **A caring, thoughtful, and humane facilitator** who provides access to people, places, experiences, and resources outside the mentee's routine environment.
- **A role model** who exemplifies in word and deed what it means to be an ethical, responsible, and compassionate human being.
- **A trusted ally, or advocate**, who works with (not for) the mentee and on behalf of the mentee's best interests and goals.

Source: <http://www.csun.edu/eop/htdocs/peermentoring.pdf>

What is a Peer Mentor?

- Someone who cares about your dreams.
- Someone who is willing to spend time and effort to help you succeed.
- Someone who has expertise, experience, and resource networks to help you.
- Someone who demonstrates effective behavior and is trustworthy.
- Someone who teaches critical thinking and study skills.
- Someone who is willing to be there to talk to and support you.
- Someone who is a positive thinker.



Mentoring...

- Mentoring, like leadership, is a process of influencing others. There is no tool more powerful for influencing (Mentoring Circles, 2010)
- Mentoring is a collaborative, mutually beneficial partnership
- 95% of mentoring participants said the experience motivated them to do their very best (The War for Talent, 2001)

Benefits of Bridging the Gap Peer Mentoring Program

Mentees benefit by....

- Receiving the support and guidance of a peer
- Receiving assistance with academic endeavors
- Experiencing greater self-esteem and motivation to succeed
- Receiving encouragement to stay in school and graduate
- Improving interpersonal relationships with peers, teachers, and classmates

Mentors benefit by...

- Increasing their involvement in the school community
- Recognizing they can make a difference
- Making new friends
- Reciprocal learning
- Fulfillment and satisfaction of helping others
- Pay it forward mentality – your mentees will be encouraged to do the same after a positive experience. Empower others to succeed!
- Having the opportunity to enhance their professional resume

The university benefits by....

- Increasing students' retention
- Increasing students' satisfaction with the university
- Providing a connectedness and sense of belonging

Source: <http://bin.lps.org/manila/vip/TeamMatesHandbook.pdf>



Mentor Roles and Responsibilities

1. Establish a positive, personal relationship with your mentee.
2. Help your mentee to develop academic and life skills.
3. Assist mentee in accessing academic and university resources.
4. Enhance your mentee's ability to interact comfortably and productively with people/groups from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds.
5. Create a sense of belonging, create a sense of community, establish relationships and networking opportunities with other campus programs, majors, etc.
6. Spread awareness and work collaboratively as a campus.

Source: <http://www.csun.edu/eop/htdocs/peermentoring.pdf>



Building a Helping Relationship

Respect is the foundation for a strong and effective relationship – and this means respecting yourself as well as your peer mentee.

The Helping Relationship

- **Is Meaningful**
 - As a peer mentor, you and your mentee should benefit from a helping relationship. A relationship is meaningful because it is relevant. It involves mutual commitment between you and your peer mentee.
- **Involves Feelings**
 - Self-disclosure may produce many feelings for both you and your peer mentee. Be aware of both verbal and non-verbal styles of communication.
- **Demonstrates Respect for Individual Self-Worth**
 - Shame, preconceived notions, and deceit are not present in a relationship built on respect for a person's self-worth. Peer mentors and peer mentees should be able to relate to one another as authentic and trustworthy human beings.
- **Takes Place by Mutual Consent**
 - Genuine help is to be given and received by the peer mentor and peer mentee.
- **Involves Communication and Interaction**
 - Both the peer mentor and peer mentee express and receive knowledge, information, and feelings. The more clear and articulate the communication between you and your mentee, the more meaningful the relationship.
- **Is Designed to Produce Change**
 - If the relationship was helpful, the peer mentor and peer mentee will both describe the change that has happened as positive.

Source: Students Helping Students, 2010,

How to Build a Collaborative Relationship

Select one suggestion below. As long as you have the intention to build collaborative relationships, your actions will produce results.

- Take time to observe how you interact with your peers. Carve out a week and do this activity. Take notes right after you worked with another peer mentor or your peer mentee. How did you feel about the interaction and how did you behave? You can't change behavior if you aren't aware of what you are doing.
- Give up control – we all like to have things done our way, though if you are serious about collaborating with your peers, you have to be flexible and open to many options.
- Focus on the situation or issue, not on the person
- Always treat others with respect. Insure that their self-esteem is not impacted by your actions. Replace a complaint with a solution.
- Be willing to share the credit with others. Recognize their work, no matter how small. It may be small today, but tomorrow this person will go out of their way to support you because you appreciated them.
- Initiative – reach out to make things better and help others.



Cultural Competence and Diversity

Cultural competence: refers to an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures. Cultural competence comprises four components:

- (a) awareness of one's own cultural worldview
- (b) attitude towards cultural differences
- (c) knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews
- (d) cross-cultural skills

Developing cultural competence results in an ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures.

As a FGS, cultural values may or may not play a more dominant role in your life. It is important that you have an understanding of your values before you discuss this with your mentee.



Chilly Says:

“Please refer to Activity 6.3: Helping Others Identify and Clarify Their Values on p. 102 of the Peer Mentor Companion”

What is your *Cultural Perspective* and how does it influence your identity?



Chilly Says:

“Please refer to Activity 7.1: Defining Cultural Perspectives on p. 110 of the Peer Mentor Companion”

Exploring Diversity

“Never judge someone by the way he looks

Or a book by the way it's covered;

For inside those tattered pages, there's a lot to be discovered”

— Stephen Cosgrove

An exciting part of college is that you will meet and work with people from different age groups and backgrounds. At Dominican University you may be part of a study group that includes a grandparent, full-time worker, a minister, veteran, or a recent amputee. Because of this variety, college students need to be especially sensitive to other’s values and perspectives.

A simple definition for *diversity* is “difference” or “variety”. Another term heard when diversity is discussed in a college setting is *multiculturalism*. Although the two words have different implications, they often have the same motivation – to expose the community to a variety of ideas, cultures, viewpoints, beliefs, and backgrounds.

Stereotypes

Stereotyping is an oversimplified opinion of someone.

Can you list some common stereotypes you have encountered?

Prejudice

Prejudice is literally “pre-judging” a person or situation without knowing the facts. Prejudice is often based on stereotyping, showing how stereotyping can easily become negative. Prejudice is a judgment based on little or no information. It is based on ignorance and lack of information.

Has there ever been a time in your life where you felt discriminated? If so, how did this make you feel?

Tips for Appreciating Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Diversity

- ❖ Work to eliminate all racial, ethnic, or cultural stereotype or slurs from your thoughts and vocabulary. Stop yourself before you speak and ask, “Is this a stereotype or could it be offensive to someone?”
- ❖ Racial, ethnic, and cultural jokes, images, and cartoons are insensitive at best, harassment at worst. Avoid making fun of others heritage. Be sensitive to others’ backgrounds.
- ❖ Learn more about your heritage and culture
- ❖ Strive to learn more about cultures that are new and different to you.
- ❖ Participate in college and community cultural celebrations.
- ❖ Attend seminars, guest lectures, and artistic performances about different cultures and countries.
- ❖ Do not tolerate others who exhibit racial and cultural insensitivity. If you don’t feel comfortable saying something to them, then avoid them, then avoid them and similar situations in the future.

Source: The First-Generation College Experience, 2012, page 57

Communication

Importance of Communication Skills

Peer mentors need to be well equipped with the tools to communicate effectively with their mentees. In fact, being a good communicator is half the battle won. After all, if you speak and listen well, then there is little or no scope for misunderstanding. Thus, keeping this fact in mind, the primary reasons for misunderstanding is due to inability to speak well or listen effectively.

Communication skills are the ability the peer mentors display in consistently demonstrating the ability to effectively communicate with their mentees in a personal, yet professional, manner. The peer mentors use language and convey information so that it is received and understood by their mentees.

Source: <http://www.communicationskills.co.in/definition-of-communication-skills.htm>

Communication skills include:

- **Listening** – fully participate in a conversation by being an active listener and utilizing some simple counseling skills such as reflecting, encouraging and asking questions. Be aware of how your body language can affect a conversation.
- **Observing** – be aware of how the student is presenting the message or ideas through body language and unspoken words.
- **Communicating** – be very clear in your presentation of facts and opinions.
- **Decentering** – try to understand what the student is saying, not by how you hear it, but in how they are approaching and thinking about what they are saying. Communicate with them in ways they will understand.

Source: Peer Mentor Handbook, Iowa State University

The Three Components of Communication

1. Verbal Messages - The words you choose
2. Nonverbal Messages - Your body language
3. Paraverbal Messages - How you say the words

The Three Components Are Used To:

1. Send clear, concise messages
2. Receive and correctly understand messages sent to you

I. SENDING MESSAGES

Effective Verbal Messages:

1. Are brief, succinct, and organized
2. Are free of jargon
3. Do not create resistance in the listener



I get it !!

Nonverbal Messages:

1. Account for about 55% of what is perceived and understood by others
2. Are conveyed through your facial expressions, postures, and gestures

Examples:

Eyes can express many different emotions, including joy, sadness, and anger

Facing someone while sitting quietly with hands loosely folded on lap implies a feeling of anticipation and interest. Crossing your arms across your chest will have the opposite effect.

The action of gathering up your materials and reaching for a purse signals a desire to end the conversation.

Paraverbal Messages:

1. Account for about 38% of what is perceived and understood by others
2. Include the tone, pitch, and pacing of your voice

Important Points to Remember:

- When you are angry or excited, your speech tends to become more rapid and higher pitched
- When you are bored or feeling down, your speech tends to slow and take on a monotone quality
- When you are feeling defensive, your speech is often abrupt

Importance of Consistency

Peer mentors should strive to send consistent verbal, nonverbal, and paraverbal messages. When your messages are inconsistent, your mentees may become confused. Inconsistency can also create a lack of trust and undermine the chance to build a good peer relationship.

II. RECEIVING MESSAGES

Listening:

1. Requires concentration and energy
2. Involves a psychological connection with the speaker
3. Includes a desire and willingness to try and see things from another's perspective
4. Requires that we suspend judgment and evaluation



Nonverbal Listening Skills:

1. Giving full physical attention to the speaker

- Leaning gently towards the speaker
- Facing the other person squarely
- Maintaining an open posture with arms and legs uncrossed
- Maintaining an appropriate distance between you and the speaker
- Moving your body in response to the speaker (i.e. appropriate head nodding, facial expressions)

2. Being aware of the speaker's nonverbal messages

- You gain insight and develop hunches of the speaker's feeling and intensity of that feeling
- Use reflective listening skills (see below) to check the accuracy of your hunches by expressing, in your own words, what is being communicated

Verbal Listening Skills:

1. Paying attention to the words and feelings that are being expressed

- It may be necessary to deal directly with the relationship problem by openly acknowledging and naming the feelings and having an honest discussion about them prior to moving into the substantive issues

2. Using reflective listening tools such as paraphrasing, reflecting, summarizing, and questioning to increase understanding of the message and help the speaker tell his or her story

- Paraphrasing - A brief, succinct statement reflecting the content of the speaker's message

- Example: “You would like for your parents to understand that it would be difficult for you to come home every weekend because of schoolwork.”
- Reflecting Feeling - Restating or paraphrasing the feeling of what was heard in a manner that conveys understanding
 - Example: “You feel stressed about managing your college expenses.”
- Summarizing - A statement of the main ideas and feelings to show understanding
 - Example: “You are frustrated because your parents expect you to come home every weekend to help run the family store. You want to help support the family, but at the same time, you want to keep up with your schoolwork and have time to hang out with your friends.”
- Questioning - Asking open-ended questions to gain information, encourage the speaker to tell his or her story, and gain clarification
 - Example: “What are your concerns about going to college?”



Chilly Says:

“Please refer to Activity 8.3: Implementing Questioning Techniques on p. 138 of the Peer Mentor Companion.”

III. BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Verbal Communication Barriers

- Attacking (Interrogating, criticizing, blaming, shaming)
- “You” Messages (Moralizing, preaching, advising, diagnosing)
- Showing Power (Ordering, threatening, commanding, directing)
- Shouting
- Name-calling
- Refusing to Speak



Nonverbal Communication Barriers

- Flashing or Rolling Eyes
- Quick or Slow Movements
- Gestures Made with Exasperation
- Slouching, Hunching Over
- Poor Personal Care
- Doodling
- Staring at People
- Avoiding Eye Contact
- Excessive Fidgeting with Materials

Source: <http://www.directionservice.org/cadre/section4.cfm>

Language and Etiquette

Please refer to the Appropriate/Ethical Behavior Contract on Page 48

12 Principles of Good Practice

When Working With Your Mentee

Principle 1: Respond within the limits of your training and skill

- When you receive requests for information, assistance, or support that require skills beyond your training, expertise, or jurisdiction, you must know your personal limits and not exceed the boundaries of your knowledge that may be lacking. If possible, you can briefly explain the reason or limits of your assistance without coming across as rejecting the student you are mentoring.

Principle 2: Acknowledge your limits openly by saying that you do not know rather than providing false expertise

- Do not play the role of expert. Saying “I don’t know” is much more helpful than faking it. When confronted with this situation, acknowledge your shortcomings and work with your mentee to find the right answer.

Principle 3: When in doubt, consult!

- When you are confronted with a situation you are uncertain about or that may involve some conflict or dilemma, it is critical to consult with your supervisor (Christina Jimenez or Stacy Frauwirth). Your supervisor can be your greatest resource.

Principle 4: Maintain peer privacy and confidentiality as long as privacy protects the person being helped

- Your relationship with mentees receiving your mentorship is private and the helping agreement implies that you will not divulge personal data with them. This standard of conduct protects the privacy of the individual, and it also promotes a level of trust that makes self-disclosure of personal information possible. But, there are expectations to this rule. If you receive information that reveals a potential danger to yourself, your mentee, or others, then you must report it to your supervisor and proper authorities.

What would you say to a student who tells you that he or she wants to “end it”, but makes you promise not to tell anyone about it?

Principle 5: Show respect and dignity for other individuals

- Tolerance and acceptance of both the individual mentee and his or her circumstances are important prerequisites for providing any kind of assistance. No student with whom you are working with should be made to feel that you are condescending to him or her while you are serving in your role as a peer mentor. All information should be maintained with respect and dignity.



Principle 6: Understand your own personal bias and avoid imposing this bias on others

- As a peer mentor, you should be careful to not impose your personal bias on other students or to attempt to influence or prejudice the student's views and beliefs. This might include criticism of other individuals or authorities. Everyone has personal opinions and biases, but they should always be stated with person ownership and without a sense of pressuring or convincing another to accept that opinion.

Principle 7: Continue to deal appropriately when working with persons for whom you feel some aversion.

- You may find that in your role as a peer mentor, you may meet a student for whom you may feel some dislike or other strong emotional reaction. In these cases, you must consider why the aversion is being experienced and carefully assess whether these feelings will interfere with the role you are to maintain.

Principle 8: Act appropriately when working with persons for whom you feel attraction

- You may meet a peer mentee whom you feel interest for or even attracted to. You may even recognize that you would like to date this person or be friends outside the activities of the job. These types of relationships can compromise your helping role and may set up problems of dual relationships. You should consider how to avoid and deal with these dilemmas before they occur. If an incident should occur, talk to your supervisor about it and seek advice.

Principle 9: Knowing and managing your emotional response, while helping another, is crucial to your own well being and ability to help

- In your role as a peer mentor, you may evoke emotionally charge reactions from students ranging from anger and irritation to grief and sorrow. Peer mentors must be prepared to handle and even control emotional reactions by learning to set limits, accept but not absorb emotional output, and channel reactions through referral to appropriate resources on campus. On some occasions, a student reaction will stimulate parallel feelings from a peer mentor's own personal experience. As a peer mentor, you should know how to follow up and use personal resources of support to debrief such encounters.

❖ **Counseling Services at Dominican University**
Free and Confidential Services

For Appointments: 415-485-3258

Principle 10: Take responsible action if you learn about illegal behavior

- In your role, you may become aware, from a student response, of behavior that is illegal or potentially unethical. In this instance, you may confront the behavior in a manner that points out the social norms and consequences in a manner that suggests that you are not the person to judge the behavior, but instead to point out the clear social expectations.

A peer mentee sends you a 'friend request' of Facebook and you decide to accept that request. This student will often post status updates and pictures about his or her wild and eventful weekends. One night, the student sends you a message and asks you if you know where he or she can buy drugs such as ecstasy, mushrooms, or acid. What should you say or do?

Principle 11: Remember that as a peer mentor, you are a role model!

- Peer mentors are student role models, both on campus and in the community. This means you are obligated to maintain congruence between what you say to fellow students in your role and how you act in other facets in your life. For example, if you help others with problems in the area of time management but you are the one who is always late to meetings, or if you give a presentation on responsible drinking yet get picked up for a DUI, much of your credibility as a peer mentor is quickly and decidedly undermined.

Principle 12: Maintain integrity and do not promote hearsay in commenting on professional relationships with others

- In your role, students will ask for your opinion about the quality of other professionals, especially the faculty at your campus and the type of classroom experience they offer. We believe you should refrain from giving negative opinions or at least limit any potentially critical comment to objective facts about a campus professional or agency. Everyone experiences other people differently. What may have been a poor experience for you could be quite excellent for others.

Source: Students Helping Students, 2010, page 268

Code of Conduct in the Peer Mentor-Mentee Relationship

- A peer mentor should use respectful language when speaking with his or her mentee. Also, you should not use language that may be considered as offensive or derogatory.
- A peer mentor should not accept money, goods, or services from a mentee as payment for services.
- A peer mentor should not use the mentee relationship for personal, religious, political, or business gains.
- A peer mentor should not sexually harass or become sexually involved with a mentee, a mentee's relatives, or other individuals with whom the mentee has a close relationship. The peer mentor relationship is different from a friendship. Most friendships are two-sided, meaning that both individuals support and help each other. For the most part, a peer mentor relationship is one-sided. As a peer-mentor, your role is to support your mentee and to help your mentee meet his or her goals. Remember that things you do or say are for the benefit of your mentee.
- Because the peer mentor relationship is a helping relationship, it is also important to understand when requests for help are reasonable and when they are not. Just as you should not take advantage of your peer mentor relationships, you also should not let your mentee to take advantage of you or your willingness to help (for example, lending him or her money). If you are unsure, it is best to ask your peer mentor supervisor before agreeing with a request from your mentee.

Source: http://www.uic.edu/orgs/empower/supporting%20documents/mentor_manual.htm



Boundaries in Mentoring

All relationships have boundaries or rules about what is and isn't permitted. Usually in peer mentoring, the mentor brings up the topic of boundaries (sometimes calling them "expectations" or "limits") and also guides the discussion toward agreement about which ones the partnership will honor.

It is suggested that you and your mentees come to agreements about the following and more:

- How often, where, and how long (in weeks or months) you'll meet
- Who will "manage" the relationship and how that will look
- Communication in between your meetings
- Areas to talk about and work on and what's off limits
- When you might refer mentees to someone else for additional assistance
- Style preferences (e.g., how each of you would like to give and receive feedback, how you prefer to communicate, punctuality habits)
- Mentee "homework," if any
- Physical/touch boundaries (What's comfortable? Are each of you "huggers"...or not?)
- Confidentiality (what is strictly between you, what you as the mentor must report, if anything)
- Gifts

Handling Boundary Dilemmas

Even when you discuss a set of working rules or boundaries, you'll probably forget to cover something...or your mentees will misinterpret (or even ignore) what you agreed upon. When this happens, take it in stride. Patiently, and yet firmly, reiterate your agreement (or your preference if the rule wasn't clarified) to your mentees, and try again.

If your mentee continues to push the boundaries and take unfair advantage of your mentoring, you may have to be assertive and even call a halt to the relationship. Here is what is recommended to do related to the dilemmas mentioned in the list above. (Let us assume you didn't clarify the rules about these in the beginning of your relationship.)

If your mentee...

- **gave you an expensive gift**

"This _____ is incredibly beautiful/nice, and I'm honored that you think this highly of me. I know you're giving me a big compliment and saying thanks with your gifts. I'm not willing to take it, and I hope you'll understand. I would be open to exchanging cards or small souvenirs on our birthdays and when we bring the formal part of our relationship to a close. How does that sound?"

- **asked if he or she could come over to your dorm room or home**

If you prefer to keep the relationship strictly business and not social at this point: *“We might consider doing that later. Thanks for suggesting it! For now, I’d like to concentrate on our meetings elsewhere.”* (You could continue more discussion about both of your social etiquette experiences and preferences.)

- **told you about a serious psychological diagnosis he or she has had since childhood**

“I’m glad you trusted me enough to share that with me. What a challenge you’ve had over the years! You cover it well. You know I care about you, and I want you to find someone who can help you take the next improvement step related to this concern.”

- **phoned you at 2:00 a.m. to talk**

“Is this an emergency? (If not) I prefer we do our talking during the day” or *“Please, no more calls before 8:00 a.m. and after 9:00 p.m.”* Decide what you want your role to be in the case of an emergency, which would be extremely rare if it occurs at all.

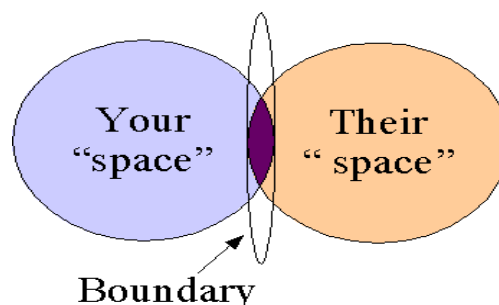
- **asked you a very personal question**

“I’d prefer to keep that topic off limits between us.”

- **flirts with you or is attracted to you**

Comment on what you observed. Let him or her know you are enjoying this relationship and want to be sure he or she knows the relationship is strictly mentor-mentee. The focus must be on helping him or her grow and reach the goals the two of you set: *“Lately, I have noticed that you have been acting differently around me. I want to let you know that I am here for you and do care about you, as your mentor. I enjoy our relationship as mentor and mentee, and I want to help you during your transition to college and help you reach your goals.”*

Source: http://www.mentoringgroup.com/html/articles/mentor_35.htm



Conflict Resolution

- **A conflict is more than just a disagreement.** It is a situation in which one or both parties perceive a threat (whether or not the threat is real).
- **Conflicts continue to fester when ignored.** Because conflicts involve perceived threats to our well-being and survival, they stay with us until we face and resolve them.
- **We respond to conflicts based on our perceptions** of the situation, not necessarily to an objective review of the facts. Our perceptions are influenced by our life experiences, culture, values, and beliefs.
- **Conflicts trigger strong emotions.** If you aren't comfortable with your emotions or able to manage them in times of stress, you won't be able to resolve conflict successfully.
- **Conflicts are an opportunity for growth.** When you're able to resolve conflict in a relationship, it builds trust. You can feel secure, knowing your relationship can survive challenges and disagreements.



How to Appropriately Respond to Conflict

- The capacity to recognize and respond to the things that matter to the other person
- Calm, non-defensive, and respectful reactions
- A readiness to forgive and forget, and to move past the conflict without holding resentments or anger
- The ability to seek compromise and avoid punishing
- A belief that facing conflict head on is the best thing for both sides

Tips for Resolving Conflict

- **Communicate-** in an assertive, clear and non-blaming manner, using “I” statements.
- **Listen for what is felt as well as said.** When we listen we connect more deeply to our own needs and emotions, and to those of other people. Listening in this way also strengthens us, informs us, and makes it easier for others to hear us. Everyone in the conflict should be involved and describe their perception of the situation.
- **Make conflict resolution the priority rather than winning or "being right."** Maintaining and strengthening the relationship, rather than “winning” the argument, should always be your first priority. Be respectful of the other person and his or her viewpoint.
- **Focus on the present.** If you’re holding on to old hurts and resentments, your ability to see the reality of the current situation will be impaired. Rather than looking to the past and assigning blame, focus on what you can do in the here-and-now to solve the problem.
- **Pick your battles.** Conflicts can be draining, so it’s important to consider whether the issue is really worthy of your time and energy.
- **Be willing to forgive.** Resolving conflict is impossible if you’re unwilling or unable to forgive.
- **Know when to let something go.** If you can’t come to an agreement, agree to disagree.

Source: <http://helpguide.org/mental>

Conflict Resolution



Meet and talk about your problem.

Take turns talking and listening.

Think of a solution together. What will help you solve your problem? Make a plan.

Put your plan into action.

Now It's Your Turn!

Read the following two scenarios.

Scenario 1: *Your roommate has been raised in a very religious household. He or she strongly believes that homosexuality is wrong. You have admitted to having several gay friends and have stated that you do not share the same opinions. Your friends from home decided to surprise you for your birthday visiting you at school. Your roommate usually goes home every weekend and said that it would be fine for your friends to stay the night while he or she is gone. You accidentally mentioned that your friend is gay. Your roommate suddenly changes his or her mind and decided to stay in town for the weekend before telling you that he or she feels uncomfortable having strangers around.*

Scenario 2: *You are very close to your family and have been raised believing that 'family always comes first.' You have become an active member in the campus community and have recently joined student government. Your parents expect you to come home every weekend to help babysit your younger siblings and to help take care of your elderly grandmother. You try to explain to your family that you are now obligated to stay on campus on most weekends because you are responsible for hosting several activities for students. Your parents do not understand why you are now "putting your friends first" and believe that you have abandoned your priorities, including your culture. You want to please your family as much as you'd like to please your peers, but realistically, you know that you cannot be in two different places at one time.*

Using the conflict resolution information provided above and the Conflict Resolution Worksheets on the following page, how would you deal with these particular situations?



CONFLICT RESOLUTION WORKSHEET

Getting to the resolution of conflict involves the true understanding of four elements of the conflict:

1. The Issue.
2. Your Position.
3. The Other Person's Position.
4. The Context of the Issue.

Use the following set of questions to review these key elements in order to plan and resolve a conflict you or your team may have.

- 1. The Issue:** Define the issue. What is the real situation? What is the "ideal" situation?

- 2. Your Position:** Describe the conflict from your point of view. List your needs and wants, your proposed solution(s), and why you think your solution(s) should work.

- How much power do you have in this conflict?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

- How much do you trust this person or each person?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

- How important is the resolution of this conflict to you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

- How much time is there to discuss the issues around this conflict?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

- List the actual behaviors of the other party that contribute to the conflict.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Adapted from the Federal Team Leader's "Idea-A-Day Guide", 2001

3. **The Other Person's Position:** Explain what you think the other person wants, needs, what you think his/her proposed solution(s) is/are, and why you think it will or will not work.

- How much power does the other person have in this conflict?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

- How much does the other person trust you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

- How important is the resolution of this conflict to the other person?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

- How much time does the other person think is available to discuss the issues around this conflict?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

- List the actual behaviors you think the other person would say you exhibit that contribute to the conflict.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

4. **The Context of the Issue:** List the things, people, policies, procedures, etc., that may be contributing to the conflict.

What is the basis of the problem? (Check one)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Differences in beliefs and values | <input type="checkbox"/> Different goals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Role pressures | <input type="checkbox"/> Status |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Perceptual differences | |

Based on the analysis of the above elements, check which five of the conflict resolution strategies is the most feasible

	NOT FEASIBLE	SOMEWHAT FEASIBLE	MOST FEASIBLE
Accommodating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Avoiding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Collaborating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Competing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Compromising	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Which conflict resolution strategy did you choose? _____

Using this strategy, what actions do you plan?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Adapted from the Federal Team Leader's "Idea-A-Day Guide", 2001

Goal-Setting

Guidelines for Making Goals

- Set goals by writing them down.
- Make your goals attainable and reasonable.
- Break larger goals into smaller goals that will lead to fulfillment.
- Think of setting goals in these time frames: 1 week, 1 month, 1 semester, 1 year, 5 years, or 10 years.
- Regularly review your goals and make changes as necessary to stay on track and decrease stress.
- Enlist supportive people (family, friends, colleagues, professors, and/or counselors) to help you achieve your goals.
- Make an effort to eliminate anything that keeps you from focusing on your goals.
- Think positive about yourself and your progress.

Source: Baldwin, A. (2012). The first-generation college experience. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.



Follow the SMART Model:

S = Specific, **M** = Measurable, **A** = Attainable, **R** = Reasonable, **T** = Timely

- **Specific**

- Answer “what, why, and how?”
- Clearly define what you are going to do.

- **Measurable**

- Set target dates (daily, weekly, monthly, and/or yearly) to measure progress.

- **Attainable**

- Set the “just-right challenge” for you.
- A goal needs to stretch you slightly so you feel you can do it and it will need a real commitment from you.

- **Reasonable**

- The goal is do-able.
- Devise a realistic plan.
- Set the bar high enough for a satisfying achievement!

- **Timely**

- Set a timeframe.
- Putting an endpoint on your goal gives you a clear target to work towards.

Source: <http://www.goal-setting-guide.com/smart-goal-setting-a-surefire-way-to-achieve-your-goals>

**Chilly Says:**

“Please refer to Activity 10.4: Setting Effective Goals on p. 179 of the Peer Mentor Companion.”

Your Turn to Practice Goal Writing!

Set and write two goals you would like to accomplish with your mentee, using the SMART model.

Goal

#1: _____

Goal

#2: _____

Occupational Balance

As college student, one of the hardest challenges is balancing school and fun. Often times, students commit to one or the other and have a trouble distinguishing that fine line between work and play. In order to maintain health and well-being, students need to learn how to balance their time and leisure activities.

Time Management Tips

- Use a Calendar-It can be a planner or it can be a phone. No matter the method, find a calendar that works for you!
- Write Everything Down- and it is helpful if you write it all in the same place!
- Be Flexible-Things come up! Leave room in your calendar so that you can move things around a little when needed.
- Plan Ahead-If you have an important term paper due at the end of the semester, work backward from the due date and schedule the time into your calendar before it's too late.
- Plan for the Unexpected-What happens if you get the flu the day before a project is due? Expect the unexpected so you don't have to spend more unplanned time trying to fix your mistakes.

Don't Forget to Plan for Leisure Time

- Use fun activities, as motivators-Nothing feels better than rewarding yourself after completing something that you needed to do. Use this to your advantage to speed up your work.
- Make time for things you enjoy-Schedule in these activities; otherwise, you are more prone to burn out.
- Take care of yourself-Make sure you are eating healthy, drinking lots of fluids, and anything else that keeps you healthy.
- Schedule sleep time-With a busy schedule, students often skip out on sleep. Sleep is so important. Always make sure to schedule yourself an adequate amount of time each night to rest and recuperate.
- Alone time-Being with friends is always a good time, but don't forget to set time for things you can do alone.
- Set boundaries-Don't let homework take over your life. Balance is needed. Set the number of hours you are going to dedicate to work and the time you will dedicate to enjoying yourself.

Time Management/Organization Worksheet

List Your Activities

Make a list of ALL your activities for the week:

From this list divide it into 4 categories

- List activities that come at fixed times and cannot be changed (e.g., classes, work responsibilities, doctor's appointment).

- List class assignments and meetings (e.g., study groups, meeting with your advisor, etc.).

- List recreation and social activities.

- List things you want to do, but do not think you have time for?

Create a Week Plan

Take the activities listed above and write on a week's calendar. Take the time to look through your syllabi and review assignments.

Prioritize

If your week is looking very full and there is no way you are going to get all of these activities done, you must now prioritize! Now with your lists number 1-4, ranging from 1 being very important and urgent and 4 being not important or urgent.

Stress Relieving Exercises

Take a Deep Breath and Count to Ten - Taking a deep breath or two adds oxygen to your system, which almost instantly helps you relax! Deep Breathing is an excellent stress reducer. Breathe in while tucking in your tummy and feel the air as it expands your lungs and your chest. Breathe in to the count of four and hold it for two counts. Then exhale to the count of four. Try this breathing techniques two to three times daily and see if you notice any changes.

Stretch - Allowing your body and mind to relax for a few minutes. Try some yoga poses or even a yoga class!

Take a Short Walk - Getting fresh air and some physical activity allows you to get your mind off your problems for a bit.

Progressive Relaxation - Start at your toes and “tell” them to relax. When you feel them relaxing move to your feet, ankles, calves, knees, thighs and so on up your torso to your shoulders and finally to the top of your head.

Dance - Dancing makes everything better! Take a Zumba or aerobics class or just turn up some music and let loose! Dancing has a double advantage in that along with exercise, music is a great stress reducer.

Other Helpful Tips:

- Get a good night's rest.
- Eat healthily.
- Listen to your favorite music.
- Exercise, participate in a sport or engage in fun activity.
- Plan out your time and prioritize.
- Talk to a friend about your problems.
- Take a nap.
- Read a book or watch TV.

Source: <http://collegelife.about.com>

Reflect on Your Stress Management Techniques

Stress is your body's response to some kind of demand. Some stress can be beneficial but too much is unhealthy. Use this worksheet to identify the stressors your mentee is experiencing and how together you can find useful coping strategies when times get tough.

Causes of Your Stress

What causes your stress? Make a list of what has caused you stress over the past two weeks:

Do you have any major stressors lasting over the past month or year? If so make a list:

What is bothering you the most today?

Stress Symptoms

How do you know when you are feeling stressed? Any type of warning signs?

Coping Skills and Habits

How do you handle your stress? List your usual coping habits:

How effective are these coping habits?

Are there any techniques that you were using before that you are not using now?

List three new coping strategies you would like to try. Examples: exercising, breathing techniques, journaling, etc.

How do you think these new coping strategies and your other effective coping habits can be used to handle your stress?

Source: <http://www.innerhealthstudio.com>

Student Services and Campus Resources



Chilly Says:

“Please Refer to Activity 3.1: Students’ Attitudes towards Campus on page 39 of the Peer Mentor Companion”

REGISTRAR'S OFFICE

- Manages the academic catalog
- Manages the academic calendar
- Manages the schedule of courses
- Oversees leaves and withdrawals
- Helps with transcript requests, information about grades and exam schedules

BUSINESS SERVICES

- Offers help with all student billing needs
- Explains charges to students
- Accepts payments for student accounts

FINANCIAL AID OFFICE

- Helps with financial aid, scholarships, grants and loans
- Explains the cost of attending Dominican
- Helps with work study details
- Helps with debt and default management

ACADEMIC ADVISING AND ACHIEVEMENT

- Helps with academic advising, disability services, tutoring, freshmen programs, placement testing, academic excellence workshops, and CLEP testing

CAREER AND INTERNSHIP SERVICES

- Allows students to search for a job/internship
- Allows recruiters to post a job/internship
- Offers online tutorials
- Organizes workshops and trainings
- Helps with graduate school planning and preparation

Clubs and Organizations

ATHLETICS AND RECREATIONAL CLUBS

Coaching Corps

Dominican Mountain Bike Team

Dominican Sailing Club

Penguin Student Athlete Advisory Council



CAMPUS DIVERSITY CLUBS/ORGANIZATIONS

Black Student Union

ELS Conversation Partners Program

Global Ambassadors

Kapamilya

Latinos Unidos

P.R.I.D.E.



RELIGIOUS CLUBS/ORGANIZATIONS

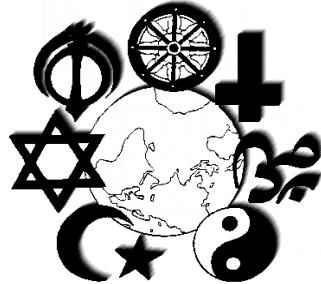
Brothers And Sisters In Christ

Jewish Student Union

Muslim Student Association

Ripple Effect

Students Promoting Dominican Ideals



SOCIAL/OTHER CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Dominican Harry Potter Association

Dominican Toastmasters

Green Club

Perceptions

ROTARACT

Spirit Club

MAJOR RELATED CLUBS/ORGANIZATIONS

Dominican Accounting and Finance Club

Dominican Nursing Student Association

Dominican Political Science Association

Dominican Students Occupational Therapy Association

Dominican University of California Business Association

History Club

Model United Nations

Phi Alpha Delta

Pre-Dental Society

Psychology Club

Appendix A

Appropriate/ Ethical Behavior Contract

It is extremely important that you, as a peer mentor, to understand and practice ethical behavior as you work with other mentors and mentees.

Carefully read the following statements. Please feel free to consult with your supervisor if you have any questions or need clarification.

As a peer mentor, I will:

- have knowledge of and act consistently with any professional standards appropriate to our university
- respect the autonomy and individual dignity of your peer mentee
- avoid acting beyond the scope of service for which you were selected and trained and will not attempt to offer professional services requiring more extensive qualifications and training
- maintain the right to privacy and confidentiality of your peer mentee
- act in my practice for the benefit and welfare of my peer mentee
- be careful to avoid issues in which conflict of interests, bias, or dual relationship, which could jeopardize this peer mentor/mentee relationship

I, _____, have read and understand the statements listed above. By signing this contract, I hereby acknowledge that I will abide by this contract.

X _____
Peer Mentor

_____ Date

X _____
Peer Mentor Supervisor

_____ Date

Source: Students Helping Students, 2010

Appendix B

Mentoring Competence Inventory – Pre – Assessment

Use the following scale to rate your confidence in each of the following areas.

0 – Not Confident

1 – Slightly Confident

2 – Somewhat Confident

3 – Fairly Confident

4 – Quite Confident

5 – Completely Confident

Please Circle One:

Becoming a Peer Mentor

0 1 2 3 4 5 1. I know what it means to be a mentor.

0 1 2 3 4 5 2. I know why I want to become a mentor.

Helping Students Make the Transition to College

0 1 2 3 4 5 3. I can explain why college students need peer mentors.

0 1 2 3 4 5 4. I am aware of the objectives of the first-year-experience program on my
campus.

0 1 2 3 4 5 5. I understand how involvement can affect my development as a student.

Defining Roles

0 1 2 3 4 5 6. I understand my role within the peer mentor program.

0 1 2 3 4 5 7. I am capable of fulfilling the different roles of a peer mentor.

Establishing and Maintaining Relationships

0 1 2 3 4 5 8. I know what students are looking for in a mentoring relationship.

0 1 2 3 4 5 9. I know how to establish an effective mentoring relationship.

Becoming a Role Model

- 0 1 2 3 4 5 10. I am comfortable being honest about my strengths and weaknesses.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 11. I can identify my own personal values

Developing Cultural Sensitivity

- 0 1 2 3 4 5 12. I understand the benefits of diversity on a college campus.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 13. I am aware of my own attitude toward cultural differences.

Communicating Effectively

- 0 1 2 3 4 5 14. I understand how communicating as a mentor is different than communicating in other relationships.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 15. I have effective listening skills.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 16. I am aware of my verbal and nonverbal messages.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 17. I understand how to effectively give and receive feedback.

Planning and Problem Solving

- 0 1 2 3 4 5 18. I know how to plan to be an effective mentor.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 19. I can demonstrate effective goal setting for other students.

Utilizing Campus Resources

- 0 1 2 3 4 5 20. I can explain to students why it is important to be aware of campus resources.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 21. I am familiar with student support services on available campus.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 22. I can recognize the signs of stress and help students identify the resources that can help them manage their stress.

Evaluating Your Mentoring

- 0 1 2 3 4 5 23. I know how to evaluate my skills and performance.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 24. I am comfortable asking others for feedback.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 25. I am aware of how my motivation can change.

Appendix C

Mentoring Competence Inventory – Post – Assessment

Use the following scale to rate your confidence in each of the following areas.

0 – Not Confident

1 – Slightly Confident

2 – Somewhat Confident

3 – Fairly Confident

4 – Quite Confident

5 – Completely Confident

Please Circle One:

Becoming a Peer Mentor

0 1 2 3 4 5 1. I know what it means to be a mentor.

0 1 2 3 4 5 2. I know why I want to become a mentor.

Helping Students Make the Transition to College

0 1 2 3 4 5 3. I can explain why college students need peer mentors.

0 1 2 3 4 5 4. I am aware of the objectives of the first-year-experience program on my
campus.

0 1 2 3 4 5 5. I understand how involvement can affect my development as a student.

Defining Roles

0 1 2 3 4 5 6. I understand my role within the peer mentor program.

0 1 2 3 4 5 7. I am capable of fulfilling the different roles of a peer mentor.

Establishing and Maintaining Relationships

0 1 2 3 4 5 8. I know what students are looking for in a mentoring relationship.

0 1 2 3 4 5 9. I know how to establish an effective mentoring relationship.

Becoming a Role Model

- 0 1 2 3 4 5 10. I am comfortable being honest about my strengths and weaknesses.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 11. I can identify my own personal values

Developing Cultural Sensitivity

- 0 1 2 3 4 5 12. I understand the benefits of diversity on a college campus.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 13. I am aware of my own attitude toward cultural differences.

Communicating Effectively

- 0 1 2 3 4 5 14. I understand how communicating as a mentor is different than communicating in other relationships.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 15. I have effective listening skills.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 16. I am aware of my verbal and nonverbal messages.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 17. I understand how to effectively give and receive feedback.

Planning and Problem Solving

- 0 1 2 3 4 5 18. I know how to plan to be an effective mentor.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 19. I can demonstrate effective goal setting for other students.

Utilizing Campus Resources

- 0 1 2 3 4 5 20. I can explain to students why it is important to be aware of campus resources.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 21. I am familiar with student support services on available campus.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 22. I can recognize the signs of stress and help students identify the resources that can help them manage their stress.

Evaluating Your Mentoring

- 0 1 2 3 4 5 23. I know how to evaluate my skills and performance.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 24. I am comfortable asking others for feedback.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5 25. I am aware of how my motivation can change.

Reflective Questions

In which areas are you most confident about your mentoring knowledge and skills?

In which areas are you least confident about your mentoring knowledge and skills?

In this manual, what section(s) did you find to be the most helpful? Why?

In your opinion, how can this manual be improved?

Overall, this peer mentor training session was...

Appendix E

Permission Requests for Reprinting Material

From: [REDACTED]
 To: [REDACTED]
 Sent: Monday, June 11, 2012 12:46 AM
 Subject: SMART Goal Setting

Hi Mari,

You have my permission to reprint and paraphrase a webpage titled "SMART Goal Setting: A Surefire Way To Achieve Your Goals" in your manual.

Good luck with your peer mentoring program,

Arina

▼ **Re: Requesting Permission to Reprint Material** Mon, Sep 24, 2012 at 10:25 PM ● ☆

From: Swati Lodha
 To: Marion Sarte

Dear Marion

You are most welcome to use the content.
 However, please provide the proper link in your project.

All the best for your thesis project.

Thanks
 Regards
 Swati Lodha

On Tue, Sep 25, 2012 at 3:12 AM, Marion Sarte <[REDACTED]>

Dear Swati Lodha,

My name is Marion Sarte, and I am a graduate occupational therapy student at Dominican University of California. My fellow student partners and I are currently working on our thesis project, which is creating a peer mentor training manual for a new peer mentoring program for first-generation college students at our university, called Bridging the Gap for First-Generation Students. In the process, we have researched current mentoring websites, peer mentor programs, and peer mentor training manuals to guide us as we draft our own.

We found your website and would like to kindly request permission to reprint and paraphrase parts of the webpage at <http://www.communicationskills.co.in/definition-of-communication-skills.htm> titled, "Definition of Communication Skills" (beginning with the first paragraph, the second bullet point, the third bullet point, and ending with the fourth bullet point) in our own manual. If you agree with our request, please kindly reply back to this e-mail granting us your permission. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions regarding our thesis project.

Sincerely,

Marion Sarte, OTS

▼ **RE: Requesting Permission to Reprint Material** Fri, Sep 28, 2012 at 8:16 AM ● ☆

From: Fabricio Balcazar

To: 'Marion Sarte'

Hi marion I appreciate your interest in our work. You have my permission to use all or parts of the manual as needed. I hope your project is successful.
fabricio

Fabricio Balcazar, Ph.D.
Center on Capacity Building for Minorities with Disabilities
Department of Disability & Human Development
University of Illinois at Chicago
Chicago IL 60608
tel: 312-413-1646
fax: 312-413-1804

From: Marion Sarte [mailto:msarte@ucdavis.edu]
Sent: September 25, 2012 11:06 PM
To: [mailto:balcazar@uic.edu]
Subject: Requesting Permission to Reprint Material

Dear Dr. Balcazar,

My name is Marion Sarte, and I am a graduate occupational therapy student at Dominican University of California. My fellow student partners and I are currently working on our thesis project, which is creating a peer mentor training manual for a new peer mentoring program for first-generation college students at our university. In the process, we have researched current mentoring websites, peer mentor programs, and peer mentor training manuals to guide us as we draft our own.

We found your peer mentor handbook online at http://www.uic.edu/orgs/empower/supporting%20documents/mentor_manual.htm#settingboundaries and would like to kindly request permission to reprint a portion of page 28 under the heading "Guidelines for setting boundaries," beginning with the bullet point "A peer-mentor should use respectful language..." and ending with the last bullet point, "Because the peer-mentor relationship is a helping relationship...request from your mentee," in our own manual. If you agree with our request, please kindly reply back to this e-mail granting us your permission. We will take care to cite the source and provide the appropriate link. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions regarding our thesis project.

Sincerely,

Marion Sarte, OTS

▼ **Re: Requesting Permission to Reprint Material** Tue, Sep 25, 2012 at 10:05 AM ● ☆

From: The Mentoring Group

To: Marion Sarte

Hello Marion,

Thank you for contacting us regarding the use of our article. Years ago Dr. Linda Phillips-Jones made it a company policy to allow the use of any articles found on our website to interested parties free of charge. You may link, copy, or print the article, we only ask that you credit the source.

Dr. Phillips-Jones is considered a "pioneer" in the mentoring field and felt very passionate about her quest to spread the mentoring word. Thank you again for your interest in our article. Please do not hesitate to email if we can be of further assistance to your research. We'd be happy to help!

Laurie Schell
Director, Client Services

CCC/The Mentoring Group
Phone: 530.268.1146
Fax: 530.268.3636

www.mentoringgroup.com

From: Marion Sarte
Sent: Monday, September 24, 2012 2:08 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Requesting permission to reprint material

To The Mentoring Group:

My name is Marion Sarte, and I am a graduate occupational therapy student at Dominican University of California. My fellow student partners and I are currently working on our thesis project, which is creating a peer mentor training manual for a new peer mentoring program for first-generation college students at our university, called Bridging the Gap for First-Generation Students (BG4FGS). In the process, we have researched current mentoring websites, peer mentor programs, and peer mentor training manuals to guide us as we draft our own.

We found your website and would like to kindly request permission to reprint the webpage at http://www.mentoringgroup.com/html/articles/mentor_35.htm titled "Teaching Mentees Boundaries" (beginning with line 10, "Boundaries in Mentoring," to ending with line 70, "nice words") by Dr. Linda Phillips-Jones in our own manual. If you agree with our request, please kindly reply back to this e-mail granting us your permission. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions regarding our thesis project.

Sincerely,

Marion Sarte, OTS

▼ **RE: Requesting Permission to Reprint Material** Wed, Sep 26, 2012 at 6:49 AM ● ☆

From: Leptien, Jennifer R [CELTY]

To: Marion Sarte

CC: [REDACTED]

Marion,

You are welcome to reprint portions of our handbook.

Thank you for requesting our approval and for crediting us for the material.

Best wishes on the development of your new mentor program.

Jen Leptien

Jennifer Leptien

Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELTY), Program Coordinator
 Learning Communities, Program Coordinator
 Iowa State University
 3024 Morrill Hall
 Ames, Iowa 50011
 (515)294-1948
 [REDACTED]

From: Marion Sarte [REDACTED]
 Sent: Tuesday, September 25, 2012 10:45 PM
 To: [REDACTED]
 Subject: Requesting Permission to Reprint Material

Dear Mr. Gruenewald, Ms. VanDerZanden, and Ms. Leptien,

My name is Marion Sarte, and I am a graduate occupational therapy student at Dominican University of California. My fellow student partners and I are currently working on our thesis project, which is creating a peer mentor training manual for a new peer mentoring program for first-generation college students at our university. In the process, we have researched current mentoring websites, peer mentor programs, and peer mentor training manuals to guide us as we draft our own.

We found your peer mentor handbook online at <http://www.ic.iastate.edu/pdfs-docs/Peer%20Mentor0910.pdf> and would like to kindly request permission to reprint a portion of page 6, beginning with "Communication skills include" and ending with the last bullet point, "Decentering...ways they will understand," in our own manual. If you agree with our request, please kindly reply back to this e-mail granting us your permission. We will take care to cite the source and provide the appropriate link. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions regarding our thesis project.

Sincerely,

Marion Sarte, OTS

▼ **Re: Requesting Permission to Reprint Material** Wed, Sep 26, 2012 at 9:44 AM ● ☆

From: rod windle

To: Marion Sarte

Permission is granted. Glad you are finding the material of use.

On Tue, Sep 25, 2012 at 9:32 PM, Marion Sarte [REDACTED] wrote:

Dear Dr. Windle,

My name is Marion Sarte, and I am a graduate occupational therapy student at Dominican University of California. My fellow student partners and I are currently working on our thesis project, which is creating a peer mentor training manual for a new peer mentoring program for first-generation college students at our university. In the process, we have researched current mentoring websites, peer mentor programs, and peer mentor training manuals to guide us as we draft our own.

We found your manual, "Collaborative Problem Solving and Dispute Resolution in Special Education," online at <http://www.directionservice.org/cadre/section4.cfm> and would like to kindly request permission to reprint and paraphrase the content under "Section 4: Communication Skills" (beginning with "The Three Components of Communication" and ending with "Nonverbal Communication Barriers...Excessive fidgeting with materials") in our own manual. If you agree with our request, please kindly reply back to this e-mail granting us your permission. We will take care to cite the source and provide the appropriate link. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions regarding our thesis project.

Sincerely,

Marion Sarte, OTS

Appendix F

Peer Mentor Recruitment Flyer

**FIRST-
GENERATION**

Are you the
first in your
family to go
to college?

Dominican University
of California

**BECOME A PEER
MENTOR TODAY!**



*- students
helping one
another -*

**“One-quarter of our student population are the
first in their families
to pioneer a college education...”**

• DO YOU HAVE A PASSION TO HELP OTHERS?

If so, please consider becoming a peer mentor! As a peer mentor, you will have the opportunity to develop a relationship, provide support, and share your personal experiences with an incoming Dominican student. The transition to college isn't always easy – help make a difference by becoming a mentor today!

TO LEARN MORE about becoming a peer mentor for a first-generation college freshman, please fill out an application and return to:
Stacy Frauwirth - Occupational Therapy Department, Meadowlands (or)
Christina Jimenez - Academic Advising and Achievement, Bertrand Hall

**• If you have any additional questions, please contact:
Victoria Rivera at [REDACTED]**

Appendix G

Peer Mentor Recruitment E-mail

[MAJOR.OT](#) » [Forums](#) » [News forum](#) » [First Generation Peer Mentoring Project](#)



First Generation Peer Mentoring Project

by [Stacy Frauwith](#) - Tuesday, 7 February 2012, 12:14 PM

Dear OT students,

Are you a first generation college student (neither of your parents graduated from a 4 year college)? Are you currently a sophomore or junior? Have you thought about being a peer mentor?

The Department of Occupational Therapy in conjunction with Academic Support Services is developing a comprehensive peer mentoring program for first generation college students. Mentors will be trained this semester, and will be assigned to a freshman mentee for the 2012-2013 academic year. This is an excellent chance to share your experiences and help a new student make a successful transition to college.

Applications are available with Christina Jimenez in Academic Support Services. Please feel free to contact me with questions or talk to OT students Ali Wiggam, Victoria Rivera, and Marion Sarte who are working on this project for their thesis.

Stacy Frauwith

[See this post in context](#)

Appendix H

Peer Mentor Application

**Bridging the Gap for First Generation Students
Peer Mentoring Program
Application (Mentor)**

To Applicant: We appreciate your interest in Dominican University's Peer Mentoring Program. It is important to complete this application fully. The information contained herein is considered confidential. In order to be eligible, we require our students to be in good academic standing.

General Information:

Name: _____

Email: _____

Student ID #: _____

Do you live on campus? Yes No

If you do not live on campus, what is your current local address?

_____, CA zip code: _____

Phone # _____

Date of Birth: _____

Year in School: _____

Major: _____

GPA: _____

Expected Graduation Date: _____

How did you hear about this program? (check all that apply)

Email: _____

Signs/Ads: _____

Advisors/Faculty/Staff: _____

Fellow Students: _____

Other: _____

Please write a brief essay, 500-750 words, on the following prompt:

There are many characteristics that contribute to making a great peer mentor. Please share your thoughts on what has prepared you to become a mentor for incoming freshman by describing

- a) A meaningful experience and,
- b) A unique personal quality
- c) What elements would you add to the Peer Mentoring Program

