5-2014

The Effectiveness of Peer Mentoring in Helping First Year Students Develop Occupational Adaptation Skills

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https://doi.org/10.33015/dominican.edu/2014.OT.11

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

Master of Science Occupational Therapy

School of Health and Natural Sciences

Dominican University of California

San Rafael, California

May 2014

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, project, and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidates alone.

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Ruth Ramsey, Ed.D, OTR/L, Chair   12/6/2013

Stacy Frauwirth, MS, OTR/L, Thesis Advisor   12/3/2013

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Dominican University's Department of Occupational Therapy for giving us a great foundation and preparing us to enter the occupational therapy profession. We would like to give a special thanks to our thesis advisor Stacy Frauwirth for being a wonderful instructor and providing us with her full support and guidance throughout our research and thesis process. We would also like to thank Mark McAlister, the statistician who helped us make sense of all the numbers, as well as Mike Pujals the librarian who helped us in putting together the final thesis for submission and publication. Lastly we would like to thank our peers and loved ones for providing us with words of encouragement and support. Thank you all. We couldn't have done it without you!

Abstract

Objective.

To evaluate the effectiveness of peer mentoring in helping first year, first-generation college students at Dominican University of California (DUC) adapt to university life and navigate the occupational challenges experienced during the first year of college.

Method.

Sixty-seven students voluntarily completed an online survey, First Year College Experience (FYCE) Survey: Adaptation to University Life. Quantitative research determined the influence of peer mentoring on the students' adaptation and occupational performance in their transition to college. Effectiveness was determined by: 1) sense of belonging, 2) developed academic and social skills, 3) adaptive responses and strategies used, and 4) overall satisfaction with the college experience.

Results.

FGS experienced a greater sense of belonging compared to non-FGS ($p = 0.012$). Mentored students gained more skill over time academically than students who did not use peer mentoring ($p = 0.003$). There was no statistical difference between FGS and non-FGS in the use of adaptive strategies ($p = 0.484$). There was a statistical difference in use of adaptive strategies between students who were mentored and non-mentored ($p=0.025$). Mentored students self-reported having more problem solving strategies when confronted with a challenge compared to non-mentored students.

Conclusion.

The results suggest that peer mentoring is effective in helping students develop adaptive strategies, academic skills, and increasing overall college satisfaction. Implications of

this study suggest that peer mentoring designed specifically for FGS in their first year of college may help FGS develop adaptive skills and flexibility in their problem-solving strategies that enhance their occupational performance as college students.

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Introduction

In the current struggling economy, it is more important than ever before to earn a college degree in order to be competitive in today's job market. As of 2010, 7% of the U.S. population was enrolled in an institution of higher education, including two-year and four-year colleges, and the majority of that 7% (63%) attended a four-year college (United States Census Bureau, 2012). Obtaining a college degree can help provide job opportunities and security for young adults, as well as help with achievement of a sense of accomplishment and personal self-worth, and the establishment of a new status (Marklein, 2013). According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 73.2% of the population over 25 years of age with a Bachelor's degree or higher were employed with an unemployment rate of 3.6%. Only 61% of people with some college or no degree were employed, with an unemployment rate of 6.6% (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). In addition to the employment and unemployment differences between college graduates and non-college graduates or those with some college, those with a four year degree make 70-75% more annually than individuals with some college or no degree (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012).

Currently there are more first-generation students (FGS) attending college than ever before, with FGS making up one third of all college enrolled students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). There are multiple definitions of first-generation status. Here, FGS are defined as students who are the first in their families to attend college. Despite increased rates in enrollment, FGS continue to leave college at a higher rate than their non-FGS peers. FGS are four times more likely to drop-out of college before the beginning of their second year (Ramsey & Peale, 2010). Approximately 25%

of FGS drop out of college by the end of their first year, and the overall attrition rate for FGS is close to 50% (Cho, Hudley, Lee, Barry, & Kelly, 2008).

Being a first year college student can be an overwhelming and demanding experience. Students may be away from home for the first time, may be experiencing new independence and facing new academic and social challenges, and may have additional responsibilities now that they are away from their parents. Not only are first year students transitioning to a new environment with new academic demands, but they are transitioning from adolescence to young adulthood (Dyson & Renk, 2006). While all students must negotiate the college transition, FGS enter college with a unique set of life experiences and a particular set of occupational challenges that might contribute to their poorer college graduation statistics than their non-FGS peers (Barry et al., 2009; Purswell, Yazedjian, & Toews, 2008). Many FGS also face the challenges of low socioeconomic status and financial need, inadequate academic preparation, and little understanding of what to expect in college (Ramsey & Peale, 2010). Most importantly, a lack of support services and sense of belonging can significantly affect FGS' opportunity to be successful in adapting to the college environment (Ramsey & Peale, 2010). FGS may also lack the cultural capital, or "general familiarity with the traditions and norms necessary to be successful at institutions of higher education", (Mehta, Newbold, & O'Rourke, 2011, p.26), which can make their adaptation to the college environment more challenging than non-FGS.

The social and cultural aspects of FGS' adaptation to college are of great significance because FGS are navigating between the demands of various identities: ethnic, familial, personal, social, cultural, college life, and community (Orbe, 2004).

FGS struggle with balancing and fulfilling their many cultural expectations, and struggle with maintaining their identities tied to family and the communities they are a part of, which can be overwhelming and puts them at a disadvantage in being successful (Lowery-Hart & Pacheco, 2011).

Peer-to-peer support in the form of peer mentoring is a valuable resource for individuals transitioning and adapting to the college environment. Unlike academic advisors and academic support groups, peer mentoring has the ability to provide psychosocial support and emotional support. Mentoring creates a place where students can talk openly, feel accepted, and have someone to relate to. This creates the opportunity for students to build a social network and a personal support system (Smith-Jentsch, Scielzo, Yarbrough, & Rosopa, 2008; Weinberg & Lankau, 2011).

The effectiveness of peer mentoring for FGS has not been explored as thoroughly as peer mentoring programs for non-FGS first year college students. Current research focuses on the many challenges college students face during their transition to college, the challenges of FGS, and the effectiveness of peer mentoring, but there is little research that integrates these three aspects together. Therefore, the original purpose of this research study was to examine FGS in their transition and adaptation to the college environment while receiving peer mentoring at a small, private liberal arts university, Dominican University of California (DUC). This research study attempted to investigate the effectiveness of the newly developed DUC peer mentoring program, Bridging the Gap for First-Generation Students (BG4FGS). BG4FGS was designed to address the separate and unique set of challenges FGS face due to their first-generation status.

The researchers believed that BG4FGS may have been a way to assist FGS in overcoming their challenges, lack of support, and college adaptive skills by providing a social network, role modeling, career advising, academic modeling, and support on campus. However, due to the lack of recruitment of students involved in BG4FGS, the purpose of this study was modified. Alternatively, the researchers studied the effectiveness of general peer mentoring in helping first year college students develop occupational adaptation skills needed to enhance their occupational performance and promote the successful completion of a college degree. The researchers wanted to continue to focus on FGS, and as a result, the differences between two groups of first year students were studied: 1) first-generation students (FGS) and non-FGS, and 2) peer-mentored students and non-mentored students.

Literature Review

This literature review examines the challenges faced by college students during their transition to college, and the various adaptations that take place during their first year of college. Additional challenges faced by first-generation students (FGS) are also addressed, including their lack of family support, inadequate academic preparation, limited understanding of what to expect in the college environment, lack of available support services on campus for FGS, and lack of awareness about support services. Lastly, the benefits of peer mentoring programs, along with the components that make programs effective are discussed.

The Transition to College

Going to college for the first time can be a stressful and overwhelming experience for many students. This period is of great significance because not only are students

making the transition from high school to college, but they are also simultaneously

making the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Dyson & Renk, 2006). College

students face many challenges in their transition to college and adaptation to university

life. These challenges include physical health challenges such as unhealthy weight

changes, poor nutrition, and increased alcohol consumption; mental health challenges

including depression and anxiety; and occupational challenges including a decrease in

physical activities, difficulty with time management, poor sleep patterns, and difficulty

with social adjustment (Boekeloo, Novik, & Bush, 2011; Crawford & Novak, 2007;

Dyson & Renk, 2006; Economos, Hilderbrandt, & Hyatt, 2008; Galambos, Howard, &

Maggs, 2010; Hoffman, Policastro, Quick, & Lee, 2006; Pittman & Richmond, 2008).

These challenges can affect the emotional and physical well-being of students and their

overall college experience, ultimately interfering with their academic success.

　　　College students are more prone to weight change than other populations due to

the drastic changes in environment and resources, and the various stressors that

accompany the rigor of a college education (Wengreen & Moncur, 2009). According to

studies examining weight changes in college students, the time of greatest increase in

weight gain resulting in either overweight status or obesity is between the ages of 19 and

29 (LaCaille, Dauner, Krambeur, & Pedersen, 2011). Studies reported that among first-

year college students, the average weight gain over a three to twelve month period was 4

pounds (LaCaille et al., 2011). Although this gain isn't a considerable change in weight,

studies showed that students who gain weight in their first year of college are at risk for

continuous weight gain and are more likely to become obese later (LaCaille et al., 2011).

The gradual weight gain over the college years and consequence of adult obesity also

puts these students at risk for heart disease, stroke, and Type 2 diabetes in their future (Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, 2012b).

Weight gain is not the only form of unhealthy weight change that occurs during students' transition to college. Many students also experience unhealthy weight loss. According to the American College Health Association's annual surveys, since 2000 the number of college students dieting, vomiting, or taking laxatives to lose weight has risen from 28% to 38% (American College Health Association, 2012). Additional dangerous means to lose weight that college students, especially women, may resort to include liquid and low-calorie diets, skipping meals and fasting, excessive exercise, and purging. These unhealthy dieting habits not only stem from drastic changes in environment and resources, and the various stressors that accompany the rigor of a college education, but also some first-year students may enter college with body image issues (White, Reynolds-Malear, & Cordero, 2011).

In addition to weight changes, first year college students also demonstrate unhealthy eating habits and poor food choices. Residential college students no longer have their parents or guardians to monitor their food choices or manage how they eat. When students transition to college the quality of food and types of food choices change (Economos, Hilderbrandt, & Hyatt, 2008). All-you-can-eat dining halls, easy access to junk food, and limited access to healthy, home-cooked foods allow first-year college students to engage in unhealthy eating behaviors and develop poor nutrition habits (Economos, Hilderbrandt, & Hyatt, 2008). Students who live on campus are more likely to eat larger portions of food because of the all-you-can-eat style at the dining halls encourages overeating (Wengreen & Moncur, 2009).

Additionally, the lack of healthy food choices and resources to prepare healthier foods in the university environment also creates a challenge in consuming the proper servings of nutritious foods (i.e. fruits and vegetables). According to the American College Health Association, 57.6% of college students only receive one to two servings of fruits and vegetables per day (American College Health Association, 2012). A study on the consumption of milk and dairy products during the transition to young adulthood found that on average, college students aren't consuming the three servings per day of milk or dairy products recommended for young adults ages 24 and younger (DuráTravé, 2008). This study showed that only about half of men and 21% of women consume the recommended amount of milk and dairy products (calcium) (DuráTravé, 2008). Poor eating habits and unhealthy food choices can result in chronic medical conditions such as obesity, heart disease Type 2 diabetes, respiratory issues, and stroke (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012b). Studies also found that poor eating habits can negatively influence intelligence and academic performance, and that students who practiced healthy and balanced habits performed academically better in school than students who ignored their daily nutrient needs (Rampersaud, Pereira, Girard, Adams, & Metzl, 2005).

First year college students also demonstrate changes in alcohol consumption. Researchers found that 76.9% of incoming freshmen self-reported drinking to get drunk only, and those who drank to get drunk were more likely to drink in ways that promote heavy drinking (Boekeloo, Novik, & Bush, 2011). According to the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), 19% of college students between the ages of 18-24 years of age meet the criteria for alcohol abuse and dependence (NIAAA, 2012).

Incoming freshmen are more vulnerable to engage in risky alcohol behaviors and binge

drink due to their lack of experience in the college environment and their desire to bond

with their peers (Crawford & Novak, 2007). Additionally, many students enter college

with already established drinking habits, and the college environment might further

encourage these drinking behaviors (White & Swatzwelder, 2009).

Binge drinking has been defined as drinking so much in two hours that one's

blood alcohol level reaches or exceeds 0.08g/dL (NIAAA, 2012). The Center of Disease

Control and Prevention reported that "about 90% of the alcohol consumed by youth

under the age of 21 in the United States is in the form of binge drinks (Centers of Disease

Control and Prevention, 2012a). Binge drinking can lead to alcohol poisoning, sexually

transmitted infections, unintended pregnancies, liver damage, high blood pressure,

cardiovascular disease, and diabetes (Center of Disease Control and Prevention, 2012a).

Binge drinking can also lead to missing classes, falling behind academically, performing

poorly on papers and exams, and receiving lower grades overall; about 25% of college

students have reported poorer academic performance due to their drinking habits

(NIAAA, 2012).

Mental health challenges greatly influence first year college students' success and

emotional well-being during their transition to college. A research study conducted at

Acadia University in Canada found that approximately 7% of men and 14% of women in

their first year of college met the criteria for Major Depressive Disorder (Price, McLeod,

Gleich, & Hand, 2006). Depression in college students often goes unrecognized,

especially since the depression first year college students experience stems from the

adjustment and adaptation to university life (Price et al., 2006). Annual surveys showed

that 31.6% of college undergraduates during the 2011-2012 school year (anytime within the last 12 months by Spring 2012) felt so depressed at least once, that they found it difficult to function (American College Health Association, 2012). Depression has been connected to homesickness in first year college students as they adapt to their new college environment, and some may be away from home for the first time (Tognoli, 2003). However, depression is also the result of feeling helpless because of the overwhelming demands academically and socially of university life experienced by first-year college students (Dyson & Renk, 2006).

Anxiety has also has been linked with homesickness, but typically anxiety is connected with social adjustment and feelings of unpreparedness and stress due to the occupational demands of college (Dyson & Renk, 2006). The same study at Acadia University in Canada found that 13% of men and 19% of women met the criteria for Major Anxiety Disorder (Price et al., 2006). Survey data collected during the spring of 2012 revealed that 51.3% of college undergraduates felt overwhelmed at one point during the school year over the past 12 months which resulted in anxiety, and 86.8% stated feeling overwhelmed in general with the demands of college (American College Health Association, 2012). First year college students have anxiety about whether they will be able to meet the multitude of expectations from the university, their parents, their friends, and their personal expectations (Dyson & Renk, 2006). Researchers found patterns of missed class time, decreased academic productivity, and poor performance on exams in students who experienced depressive symptoms and/or had high anxiety (Price et al., 2006).

The physical health challenges and mental health challenges that first year college students face ultimately affect occupational performance, and occupational performance affects the physical health and mental health of students. One of the occupational challenges is maintaining adequate levels of physical activity. Studies show that the sharpest decline in physical activity occurs during the transition to college (late adolescence to early adulthood), and 33% of college students engage in less physical activity during their first eight weeks of college than their last eight weeks of high school (Han et al., 2008). Between 56% and 80% of college students do not regularly participate in physical activity (Han, Dinger, Hull, Randall, Heesch, & Fields, 2008).

In high school many students are involved in organized sports, but once they transition to college, many students are no longer participating in organized sports and would rather spend their free time in social activities or studying instead of engaging in physical exercise. Intercollegiate athletes are more likely to engage in moderate to vigorous physical activities than non-athletes due to their responsibilities to their team and demands of the sport (Miller et al., 2005). Physical activity is more likely to decrease and decreases more in women than in men through young adulthood (Miller, Staten, Rayens, & Noland, 2005). Other factors that influence first year college students' participation in physical activity are academic demands, social events and responsibilities, and employment responsibilities due to financial necessity (Han et al., 2008).

Sleep patterns also change when students make the transition to college (Galambos, Howard, & Maggs, 2010). A sufficient quantity of good sleep is necessary for academic performance, physical health, and psychological well-being, yet too few

new college students get enough sleep. Up to 70% of university students have sleep difficulties, and first year college students have greater odds of being poor sleepers than second-year students (Galambos, Howard, & Maggs, 2010). Students at risk for poor sleep quality and quantity include those who are more independent from their parents, living away from home, experiencing great financial burdens, living in shared and potentially noisy housing situations, and women (Galambos, Howard, & Maggs, 2010). Studies suggest that sleep deprivation in college students also stems from anxiety and worrying about their academic work load (Forquer, Camden, Gabriau, & Johnson, 2008). The most common sleep disorder found in college students is insomnia, but other sleep disorders include sleepwalking, nightmares, affective disorder, hypersomnia, sleep hygiene (behaviors and environmental conditions that influence sleep), and impact on daily functioning (IDF; disruptions to the ability to function well during the day) (Gaultney, 2010). Insufficient quality and quantity of sleep affects the ability to do school work and also negatively impacts mental health.

The transition to college presents many changes in a student's social environment and social participation. Students entering their first year of college look for a sense of belonging and connectedness to their school, and when they experience difficulty in connecting with peers, students are more likely to leave their university without receiving a degree (Pittman & Richmond, 2008). Those who experience difficulty in social adjustment to college state that they feel a lack of social support on campus (Pittman & Richmond, 2008). A study published on university belonging and psychological adjustment during the transition to college found that a sense of university belonging is linked to students' social acceptance, academic performance, and class belonging

(Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007). Students in their first year who reported more peer support or higher levels of friendship quality displayed higher academic performance (Pittman & Richmond, 2008).

Lastly, first year college students also experience occupational challenges in the areas of time management and balancing the academic demands of college. Many first year college students who considered themselves high achievers in high school experience difficulties once they begin college because the rigor of college coursework is higher than what they expected (Baldulf, 2009). Often many first year college students feel they have less time to complete all of their assigned work, which is one of the most common complaints (Kitsantas, Winsler, & IIuie, 2008). Many first year college students also lack the organizational, time management, and self-management skills necessary to balance and complete the tasks of college (Goldfinch & Hughes, 2007). Additional contributing factors to the challenge of balancing the academic demands of college also include low self-efficacy and insufficient prior ability before entering college (Kitsantas, Winsler, & IIuie, 2008). Inadequate study skills, poor time management, and lack of internal motivation in first-year college students have been shown to result in poor academic performance and underachievement (Balduf, 2009). Students who rated themselves as having good skills in self-management and time management did better in their first year at university than those who rated themselves as having poor time management skills and self-reliance (Goldfinch & Hughes, 2007).

First year college students face multiple challenges during their transition to college. They experience the challenges of balancing their nutrition and making healthy food choices. First year students encounter unhealthy weight changes due to the stresses

and demands of college, and they demonstrate challenges in adapting to the university environment in regards to social acceptance and university belonging. In addition, students in their first year of college endure multiple occupational challenges that affect their ability to perform academically and socially, and these occupational challenges in turn affect students' physical and mental well-being.

Challenges Faced by First-Generation College Students

The transition to college is a crucial period that sets the stage for college success or failure, especially for FGS. While FGS represent a range of ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds, they are more likely to be minorities and come from working-class backgrounds. As a result FGS face more academic, cultural, social, and psychosocial challenges than non-FGS (Forbus, Newbold, & Mehta, 2011).

FGS generally perform lower academically compared to non-FGS (Forbus et al., 2011). Often, FGS attend high schools of lower academic intensity or take less demanding coursework, complete fewer credit hours, participate less frequently in honors programs, rank lower in their high school class, and have lower college entrance scores (Forbus et al., 2011; Ishitani, 2006; Purswell et al., 2008). As a result, FGS tend to feel less academically prepared to pursue a college education than non-FGS and are more likely to require additional tutoring, mentoring and social support to overcome their academic challenges (Stephen, Fryberg et al., 2012). Part of this decreased academic performance is also attributed to the fact that FGS often come from working-class backgrounds and have fewer financial resources to pay for tuition and living expenses, therefore FGS have to work while in college. This leads to having less time to fully devote themselves to academics, to participate in extracurricular activities, and to spend

their summers doing the types of unpaid internships that lead to future job opportunities (Stephens, Fryberg et al., 2012).

Because FGS are the first in their immediate family to attend college, FGS also have less "cultural capital" than non-FGS. Cultural capital is developed over time and in most instances is passed on from parent to child (Barry, Hudley, Cho, & Kelly, 2008). Cultural capital includes being aware of how to access advising and financial resources and knowledge of implicit expectations such as attending class, being prepared, using course materials, and working in partnership with classmates (Forbus et al., 2011). Parents of FGS do not have personal knowledge about how to navigate through college, so FGS are often uncertain about the "right" way to act as college students (Mehta et al., 2011; Stephens, Fryberg et al., 2012). As a result, FGS may enter college with less knowledge about the expectations of the college environment and campus standards (Forbus et al., 2011; Lowery-Hart & Pacheco, 2011). This lack of knowledge can put FGS at a disadvantage, limit their access to the social support, and reduce their chances of academic success (Barry et al., 2008; Purswell et al., 2008).

A major social and cultural challenge that FGS face is the feeling of a cultural mismatch between their family culture and the college culture. Before college, FGS are often socialized in working-class contexts which value interdependence (Stephens, Townsend et al., 2012). This social class background and norms of interdependence guide and shape the motives of FGS for attending college. For example, FGS often cite more interdependent reasons for attending college compared to non-FGS, such as giving back to their communities and being role models for the people in their communities (Stephens, Townsend et al., 2012). However, American universities are often middle-

class contexts which emphasize and promote norms of independence (Stephens, Townsend et al., 2012). This leads FGS to feel that they are moving back and forth between two cultures because they want to maintain their personal and social identity tied to their families and childhood communities, but at the same time they want to fit in into the college community because they know that doing so would help them succeed academically (Lowery-Hart & Pacheco, 2011; Wang & Castaneda-Sound, 2008; Woosley & Shepler, 2011).

In addition to this cultural mismatch, FGS often feel a sense of competing demands between their familial responsibilities and school expectations. Parents of FGS often expect their children to still fulfill familial obligations while they are away at college, while the college expects full academic dedication and commitment from their students (Wang & Castaneda-Sound, 2008; Woosley & Shepler, 2011). Also, while the college community sees the transition to college as a time to find oneself, the families of FGS often reproach the student who returns home with new ideas, clothing, and other outward signals that change is taking place (Miller, 2007; Lowery-Hart & Pacheco, 2011; Woosley & Shepler, 2011). As a consequence, FGS may feel both disoriented due to the increased sense of estrangement from the comfort zone of the family, and also a sense of discomfort and decreased sense of belonging in the college community because others do not understand their competing demands (Stephens, Fryberg et al., 2012).

Family and peer support can be a crucial component of academic and social outcomes because having supportive family and friends outside of college can make the transition to college smoother (Barry et al., 2009; Fischer, 2007). Specifically, having social and emotional support and encouragement from the family can increase the

motivation of students and lead to higher academic achievement (Barry et al., 2008; Miller, 2007). However, parents of FGS may be unable to support their children in instrumental ways, such as helping them understand an assignment or the demands of the college environment, because they have not experienced the challenges associated with college attendance themselves (Purswell et al., 2008). As a result, these parents are less likely to talk about academic issues and challenges with their children once they enter college. Hence, it is not the amount of parental and peer support that FGS receive that influences their academic success and transition; but rather it is the type of support received that makes a difference (Purswell et al., 2008).

While FGS face the same social stressors that non-FGS experience during their transition to college, such as anxiety about moving away from a familiar environment, FGS also experience additional psychological challenges due to their lower academic preparedness, decreased cultural capital, cultural mismatch, and lack of instrumental support from family and peers (Barry et al., 2009). Experiencing a cultural mismatch decreases a first-generation student's capacity to cope with college demands and reduces his or her sense of belonging (Stephens & Townsend et al., 2012). Coping is also reduced when FGS perceive themselves as needing and not receiving emotional support (Barry et al., 2009). This significantly reduces opportunities to share and disclose stressful events, which can exacerbate the stress that FGS are experiencing and have a lasting impact on academic success, social interactions, and physical health. (Barry et al., 2008).

The Effectiveness of Peer Mentoring

Peer mentoring has become a widely accepted strategy to help address the
challenges students face in college, enhance the experience of first-year students, and
ease their transition from high school to college (Drew, Pike, Pooley, Young, & Breen,
2007). Peer mentoring is a relationship where a mentor, a more experienced and
knowledgeable individual, invests time to provide guidance and developmental assistance
to a mentee, a less experienced individual (Kram, 1985). The two primary types of
mentoring are formal mentoring and informal mentoring. Formal mentoring is
constrained by a specific period of time and requires recruitment of mentors to be
matched to a suitable mentee to provide effective levels of mentoring. Informal
mentoring does not require recruitment and informal pairing occurs naturally as members
voluntarily form relationships (Weinberg & Lankau, 2011). Informal mentoring can last
as long as the mentor and mentee continue to build onto the relationship and continue to
receive benefits. However, a formal mentoring program provides distinctive benefits that
an informal mentoring program may not have available (Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007;
Parise & Forret, 2007).

In a formal mentoring program, the program coordinator plays an important role
in providing structure by establishing procedures and boundaries for student interactions
to promote positive relationships (Putsche, Storrs, Lewis, & Haylett, 2008). From
managing a program, mentors gain a sense of value from their role and their commitment
to build a relationship with mentees (Parise & Forret, 2007). According to Putsche et al.
(2008) success in a formal mentoring program depends on appropriate matching of
mentors and mentees. Mutual interests between the mentor and mentee has resulted in

overall satisfaction with the mentoring experience. Thus, formal pairing of mentors and mentees based on common interests is important in order to meet mentee's needs (Putsche et al., 2008).

The quality of training for mentors is another important aspect of an effective program (Parise & Forret, 2007). Training sessions for the mentors and initial group meetings give the program structure. Discussion of the role of the mentor and strategies to navigate the expectations and goals of various types of mentees is crucial to accommodate mentees' needs and to encourage ongoing mentorship (Putsche et al., 2008). Mentors who are well trained are more likely to build a stronger relationship with their mentees and demonstrate higher commitment (Parise & Forret, 2007). According to Weinberg and Lankau (2011) the success of formal mentoring depends on the motivation of the mentors in fulfilling their roles. Mentors who show higher commitment are motivated to provide more guidance to their mentees because of their sense of ownership and emotional attachment. A mentor who shows more commitment to the mentee will provide more valuable support, more developmental benefits and a more positive mentoring experience (Weinberg & Lankau, 2011).

Mentoring offers a variety of opportunities to students and has successfully helped guide new students through a smooth transition in adapting to the college environment (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007; D'Abate, 2010; Hughes & Fahy, 2009). It is clear that mentoring programs have decreased dropout rates, improved academic performance, provided greater access to resources, increased postgraduate opportunities, and led to overall higher personal satisfaction in mentees (Putsche et al., 2008). According to Murphy, Gaughan, Hume, and Moore (2010) freshmen who participated in

a peer mentoring component of an accelerated bridge program were more likely to graduate from college than those who were non participants. They reported that throughout the college experience, peer mentoring provided increased support, motivation, and enhanced student preparation to stay on track to graduate (Murphy et al., 2010).

Many peer mentoring programs provide academic support which includes services to help students be more organized and responsible, and academic tools to assist in the development of study skills and time management skills (Hughes & Fahy, 2009; Murphy et al., 2010). According to Gilmer (2007) students who participated in the peer mentoring component of a summer "bridge" program at Bowling Green State University were able to achieve academic excellence by increasing their GPAs during their college experience. Academic peer mentoring provides an opportunity for socialization, which is an important aspect of college student success (Smith-Jentsch, Scielzo, Yarbrough, & Rosopa, 2008). Students who are well integrated into academic and social networks are more determined to graduate (Murphy et al., 2010).

Another primary function of peer mentoring is providing psychosocial support (Weinberg & Lankau, 2011). Mentors offer psychosocial support for mentees to assist in the development of their identities in the college environment, and to promote a sense of self-confidence, and to encourage a work orientation (Weinberg & Lankau, 2011). Peer mentoring programs offer student counseling that provides an atmosphere to encourage students to talk openly, feel accepted, make informal interactions to create friendships, and allow confirmation (Smith-Jentsch et al., 2008; Weinberg & Lankau, 2011). In addition, peer mentoring programs typically implement activities that provide social,

emotional, and academic support in order to ensure new students a smooth transition to college and increase their likelihood of graduation (Mcpherson, 2008; Murphy et al., 2010). Peer mentoring allowed mentees to feel a stronger sense of belonging in college through social outings and being able to communicate frustrations with mentors (Hughes & Fahy, 2009).

Peer mentoring programs can also provide career developmental skills to a mentee by supporting their ability to learn the operational functions of organizations and preparing them for career advancement (Kram, 1988). According to Kram (1983) mentors provide mentees guidance and assistance in career exploration. Mentoring provides career support, which includes activities such as coaching, challenging assignments, protecting the mentee from disorganization, helping the individual with career networking, offering advice, providing exposure, and providing performance feedback (Noe, 1988).

According to Holland, Major, and Orvis (2011) peer mentoring programs have been effective in encouraging students to participate in extracurricular activities. University students majoring in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics who also participated in voluntary and proactive activities had higher levels of professional development. Students who participate in self-development activities such as attending relevant presentations, joining college organizations, or networking with peers are more satisfied and involved in their major. Therefore, participating in self-development activities is an important aspect in helping students in their major field of study and eventually their careers. Peer mentoring provides proactive opportunities for students to help foster professional identity development (Holland, Major, & Orvis, 2011).

Statement of Purpose

Approximately 25% of FGS drop out of college by the end of their first year, and the attrition rate overall for FGS is close to 50% (Cho, Hudley, Lee, Barry, & Kelly, 2008). The effectiveness of peer mentoring to promote college success for FGS has not been explored as thoroughly as peer mentoring programs for non-FGS first year college students. The original purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the Bridging the Gap for First-Generation Students (BG4FGS) peer mentoring program at DUC and to examine the adaptation process of FGS and their occupational challenges during college. However, due to the lack of participation of the target group, FGS in BG4FGS, the initial research focus and groups were modified to examine the effectiveness of general peer mentoring in helping all first year college students develop occupational adaptation skills and the influence of generational status. Effectiveness was determined by the following areas: 1) sense of belonging, 2) developed academic and social skills, 3) adaptive strategies and responses used, and 4) overall satisfaction with the college experience. Two groups of students were examined: 1) FGS and non-FGS, and 2) peer mentored students and non-mentored students. The following research questions guided this research study:

1. Are there differences in sense of belonging among first-year FGS and non-FGS?

   - Do first-year students with peer mentoring experience a difference in sense of belonging than students without peer mentoring?

Hypothesis 1

There will be differences in sense of belonging among first-year FGS and non-

FGS. There will be differences in sense of belonging among students with peer

mentoring and students without peer mentoring.

2. Are there differences in the types of skills that FGS and non-FGS develop during

their first year of college?

- Are there differences in the types of skills that students with peer mentoring

and students without peer mentoring develop during their first year of college?

Hypothesis 2

There will be a difference in the types of skills developed among FGS and non-FGS.

There will be a difference in the types of skills developed by students with peer

mentoring in comparison to students without peer mentoring.

3. Are there differences in the types of adaptive responses and strategies used among

FGS and non-FGS?

- Do students with peer mentoring use different adaptive responses and

strategies than students without peer mentoring?

Hypothesis 3

There will be differences in the types of adaptive responses and strategies used

among the FGS and non-FGS. Students with peer mentoring use different adaptive

responses and strategies than students without peer mentoring.

4. Are there differences in satisfaction with the first year of college among the FGS

and non-FGS?

- Do students with peer mentoring experience different levels of satisfaction with the first year of college than students without peer mentoring?

Hypothesis 4

There will be a difference in satisfaction among FGS and non-FGS. Students with peer mentoring will experience a different level of satisfaction that students without peer mentoring.

Theoretical Framework

Occupational Adaptation (OA) is a model of practice that was developed in 1992 by Janette K. Schkade and Sally Schultz at Texas Women's University to provide an understanding of how individuals adapt to and master the occupational challenges associated with everyday living (DeGrace, 2007). In this model, occupation is defined as "those activities in which the individual has active involvement; experiences personal meaning; and engages in a process that yields a product, either tangible or intangible" (DeGrace, 2007, p. 98). Adaptation is a normative and universal process experienced by individuals in response to occupational challenges (DeGrace, 2007). According to Schkade and Shultz (1992) occupational adaptation predominately occurs during periods of life transition since it is at this time that adaptation needs to occur.

There are three basic elements that make up the occupational adaptation process: the person, the occupational environment, and the interaction between the person and the environment during an occupation (Schkade & Shultz, 1992). The person is assumed to have a desire for mastery, which is the intrinsic motivation to master an occupation or task. This desire to master an occupation or task is also due to the environment's demand for mastery. The interaction between the person's desire for mastery and the

environment's demand for mastery results in a press for mastery. At this point, the person will determine how personal and environmental expectations for occupational performance will be handled in order to overcome occupational challenges (Schkade & McClung, 2001).

In order to overcome an occupational challenge, the person engages in an adaptive response process. This process requires the person to generate an adaptive response, evaluate the outcome, and integrate feedback from the response (Schkade & Shultz, 1992). The generation of an adaptive response depends upon two things: the adaptation gestalt and mechanisms for adaptation. The adaptation gestalt is how an individual plans an occupational response. The adaption response mechanism consists of three subsystems: adaptation energy, response modes, and response behaviors. Adaption response modes and behaviors are of most concern for this research study because changes in these subsystems need to occur in order to best adapt to the occupational challenges of college (Schkade & McClung, 2001).

The adaption response modes subsystem includes existing, modified, and new modes. In general, a person first responds to occupational challenges with existing modes, whether or not they are appropriate to the task. When these modes fail to produce relative mastery outcomes, the person needs to develop modified or new modes (Schkade & Schultz, 1992). When a person has increased ways of responding adaptively, the likelihood of meeting the demands of current and future occupational challenges is greater (DeGrace, 2007).

The adaptive response behaviors subsystem is made up of primitive, transitional, and mature behaviors. Primitive adaptive response behaviors, also known as hyperstable

behaviors, are characterized by being stuck or frozen in thought and action. As a result, hyperstability prevents generation of new adaptive response behaviors (DeGrace, 2007). Transitional behaviors, also known as hypermobile behaviors, are characterized by highly variable thought and action. Because of the variety of responses in hypermobile behaviors, there is an increased likelihood that a solution to the occupational challenge will be generated and used. Mature adaptive response behaviors occur when a person combines primitive and transitional adaptive response behaviors. Engaging in mature behaviors is considered the best way to resolve occupational challenges because a person is able to react thoughtfully and/or spontaneously (DeGrace, 2007).

After a person generates a response, the person needs to evaluate that response. It is during this evaluation subprocess that the person assesses his or her experience of relative mastery. Relative mastery is the extent to which the person experiences the occupational response as being efficient, effective, and satisfying to the self and society (Schkade & Schultz, 1992). If the criteria of relative mastery are met, then successful adaptation has occurred. Evaluation is crucial during the adaptive subprocess because it can help the person identify which responses are satisfactory and which need to be modified (DeGrace, 2007).

Lastly, during the adaptive response integration subprocess, the person takes the information gained during the evaluation and uses it to meet his or her desires for mastery and the environmental demands of future occupational challenges (DeGrace, 2007). If the person's assessment of his or her response was that it produced a positive experience or relative mastery, then occupational adaptation, a state of occupational functioning, will be strengthened. A state of homeostasis is when no changes are called for in the planning

of similar responses. If the person recognizes the disadaptive nature of his or her response and still does not change the manner in which subsequent and similar challenges are confronted, then a state of occupational disadaptation will be strengthened or reinforced (Schkade & McClung, 2001).

The occupational adaptation process flows rapidly from one step to another and often several occupational challenges are faced at one time. When using the OA model of practice in occupational therapy, treatment is generally directed at improving a patient's occupational adaptation process, rather than his or her functional skills and performance (Schultz & Schkade, 1992). Typically, the therapist acts like a coach, helping the person to problem-solve through the occupation and critically evaluate his or her performance within the context of occupational performance (DeGrace, 2007).

The OA model of practice helped guide this research study in investigating the adaptive process of first year, first generation students (FGS) and peer mentored students in overcoming the many occupational challenges that they faced as they transitioned to college. During this transition, not only do FGS have a desire to succeed academically and socially in their new college community, but they also have many environmental demands and expectations placed on them by the college, their peers, and their families. This press for mastery helped the researchers of this study understand the pressures felt by the FGS to succeed and guided the researchers in determining which adaptive responses were effective during this transition.

The researchers also analyzed the types of responses and modes and behaviors FGS and peer mentored students generally engaged in and how these responses affected their occupational performance and functioning in college by receiving feedback from

participants about their strategies and reactions when faced with academic, social, and personal challenges. If the research results demonstrated that the current modes and behaviors used by FGS were unsuccessful at achieving mastery and thus adaptation to the demands of their new environment, then the researchers looked at whether peer mentoring was an effective strategy in improving the occupational adaptation process of FGS by looking at the participants' response to question number 2 under the "developed academic and social skills" section of the survey. Overall, the researchers analyzed and determined whether peer mentoring is effective at helping FGS achieve a state of occupational adaptation by looking at academic and problem solving skills gained by FGS in their first year of college, as well as their sense of belonging and social support received on-campus.

Definitions

- First Generation Student (FGS): A student who is the first in his or her family to attend college .

- Mastery level: The level at which one has expert skill or knowledge around a subject or task.

- Occupational Adaptation: A model of practice to provide an understanding of how individuals adapt to and master the occupational challenges associated with everyday living (DeGrace, 2007).

- Occupational Performance: A person's ability to carry out activities of daily life, including basic activities of daily living (BADL), such as bathing/showering, grooming and hygiene, dressing, feeding and eating, and

sleep, and instrumental activities of daily living (IADL), including education, work, play, leisure, and social participation (AOTA, 2002).

Methodology

Research Design

The research design used to explore the first year college experiences of FGS and non-FGS and the influence of peer mentoring was a quantitative, non-experimental, exploratory and correlational design. Using this design helped the researchers identify the differences in first year experiences among FGS and non-FGS and whether there was a positive relationship between peer mentoring and academic success; social and emotional adjustment to college; and overall satisfaction with the college experience.

Subjects

The participants in this study were traditional, full-time students in their first year of college at DUC, between the ages of 18 and 21. Approximately 89 first year students were identified as FGS and the remaining 200 first year students were non-FGS or unidentified. Students who attended DUC with part-time status, Pathway status (adult degree completion), or who were over the age of 21 or under the age of 18 were excluded from this study. Convenience sampling was used to recruit current students. The researchers were able to recruit 67 first-year students that met the inclusion criteria. 13% were male and 87% were female; 98% were ages 18-19 years old and 2% were ages 20-21 years old; 4.41% African American, 23.53% Asian American, 14.71% Hispanic, 41.18% White/Caucasian, and 16.18% bi-racial/multi-racial; and 38.24% were identified as FGS and 58.82% were identified as non-FGS (3% unidentified). See Table 1 Sample Characteristics, Appendix B.

Table 1
Sample Characteristics

Characteristic	N=67	Percentage
Gender		
Male	9	13.4
Female	58	86.6
Age		
18	40	59.7
19	26	38.8
20	1	1.5
Generation Status		
FGS	25	37.3
non-FGS	40	59.7
Unknown	2	3
Ethnicity		
Black/African American	3	4.5
Asian American	16	23.9
Hispanic	10	14.9
White/Caucasian	28	41.8
Bi-Racial/Multiracial	10	14.9
Living Situation		
On-Campus/Dorm	60	89.6
Walking/Biking Distance	2	3
Driving/Commuting Distance	5	7.5
Student-Athlete Status		
Student-Athlete	10	14.9
Non Student-Athlete	57	85.1

Overall, these statistics were similar to the findings of the National Center for

Education Statistics and the demographics of DUC. In the fall semester of 2011, there

were a total of 1,637 enrolled undergraduates at DUC, of which 27% were male and 73%

were female. 39% of Dominican students were of ALANA heritage (African American,

Hispanic, Asian American, or Native American); 29% of Dominican students were

Hispanics of any race, 15% were Asian American, 3% were African American, and 2%

were Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; and 29% of the students were the first in their

family to attend college, and 86% of undergraduate students received financial aid
(Dominican University of California, 2011).

The researchers compared two sets of groups: 1) FGS compared to non-FGS, and
2) students involved in general peer mentoring compared to students without peer
mentoring. Out of the 67 total participants, 25 identified as FGS, 40 identified as non-
FGS, and 2 were unidentified; 15 participants reported using peer mentoring and 42 did
not use peer mentoring

Approval to conduct this research was obtained from DUC's Institutional Review
Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS Approval #10116). (See
Appendix C). There were no physical risks involved in order to participate in this study.
However, it was anticipated that participants might experience minor emotional distress
or psychological discomfort when reflecting on their college transition and first year
experience. To assure their protection, participants were informed that participation in
the online survey was completely voluntary. Therefore, participants could refuse to
participate in the survey or discontinue their participation at anytime during the survey.
A description of expectations and a list of support services available on campus were
provided at the beginning of the survey.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected using a survey designed specifically for this study called the
First Year College Experience Survey: Adaptation to University Life (See Appendix A).
This survey was designed to collect information on students' experience of their first year
of college with regards to sense of belonging, sense of social support; developed mastery
of academic and social skills; adaptive responses and adaptive strategies used;

satisfaction with academic , social , and transition experience; and overall satisfaction with the first year of college. This survey was created using www.surveymonkey.com and completed for the sole purpose of exploring the differences in students' first year experiences and to investigate the influence of peer mentoring among the sample groups.

The survey consisted of questions using Likert-scales and rank-ordered questions to quantify students' first year experience at DUC, and it included basic demographic questions. In order to create this survey, the researchers pulled questions from already established questionnaires and surveys on students' first year experiences. Permission was granted to pull questions from the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ), College Student Expectations Questionnaire (CSXQ), and the SERU Student Experience Survey Instrument. See Appendix G for permission letters and proof of permission received. The researchers designed this new survey tool therefore there are no data on validity or reliability. However, the survey was tested on a class of sophomore occupational therapy students for internal consistency between questions and answers, and for overall legibility and comprehension of the survey. (See Appendix A).

The researchers also planned to collect GPA and retention data for the general freshman population at DUC to see whether generation status and/or peer mentoring had an effect of students' academic outcomes. Due to institutional barriers, the researchers were unable to collect these data.

Data on students' first year experience were collected during the spring semester of 2013. Participants for the survey portion of the study were recruited through convenience sampling. The researchers requested permission from instructors teaching freshmen history classes to make announcements about the research study (see Appendix

D for letters of permission and Appendix E for signed faculty permission slips). They also used mass emailing (see Appendix F for recruitment email) and flyers (see Appendices H and I) as recruitment strategies. The in-class announcements described details of the study and informed students that an email would be sent out to all first year freshmen students with the survey link attached. Fliers were passed out during class describing the study (see Appendix I for classroom flyer). Flyers were also posted on campus bulletin boards (see Appendix H for bulletin flyers).

Permission was granted from DUC to send an email to the first-year students to request study participation. In the mass email, participants were told that the researchers were gathering data on their transition to college experience. The participants remained anonymous throughout the electronic survey process, therefore responses to surveys were not traced back to the participants. Participants also had the opportunity to voluntarily enter a raffle to win one of three $25 VISA gift cards. Participants who decided to enter the raffle were directed to a new web link after completion of the survey to ensure that their raffle entry was not connected to their survey responses. The three winners were then randomly chosen by the researchers and contacted by email to receive their gift card. All email addresses were destroyed immediately after the three gift certificates were awarded. Data from surveys and any additional information relevant to this study were saved onto a password protected computer.

Data Analysis

1. Are there differences in sense of belonging among first year FGS and non-FGS, and students who used peer mentoring and students who did not?

To answer this question, independent samples t-tests were used to measure sense of belonging. The Likert-scale questions that were designed to respond to sense of belonging on campus were collapsed and combined into an average, and the two groups were compared using that average. Independent samples t-tests, 2-tailed were used to compare means and determine if statistically significant differences existed.

2. Are there differences in the types of skills developed among FGS and non-FGS and students who used peer mentoring and students who did not?

To answer this question, parametric statistics were used to measure the types of skills the students developed and any self-reported improvements made from when the students first started college in the fall 2012 until the spring 2013 when the survey was taken. Questions that measured the level of mastery when they started college and their current level of mastery were used to see if students made improvements in their social and academic skills. A paired samples t-test was used to see which skills were gained and where improvements in the levels of mastery were made in our entire sample. Independent samples t-tests, 2-tailed, were used to compare generational status and peer mentoring status to academic and social skills developed to determine any significant differences in the various categories of skills. Independent samples t-test, 2-tailed, were also used to compare means of various academic and social skills amongst the groups from the beginning of the school year (start levels of mastery)

3. Are there differences in the types of adaptive responses and strategies among FGS and non-FGS, and students who used peer mentoring and students who did not?

To answer this question, parametric statistics were used to measure the adaptive responses and strategies amongst FGS and non-FGS, and mentored students and non-

mentored students. Questions from the survey that measured the adaptive response

modes and behaviors when faced with a challenge were compared. Independent samples

t-tests were used to compare the means of the adaptive responses and strategies questions

to determine if there were differences in the number of strategies used and how

individuals respond among FGS and non-FGS and the mentored students and non-

mentored students.

4. Are there differences in satisfaction among FGS and non-FGS, and students who used

peer mentoring and students who did not?

To answer this question, parametric statistics was used to measure the level of

satisfaction between the two groups. Questions regarding overall satisfaction in social

experience, academic experience, transition to college, and overall first year experience

were combined and collapsed into an average score. An independent samples t-test, 2-

tailed, was used to compare the average scores of FGS and non-FGS and mentored

students and non-mentored students.

Results

See tables in appendices.

Sense of Belonging

A statistically significant difference ($p=0.012$) was found in sense of belonging

between FGS and non-FGS (Table 4). FGS experienced a greater sense of belonging

than non-FGS. There was no significant difference in sense of belonging between those

who used peer mentoring and those who did not ($p=0.897$) (Table 8).

Types of Academic and Social Skills Developed

Overall, both FGS and non-FGS showed improvement in their mastery levels of academic and social skills (Table 5). Independent T-tests on the start level of mastery (level of skills starting at the beginning of the year) between FGS and non-FGS found that there was a statistically significant difference in communication skills with peers ($p=0.009$). FGS showed having a higher start level of mastery in communicating with peers than non-FGS (Table 6).

Within the group of students who used peer mentoring and who did not, independent t-tests found that there was a statistically significant difference ($p=0.035$) in academic skill development (Table 9). Those who used peer mentoring gained more skills over time academically than students who did not use peer mentoring. The results of the independent t-tests on start levels of mastery also showed a statistically significant difference in start level of mastery in academic material comprehension and skill ($p=0.003$) between the peer mentoring and non-peer mentored group, and a statistically significant difference in start level of mastery in ability to use resources ($p=0.006$). Students who used peer mentoring started college with lower levels of mastery in academic material comprehension and skill, and lower levels of mastery in the ability to use resources (i.e. library, databases, internet, etc) (Table 10).

Types of Adaptive Responses and Strategies

There was no statistical significance found among FGS and non-FGS in strategies used when faced with a challenge in school, reactions displayed when faced with a challenge, behaviors displayed when faced with an academic or social challenge, or reactions when one's strategy fails to produce a desired outcome. Among students who

used peer mentoring and those who did not, there was a statistically significant difference in the number of strategies used ($p=0.025$). Students who used peer mentoring had more strategies to use when confronted with a challenge and to problem solve than students who did not use peer mentoring (Table 11). A statistically significant difference was also found in reactions when challenged and when one strategy failed to produce a desired outcome ($p=0.018$). Students who used peer mentoring reported only using the same original strategy and making changes or modifications to that strategy when their strategy failed. There was no significant difference found among mentored students and non-mentored students in their reactions when faced with a challenge in general or specifically when faced with a challenge academically or socially (Table 11).

Satisfaction

There was no statistically significant difference found in the amount of satisfaction with the college experience between FGS and non-FGS (Table 4). However, there was a statistically significant difference in the amount of satisfaction experienced among students who used peer mentoring and those who did not ($p=0.048$) (Table 8).

Peer Mentoring

No significant difference was found between FGS and non-FGS in the use of peer mentoring services using Chi Square crosstabs ($p = 0.655$).

<div align="center">

Discussion

</div>

This study expanded the understanding of first-year students' transition and adaptation to the college environment by investigating the effects of general peer mentoring and generational status, and looking at the differences between FGS and non-FGS, and students who used general peer mentoring and students who did not. The

researchers' original purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of DUC's peer mentoring program, Bridging the Gap for First Generation Students (BG4FGS), in helping FGS transition and the development of occupational adaptation skills. However, due to the lack of participants from the BG4FGS group, the researchers were only able to collect data from FGS, non-FGS and first year college students who used peer mentoring in general.

Determining the differences between FGS and non-FGS and the effects of general peer mentoring on first year students' college transition and adaptation to college life was measured by quantifying four areas of first year students' college experiences: 1) sense of belonging, 2) developed academic and social skills, 3) adaptive strategies and responses used, and 4) overall satisfaction with the college experience. The results of this study showed that there were differences among FGS and non-FGS in sense of belonging and start level of mastery in communication skills with peers. Differences were also found among peer mentored students and non-mentored students in level of mastery in academic material comprehension entering college and amount of academic skill gained; level of mastery in the ability to use academic resources (i.e. internet, library, databases, etc.) entering college; reactions when faced with a challenge and the types of strategies used when one's original strategy failed to produce a desired outcome; the number of strategies available for use when faced with a challenge; and satisfaction with the first year college experience.

Effects of Generational Status

The significant findings around generational status were the opposite of what the researchers expected. When comparing the experiences of FGS and non-FGS in their

transition to college life and occupational adaptation skills, the researchers found that FGS reported having greater sense of belonging to DUC than their non-FGS counterparts. FGS reporting a greater sense of belonging than non-FGS is not congruent with previous research, which has consistently found that FGS tend to experience a lower sense of belonging to their academic institution than non-FGS due to cultural mismatches. Another interesting finding from the data was that FGS self-reported higher levels of mastery in communication skills with peers than non-FGS. This finding also contradicted what some previous studies on FGS have found, but it is linked to the researchers' previous finding that FGS experienced a greater sense of belonging than non-FGS. These two interesting findings imply that FGS may be better at establishing peer groups than their non-FGS counterparts. These findings raise the question of whether there is something unique about DUC, or possibly all private liberal art universities that allow FGS to feel more comfortable in their transition to college and adaptation to university life.

No statistically significant differences were found between FGS and non-FGS in the following areas: reactions when faced with an academic or social challenge; number of strategies used to produce a desired outcome; and reactions displayed when one's strategy fails to produce a desired outcome. These findings show that FGS and non-FGS appear to be responding similarly to challenges and have the same number of strategies available for use to problem solve. The relationship between generational status and the use of peer mentoring was also explored and the results showed that there was no relationship between generational status and whether or not students chose to use peer mentoring. Chi-square and crosstabs data confirmed that there was no significant

difference between FGS and non-FGS in the use of peer mentoring. This could be due to the fact that few students in the BG4FGS participated.

Employment status and hours worked between FGS and non-FGS was also explored. Chi-square and crosstabs data showed that slightly more FGS worked than expected, and slightly more non-FGS did not work than expected. Despite these findings, the differences are still not significant. Of the students who worked, both FGS and non-FGS did not report working over 20 hours per week during the academic school year. This finding is not congruent with what the literature and previous studies have found where FGS are more likely to work more than 20 hours per week than non-FGS. This positive finding shows that FGS at DUC are not working over the recommended hours for college students.

Effects of Peer Mentoring vs. No Peer Mentoring

When comparing the effects of using peer mentoring during the first year of college, the researchers found there was no difference in sense of belonging between mentored students and non-mentored students. However, the researchers did find statistically significant differences in academic skill development between mentored students and non-mentored students. Students who used peer mentoring self-reported lower start levels of mastery in comprehension of academic material and academic preparedness at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year than their counterparts who did not use peer mentoring. Students who knew that they struggled academically and who were unfamiliar with the academic resources available to them, seem to have actively sought out peer mentoring and other support services. Also, academic resources and other support services may have been recommended, encouraged, or required by

teachers and other faculty for these students. These findings not only demonstrated that students are taking responsibility for their learning experience, but also confirmed the internal consistency of the data.

Students who used general peer mentoring services also showed greater gain and improvement in the development of academic skills than students who did not use peer mentoring. An explanation for this is that students who sought out peer mentoring services had lower start levels of mastery in academic skills at the beginning of the school year, and therefore had more to gain and to improve on. Despite the greater level of skill gained, students who used peer mentoring services did not excel beyond their counterparts who did not use peer mentoring in overall mastery of academic material and skill. These findings imply that peer mentoring services helped students entering college with low levels of mastery in academic skill and preparedness to essentially "catch up" to the students who did not need peer mentoring services.

The researchers also found differences in the types of adaptive strategies used by students who used peer mentoring and students who did not. Students who used peer mentoring self-reported having more strategies to problem solve and use when faced with a challenge than students who did not use peer mentoring. This finding may confirm that peer mentoring is helping students build strategies in order to problem solve.

In addition to the difference in the amount of adaptive strategies available when the original strategy used to confront a challenge doesn't produce the outcome desired, 100% of the students who used peer mentoring reported changing or modifying the same strategy only. Students who used peer mentoring did not try to use a new strategy, whereas their counterparts who did not use peer mentoring tried new strategies. These

results remain consistent with the data collected and suggest that peer mentoring is effective in improving academic skill and building problem-solving strategies, but may not be as effective in helping students build flexibility in their adaptive strategies so that they may use their strategies across different contexts.

When comparing overall satisfaction with the college experience between students who used peer mentoring and students who did not use peer mentoring, the students who used peer mentoring reported being more satisfied with their experience than the students who did not use peer mentoring. All students who used peer mentoring reported either being satisfied or very satisfied with their overall experience, and students who did not use peer mentoring showed greater variability in their responses to overall satisfaction. This finding confirmed the researchers' hypothesis that a difference in the level of satisfaction experienced between the peer mentored and non-peer mentored group would exist.

Limitations

There are several research limitations that need to be addressed. These findings may be limited to other small private universities with a female population of almost 90%. Due to the small sample size, results may not be generalizable beyond the specific population. Also, conducting the study on a small sample of students who participated in various peer mentoring programs means the results may not generalize to other specific peer mentoring programs, such as the BG4FGS peer mentoring program. It should also be noted that data relied on participants' self-report on their experience. Participants may exaggerate thoughts and opinions, which can form biased answers or participants may have simply misunderstand questions or failed to recall information. The designed

questionnaire had no validity or reliability, therefore the instrument may not have captured essential information on the participants' first year experience.

Implications & Recommendations

Implications that can be drawn from these results are that students who are referred to peer mentoring or actively seek out peer mentoring generally start college with weaker skills and have fewer strategies to use when faced with challenges than those who are not referred to peer mentoring and do not seek out peer mentoring services. Generally, students who are in peer mentoring spend their first year of college gaining and developing skills and adaptive strategies. Although these skills do develop by the end of the first year, they are not always applying these skills to carry out effective adaptive strategies to overcome challenges. Therefore, peer mentoring should work on helping students develop flexibility in their adaptive strategies in order to apply these strategies to different challenges and across different contexts.

The findings presented in this study on generational status and first year experiences were the opposite of what the researchers expected and contradicted what previous studies have found on FGS, but these findings create an area of new interest and could potentially add to the literature. There may be something unique about private liberal art universities such as their small size, safe environment, and low teacher-student ratio that attracts FGS. The findings from this research study imply that FGS may have more positive experiences and a smoother transition to university life at small private universities than FGS at larger public institutions such as state colleges and universities. Additional research needs to be done to explore the differences in first year experiences

and adaptation to university life between FGS at large state colleges and universities and at small institutions or private universities.

Lastly, qualitative research exploring why FGS choose to attend a 4-year college right out of high school as opposed to attending a junior college first should be conducted. This research could potentially help identify some of the characteristics displayed by successful FGS compared to unsuccessful FGS described in the literature and past research studies.

Conclusion

The adaptation to the occupational challenges that the transition to college presents for all first year college students can be an overwhelming and stressful experience. First-generation college students (FGS) enter college with a different set of life experiences and face different occupational challenges than non-FGS (Barry et al., 2009; Purswell et al., 2008). In general, FGS receive less support in comparison to their non-FGS peers, including family, social, and peer support. In addition, FGS also experience a lack of cultural capital, which puts them at a disadvantage in having a successful college experience and completing their degree (Mehta et al., 2011). This lack of support and insufficient knowledge of what to expect during the transition to college leads FGS to a poor adaptation to the college environment, and contributes to the fact that FGS are four times more likely to drop-out of college before their second year begins than non-FGS (Ramsey & Peale, 2010).

The effectiveness of peer mentoring for FGS during the transition to college has not been explored as thoroughly as peer mentoring programs for non-FGS first year college students. The purpose of this study was to further examine the experience of

DUC's FGS in their first year of college and their adaptation to the occupational challenges of college. The researchers studied the effectiveness of peer mentoring in general for first year college student, with an emphasis on first year FGS, in their transition to college. Effectiveness was measured by looking at developed sense of belonging; increased satisfaction with college experience; developed academic and social skills, problem solving skills, and college knowledge skills that students developed during their first year of college; and the adaptive responses and modes of behavior when faced with a challenge. Peer mentoring may be a way to help FGS overcome occupational challenges by providing these students with additional support, services, and adaptive skills to enhance their occupational performance as college students. Peer mentoring designed for FGS in their first year of college may also create a satisfying college experience and contribute to successful completion of college.

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Appendix A:

First Year College Experience Survey: Adaptation to University Life

First Year CollegeExperience Survey: Adaptation to University Life

This survey is designed to explore your first year college experience and adaptation to university life. The survey will consist of 25-35 questions exploring your experiences at Dominican University as well as basic demographic questions. Your participation in this survey is voluntary and all information will be kept anonymous. Your responses will only be used for the purpose of this research study.

Participants may experience minor emotional distress or psychological discomfort when reflecting on their college transition and first year experience. If so, Dominican University offers free and confidential counseling services for students. For an appointment call: (415)485-3258 or drop into the University Services Office in Bertrand room 21 Monday-Friday.

Basic Demographics

*1. What is your age?

- ○ 18
- ○ 19
- ○ 20
- ○ 21

*2. What is your gender?

- ○ Male
- ○ Female

*3. What is your race or ethnic identification?

- ○ Black or African American
- ○ Asian American
- ○ Hispanic
- ○ White
- ○ Bi-Racial/ Multi-Racial

Other (please specify)

[_____]

First Year CollegeExperience Survey: Adaptation to University Life

*4. Did either of your parents graduate from a 4 year college?

- C No
- C Yes, both parents
- C Yes, only one parent
- C Don't know

*5. Please select your major/ area of study

- C Art-Studio
- C Art-Graphic
- C Art History
- C Biological Sciences
- C Business Administration
- C Chemistry
- C Communications and Media Studies
- C Dance/Lines Ballet
- C English
- C English with a Writing Emphasis
- C Health Science/ Pre-OT
- C History
- C Humanities and Cultural Studies

- C Interdisciplinary Studies
- C International Studies
- C Liberal Studies/Teacher Preparation
- C Music
- C Music with Connection in Performance
- C Nursing
- C Political Science
- C Psychology
- C Public Health
- C Religion
- C Women and Gender Studies
- C Undeclared/Vision Quest

*6. Where do you live during the academic school year?

- C I live in a dormitory or other campus housing
- C I live within walking/biking distance of Dominican University
- C I live within driving/commuting distance of Dominican University

First Year CollegeExperience Survey: Adaptation to University Life

＊7. With whom do you live with during the academic school year? (Check all that apply)

☐ No one, I live alone

☐ One or more other students

☐ My spouse/partner

☐ My child(ren)

☐ My parents

☐ Other relatives/family

☐ Friends who are not students at Dominican University

Other (please specify)

[   ]

＊8. Do you have a job during the academic school year?

○ Yes, I have a job on campus

○ Yes, I have a job off campus

○ No, I do not have a job

＊9. About how many hours per week do you usually spend working on a job for pay?

○ None, I do not have a job

○ 1-10 hours

○ 11-20 hours

○ 21-30 hours

○ 31-40 hours

○ More than 40 hours

＊10. Are you a student athlete at Dominican University? (Men's/Women's basketball, Women's volleyball, softball, lacrosse, tennis, Men's/Women's golf, Men's/Women's cross-country, Men's/Women's soccer)

○ Yes

○ No

＊11. Are you currently participating in the first-generation peer mentoring program, "Bridging the Gap for First-Generation Students?"

○ Yes

○ No

First Year CollegeExperience Survey: Adaptation to University Life

Developed Sense of Belonging & Social Support

*12. Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements concerning Dominican University's campus climate.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Dominican University is a safe campus.	○	○	○	○	○
Dominican University is a caring and supportive campus.	○	○	○	○	○
Dominican University is a hostile campus.	○	○	○	○	○
Dominican University is an impersonal and uninvolved campus.	○	○	○	○	○
Dominican University is tolerant of diversity.	○	○	○	○	○

*13. Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements concerning sense of belonging at Dominican University.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am proud to be a student at Dominican University.	○	○	○	○	○
Dominican University values my opinions.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that I belong at Dominican University	○	○	○	○	○

*14. Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements concerning social support at Dominican University.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel that I have someone to go to and confide in for social support at Dominican University.	○	○	○	○	○
Students receive adequate support during their transition to college during their first year at university.	○	○	○	○	○
Support groups and programs are accessible at Dominican University.	○	○	○	○	○

First Year CollegeExperience Survey: Adaptation to University Life

*15. Please indicate, if any, which Dominican clubs and/or organizations you have been involved in (Check all that apply):

☐ Athletic Clubs (Coaching Corps, Dominican Mountain Bike Team, Dominican Sailing Club, Penguin Student-Athlete Advisory Committee- PSAAC)

☐ Campus Diversity Clubs (Black Student Union-BSU, ELS Conversation Partners Program, Gay-Straight Alliance, Global Ambassadors, Kapamilya, Latino Cultural Club, United Immigrants of Dominican University)

☐ Religious Clubs (Brothers and Sisters in Christ, Jewish Student Union, Muslim Student Union, Ripple Effect, Students Promoting Dominican Ideals/Campus Ministry, Roots Student Fellowship)

☐ Social Clubs (Circle "K," Debate Team, Dominican Harry Potter Association, Dominican Toastmasters, Green Club, Hope for African Children Club, Perceptions, ROTARACT, Spirit, X-Press)

☐ Major Related Clubs (Accounting and Finance Club, Business Bakers Association, Dominican University of California Business Association, Dominican Political Science Association, Dominican Nursing Student Association, Dominican Student Occupational Therapy Association)

☐ Honor Society

☐ Student Government (ASDU)

☐ I am NOT involved in a Dominican club/organization

Other (please specify)

[   ]

*16. How did you get involved in the above Dominican clubs and/or organizations? (Check all that apply)

☐ Through a program where I receive course credit (e.g. field studies, credit for tutoring)

☐ Through another student organization on campus

☐ Through a university department or program

☐ Through my religious organization of church

☐ Through my internship

☐ Through my peer mentor

☐ Through my peer mentor at "Bridging the Gap for First-Generation Students

☐ Through a friend and/or classmate

☐ I found the club and/or organization on my own

☐ I am NOT involved in a Dominican club/organization

Other (please specify)

[   ]

Developed Academic and Social Skills

First Year CollegeExperience Survey: Adaptation to University Life

Reflecting back on your time here at Dominican University and your adaptation to university life, please rate your level of mastery in the following areas from when you started and your current mastery level. (Very Poor=F, Poor=D, Fair=C, Good=B, Very Good=A)

*17. I can read and comprehend academic material

	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Your mastery level when you started	○	○	○	○	○
Your current mastery level	○	○	○	○	○

*18. I can prepare and make a presentation

	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Your mastery level when you started	○	○	○	○	○
Your current mastery level	○	○	○	○	○

*19. I can locate, analyze and critically evaluate information using 2-3 of the following resources: internet, library, databases (articles, textbooks, journals, etc.)

	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Your mastery level when you started	○	○	○	○	○
Your current mastery level	○	○	○	○	○

*20. I can identify, define, and solve problems

	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Your mastery level when you started	○	○	○	○	○
Your current mastery level	○	○	○	○	○

*21. I can communicate with my instructors effectively

	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Your mastery level when you started	○	○	○	○	○
Your current mastery level	○	○	○	○	○

*22. I can communicate with my peers effectively

	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Your level of mastery when you started	○	○	○	○	○
Your current level of mastery	○	○	○	○	○

First Year CollegeExperience Survey: Adaptation to University Life

*23. I can take responsibility for my own learning

	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Your level of mastery when you started	○	○	○	○	○
Your current level of mastery	○	○	○	○	○

*24. I can manage my time, energy, and behavior to accomplish academic demands

	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Your level of mastery when you started	○	○	○	○	○
Your current level of mastery	○	○	○	○	○

*25. I can accurately assess and articulate my personal strengths and weaknesses

	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Your mastery level when you started	○	○	○	○	○
Your current mastery level	○	○	○	○	○

*26. I can learn from my bad experiences, self-reflect, and then recover from them

	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Your mastery level when you started	○	○	○	○	○
Your current mastery level	○	○	○	○	○

*27. I can recognize the advantages of moving outside my "comfort zone"

	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Your mastery level when you started	○	○	○	○	○
Your current mastery level	○	○	○	○	○

First Year CollegeExperience Survey: Adaptation to University Life

＊28. Please indicate any factors that may have influenced your development of mastery in the above areas (Check all that apply):

☐ Faculty/Teachers

☐ College Advisors/Counselors

☐ Staff in special advising offices (e.g. honors, athletics, etc.)

☐ Peer Mentors

☐ "Bridging the Gap for First-Generation Students" peer mentor

☐ Family Members

☐ Friends who are not students at Dominican University

Other (please specify)

_____

＊29. Please indicate how often you have used the following service areas during your time here at Dominican University to better help you adapt to university life

	Used Never	Used Rarely (once a semester)	Used Sometimes (once a month)	Used Often (weekly)	Used Frequently (daily)
Academic Advising	○	○	○	○	○
Career Resource Center	○	○	○	○	○
Counseling Services	○	○	○	○	○
Disability Services	○	○	○	○	○
Health Services	○	○	○	○	○
Job Placement/ Employment Services	○	○	○	○	○
Library Services	○	○	○	○	○
Orientation Program	○	○	○	○	○
Peer Mentoring	○	○	○	○	○
Tutoring Services/ The Learning Center (TLC)	○	○	○	○	○

Adaptive Response Modes & Behaviors

For the following scenarios, please choose one answer that best describes you.

＊30. When faced with a challenge (social, academic, etc.) in school

○ I have multiple strategies to help me solve the problem

○ I have one strategy to help me solve the problem

○ I have no strategies to help me solve the problem

First Year CollegeExperience Survey: Adaptation to University Life

✱31. When faced with a challenge (social, academic, etc.) in school I react in the following way

○ I react quickly/spontaneously and go with my gut feeling/instincts

○ I evaluate and analyze the situation first, then react and take action

○ I get stuck or frozen and don't act or take action

✱32. When faced with an academic challenge in school

○ I take on the challenge by myself and don't seek assistance or guidance from others (peers, friends, mentors, family, teachers, and/or counselors)

○ I take on the challenge and always seek assistance or guidance from others

○ I take on the challenge and sometimes seek assistance or guidance from others

○ I ignore the challenge and hope it fixes itself

✱33. When faced with a social challenge in school

○ I always confront the challenge and find strategies to develop a social interaction with others.

○ I sometimes confront the challenge and find strategies to develop social interaction with others.

○ I never confront the challenge.

✱34. When the strategy I used to confront a challenge doesn't produce the outcome I wanted

○ I try again using the same strategy

○ I modify/change the strategy I used

○ I use a new strategy

Satisfaction

✱35. Please rate your level of satisfaction with the following aspects at Dominican University

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Social Experience	○	○	○	○	○
Academic Experience	○	○	○	○	○
Your Transition to College	○	○	○	○	○
Overall, your first year at Dominican University	○	○	○	○	○

First Year CollegeExperience Survey: Adaptation to University Life

36. Is there anything else you would like to share about your first year experience at Dominican University?

Thank you for participating in our survey! Your help and feedback will contribute to research in the occupational therapy program at Dominican University. In addition, it will help improve programs designed for first year students.

If you would like to be entered into a raffle to win one of three $25 Visa gift cards, please send your name and email address to freshmanstudy16@gmail.com

Your information will be kept confidential and will only be used if you are a raffle winner. We will contact our winners at the end of spring semester.

Appendix B:

Results Tables

Table 1
Sample Characteristics

Characteristic	N=67	Percentage
Gender		
Male	9	13.4
Female	58	86.6
Age		
18	40	59.7
19	26	38.8
20	1	1.5
Generation Status		
FGS	25	37.3
non-FGS	40	59.7
Unknown	2	3
Ethnicity		
Black/African American	3	4.5
Asian American	16	23.9
Hispanic	10	14.9
White/Caucasian	28	41.8
Bi-Racial/Multiracial	10	14.9
Living Situation		
On-Campus/Dorm	60	89.6
Walking/Biking Distance	2	3
Driving/Commuting Distance	5	7.5
Student-Athlete Status		
Student-Athlete	10	14.9
Non Student-Athlete	57	85.1

Table 2

Demographics of FGS and Non-FGS

Characteristic	FGS n=25	non-FGS n=40	unknown n=2
Gender			
Male	3	4	2
Female	22	36	0
Age			
18	18	21	1
19	7	18	1
20	0	1	0
Ethnicity			
Black/African American	1	1	1
Asian American	6	10	0
Hispanic	6	4	0
White/Caucasian	10	18	0
Bi-Racial/Multiracial	2	7	1
Living Situation			
On-Campus/Dorm	23	36	1
Walking/Biking Distance	1	1	0
Driving/Commuting Distance	1	3	1
Student-Athlete Status			
Student-Athlete	5	5	0
Non Student-Athlete	20	35	2

Table 3

Demographics of Peer Mentored and Non-Peer Mentored

Characteristic	Mentored n=15	non-Mentored n=52
Gender		
Male	3	6
Female	12	46
Age		
18	9	31
19	6	20
20	0	1
Ethnicity		
Black/African American	0	3
Asian American	4	12
Hispanic	5	5
White/Caucasian	5	23
Bi-Racial/Multiracial	1	9
Living Situation		
On-Campus/Dorm	12	48
Walking/Biking Distance	2	0
Driving/Commuting Distance	1	4
Student-Athlete Status		
Student-Athlete	5	5
Non Student-Athlete	10	47

Table 4

Generation Status and Sense of Belonging & Satisfaction

Variable	FGS		non-FGS		p
	n	M	n	M	
Sense of Belonging*	23	4.0	39	3.611	*0.012
Satisfaction	21	3.809	38	3.651	0.455

Table 5

Generation Status and Academic/Social Improvement

	FGS n=22	non-FGS n=38	
Variable	M	M	*p*
Academic Material	0.318	0.158	0.24
Presentation	0.318	0.342	0.899
Resources	0.682	0.474	0.212
Problem Solving	0.182	0.237	0.668
Communication w/Instructor	0.409	0.211	0.361
Communication w/Peers	0.046	0.026	0.896
Responsibility for Learning	0.409	0.237	0.344
Time Management	0.364	0.342	0.934
Assess Strengths/Weaknesses	0.182	0.237	0.653
Learn from Experiences	0.546	0.316	0.196
Comfort Zone	0.364	0.368	0.979

Table 6

Generation Status and Academic/Social Skill Start Mastery Levels

	FGS n=22	non-FGS n=38	
Variable	M	M	*p*
Academic Material	3.91	4.03	0.533
Presentation	3.77	3.79	0.939
Resources	3.64	3.61	0.901
Problem Solving	4	3.89	0.588
Communication w/Instructor	4.05	3.82	0.261
Communication w/Peers*	4.55	4.05	*0.009
Responsibility for Learning	4.23	4.05	0.452
Time Management	3.82	3.55	0.325
Assess Strengths/Weaknesses	3.82	3.76	0.782
Learn from Experiences	3.68	3.84	0.464
Comfort Zone	3.86	3.84	0.914

Table 7

Generation Status and Adaptive Responses and Modes of Behavior

	FGS n=21	non-FGS n=38	
Variable	M	M	*p*
Number of Strategies Used	1.1	1.16	0.484
Reaction when Faced w/Challenge	1.95	1.87	0.358
When Faced w/ an Academic Challenge	2.48	2.5	0.902
When Faced w/ a Social Challenge	1.52	1.76	0.132
When Strategy Fails	2.1	2.11	0.913

Table 8

Peer Mentoring and Sense of Belonging & Satisfaction

	Mentored		non-Mentored		*p*
Variable	n	M	n	M	
Sense of Belonging	15	3.76	49	3.74	0.897
Satisfaction*	15	3.95	46	3.59	*0.048

Table 9

Peer Mentoring and Academic/Social Skill Improvement

	Mentored n=15	non-Mentored n=47	
Variable			
	M	M	*p*
Academic Material*	0.467	0.127	*0.035
Presentation	0.6	0.255	0.153
Resources	0.8	0.489	0.169
Problem Solving	0.133	0.234	0.415
Communication w/Instructor	0.333	0.255	0.776
Communication w/Peers	0.2	-0.085	0.178
Responsibility for Learning	0.267	0.298	0.862
Time Management	0.4	0.34	0.858
Assess Strengths/Weaknesses	0.267	0.192	0.592
Learn from Experiences	0.467	0.383	0.696
Comfort Zone	0.467	0.34	0.593

Table 10

Peer Mentoring and Academic/Social Skill Start Mastery Levels

Variable	Mentored n=15	non-Mentored n=47	
	M	M	p
Academic Material*	3.6	4.13	*0.003
Presentation	3.53	3.85	0.211
Resources*	3.07	3.79	*0.006
Problem Solving	3.73	4.02	0.13
Communication w/Instructor	3.93	3.87	0.775
Communication w/Peers	4.13	4.28	0.525
Responsibility for Learning	4.27	4.09	0.413
Time Management	3.47	3.66	0.476
Assess Strengths/Weaknesses	3.93	3.74	0.333
Learn from Experiences	3.8	3.79	0.957
Comfort Zone	3.73	3.89	0.5

Table 11

Peer Mentoring and Adaptive Responses and Modes of Behavior

Variable	Mentored n=15	non-Mentored n=46	
	M	M	p
Number of Strategies Used*	1.4	1.07	*0.025
Reaction when Faced w/Challenge	1.8	1.91	0.367
When Faced w/ an Academic Challenge	2.73	0.077	0.077
When Faced w/ a Social Challenge	1.47	0.107	0.107
When Strategy Fails*	2	0.018	*0.018

Appendix C:

IRB Approval Letter

DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY
of CALIFORNIA
1890

March 4, 2013

Julia Wong
2201 5th Ave
San Rafael, CA 94901

Dear Julia:

I have reviewed your proposal (entitled, Evaluating the Effectiveness of Peer Mentoring in Helping First Year, First Generation Students at Dominican University of California Develop Occupational Adaptation Skills) submitted to the Dominican University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS Application, #10116). I am approving it as having met the requirements for expedited review.

In your final report or paper please indicate that your project was approved by the IRBPHS and indicate the identification number.

I wish you well in your very interesting research effort.

Sincerely,

Martha A Nelson

Martha Nelson, Ph.D.
Chair, IRBPHS

cc: Stacy Frauwirth

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs ● 50 Acacia Avenue, San Rafael, California 95901-2298 ● 415-257-1310
www.dominican.edu

Appendix D:

DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA
LETTER OF PERMISSION TO DOMINICAN FACULTY

Professor Name
Dominican University of California

RE: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Professor:

This letter confirms that you have read a brief description of our research study that examines the experiences of students in their first year of college and that we have your permission to recruit participants for this study from your Big History class at a date and time convenient for you. We would only need 5 minutes of class time to summarize our research, ask for volunteers, and leave our materials.

This research study is an important part of our graduate studies as occupational therapy students at Dominican. Stacy Frauwirth, PhD (cand), OTR/L, Assistant Professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy, is supervising our research. If you have questions about the project you may contact Stacy Frauwirth at (415) 257-1380, or the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (415) 257-0168.

If our request to contact the students in your class meets with your approval, please sign this letter on the line provided below, date, and return this letter to Stacy Frauwirth as soon as possible. We will then contact you to arrange a convenient time for visiting your class.
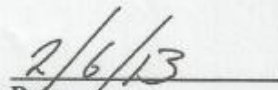
Thanks for your assistance.

Sincerely,

LaShelle Rullan, Jovita Vazquez, Julia Wong
Occupational Therapy Student Researchers
Department of Occupational Therapy
Dominican University of California
San Rafael, CA 94901

I agree with the above request.

_____   _____

Signature   **Date**

Appendix E:

Signed Permission Slips by Teachers

DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA
LETTER OF PERMISSION TO DOMINICAN FACULTY

Professor Debbie Daunt
Dominican University of California

RE: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Professor Daunt:

This letter confirms that you have read a brief description of our research study that examines the experiences of students in their first year of college and that we have your permission to recruit participants for this study from your Big History classes at a date and time convenient for you. We would only need 5 minutes of class time to summarize our research, ask for volunteers, and leave our materials.

This research study is an important part of our graduate studies as occupational therapy students at Dominican. Stacy Frauwirth, PhD (cand), OTR/L, Assistant Professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy, is supervising our research. If you have questions about the project you may contact Stacy Frauwirth at (415) 257-1380, or the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (415) 257-0168.

If our request to contact the students in your class meets with your approval, please sign this letter on the line provided below, date, and return this letter to Stacy Frauwirth as soon as possible. We will then contact you to arrange a convenient time for visiting your class.

Thanks for your assistance.

Sincerely,

LaShelle Rullan, Jovita Vazquez, Julia Wong
Occupational Therapy Student Researchers
Department of Occupational Therapy
Dominican University of California
San Rafael, CA 94901

I agree with the above request.

Signature

Date 2/6/13

DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA
LETTER OF PERMISSION TO DOMINICAN FACULTY

Professor Harlan Stelmach
Dominican University of California

RE: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Professor Stelmach:

This letter confirms that you have read a brief description of our research study that examines the experiences of students in their first year of college and that we have your permission to recruit participants for this study from your Big History classes at a date and time convenient for you. We would only need 5 minutes of class time to summarize our research, ask for volunteers, and leave our materials.

This research study is an important part of our graduate studies as occupational therapy students at Dominican. Stacy Frauwirth, PhD (cand), OTR/L, Assistant Professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy, is supervising our research. If you have questions about the project you may contact Stacy Frauwirth at (415) 257-1380, or the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (415) 257-0168.
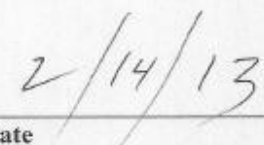
If our request to contact the students in your class meets with your approval, please sign this letter on the line provided below, date, and return this letter to Stacy Frauwirth as soon as possible. We will then contact you to arrange a convenient time for visiting your class.

Thanks for your assistance.

Sincerely,

LaShelle Rullan, Jovita Vazquez, Julia Wong
Occupational Therapy Student Researchers
Department of Occupational Therapy
Dominican University of California
San Rafael, CA 94901

I agree with the above request.

_____   2/14/13
Signature   **Date**

DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA
LETTER OF PERMISSION TO DOMINICAN FACULTY

Professor Judy Halebsky
Dominican University of California

RE: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Professor Halebsky:

This letter confirms that you have read a brief description of our research study that examines the experiences of students in their first year of college and that we have your permission to recruit participants for this study from your Big History classes at a date and time convenient for you. We would only need 5 minutes of class time to summarize our research, ask for volunteers, and leave our materials.

This research study is an important part of our graduate studies as occupational therapy students at Dominican. Stacy Frauwirth, PhD (cand), OTR/L, Assistant Professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy, is supervising our research. If you have questions about the project you may contact Stacy Frauwirth at (415) 257-1380, or the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (415) 257-0168.
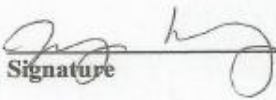
If our request to contact the students in your class meets with your approval, please sign this letter on the line provided below, date, and return this letter to Stacy Frauwirth as soon as possible. We will then contact you to arrange a convenient time for visiting your class.

Thanks for your assistance.

Sincerely,

LaShelle Rullan, Jovita Vazquez, Julia Wong
Occupational Therapy Student Researchers
Department of Occupational Therapy
Dominican University of California
San Rafael, CA 94901

I agree with the above request.

_____
Signature

02/01/2013
Date

DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA
LETTER OF PERMISSION TO DOMINICAN FACULTY

Professor Mojgan Behmand
Dominican University of California

RE: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Professor Behmand:

This letter confirms that you have read a brief description of our research study that examines the experiences of students in their first year of college and that we have your permission to recruit participants for this study from your Big History classes at a date and time convenient for you. We would only need 5 minutes of class time to summarize our research, ask for volunteers, and leave our materials.

This research study is an important part of our graduate studies as occupational therapy students at Dominican. Stacy Frauwirth, PhD (cand), OTR/L, Assistant Professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy, is supervising our research. If you have questions about the project you may contact Stacy Frauwirth at (415) 257-1380, or the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (415) 257-0168.

If our request to contact the students in your class meets with your approval, please sign this letter on the line provided below, date, and return this letter to Stacy Frauwirth as soon as possible. We will then contact you to arrange a convenient time for visiting your class.

Thanks for your assistance.

Sincerely,

LaShelle Rullan, Jovita Vazquez, Julia Wong
Occupational Therapy Student Researchers
Department of Occupational Therapy
Dominican University of California
San Rafael, CA 94901

I agree with the above request.

M. Behmand
Signature

_2/28/2013_
Date

My class is TR 1:40-2:55 in Guz 112. Please contact me via email

DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA
LETTER OF PERMISSION TO DOMINICAN FACULTY

Professor Lindsey Dean
Dominican University of California

RE: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Professor Dean:

This letter confirms that you have read a brief description of our research study that examines the experiences of students in their first year of college and that we have your permission to recruit participants for this study from your Big History classes at a date and time convenient for you. We would only need 5 minutes of class time to summarize our research, ask for volunteers, and leave our materials.

This research study is an important part of our graduate studies as occupational therapy students at Dominican. Stacy Frauwirth, PhD (cand), OTR/L, Assistant Professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy, is supervising our research. If you have questions about the project you may contact Stacy Frauwirth at (415) 257-1380, or the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (415) 257-0168.
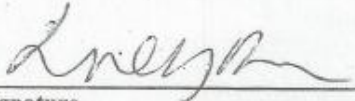
If our request to contact the students in your class meets with your approval, please sign this letter on the line provided below, date, and return this letter to Stacy Frauwirth as soon as possible. We will then contact you to arrange a convenient time for visiting your class.

Thanks for your assistance.

Sincerely,

LaShelle Rullan, Jovita Vazquez, Julia Wong
Occupational Therapy Student Researchers
Department of Occupational Therapy
Dominican University of California
San Rafael, CA 94901

I agree with the above request.

_____
Signature

2/11/13
Date

DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA
LETTER OF PERMISSION TO DOMINICAN FACULTY

Professor Thomas Burke
Dominican University of California

RE: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Professor Burke:

This letter confirms that you have read a brief description of our research study that examines the experiences of students in their first year of college and that we have your permission to recruit participants for this study from your Big History classes at a date and time convenient for you. We would only need 5 minutes of class time to summarize our research, ask for volunteers, and leave our materials.

This research study is an important part of our graduate studies as occupational therapy students at Dominican. Stacy Frauwirth, PhD (cand), OTR/L, Assistant Professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy, is supervising our research. If you have questions about the project you may contact Stacy Frauwirth at (415) 257-1380, or the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (415) 257-0168.
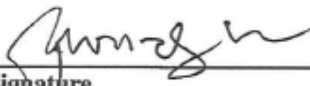
If our request to contact the students in your class meets with your approval, please sign this letter on the line provided below, date, and return this letter to Stacy Frauwirth as soon as possible. We will then contact you to arrange a convenient time for visiting your class.

Thanks for your assistance.

Sincerely,

LaShelle Rullan, Jovita Vazquez, Julia Wong
Occupational Therapy Student Researchers
Department of Occupational Therapy
Dominican University of California
San Rafael, CA 94901

I agree with the above request.

_____
Signature

_2/4/13_
Date

DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA
LETTER OF PERMISSION TO DOMINICAN FACULTY

Professor Heidi Chretien
Dominican University of California

RE: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Professor Chretien:

This letter confirms that you have read a brief description of our research study that examines the experiences of students in their first year of college and that we have your permission to recruit participants for this study from your Big History classes at a date and time convenient for you. We would only need 5 minutes of class time to summarize our research, ask for volunteers, and leave our materials.

This research study is an important part of our graduate studies as occupational therapy students at Dominican. Stacy Frauwirth, PhD (cand), OTR/L, Assistant Professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy, is supervising our research. If you have questions about the project you may contact Stacy Frauwirth at (415) 257-1380, or the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (415) 257-0168.

If our request to contact the students in your class meets with your approval, please sign this letter on the line provided below, date, and return this letter to Stacy Frauwirth as soon as possible. We will then contact you to arrange a convenient time for visiting your class.
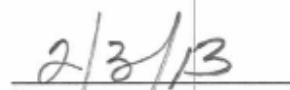
Thanks for your assistance.

Sincerely,

LaShelle Rullan, Jovita Vazquez, Julia Wong
Occupational Therapy Student Researchers
Department of Occupational Therapy
Dominican University of California
San Rafael, CA 94901

I agree with the above request.

Heidi Chretien   _2/3/13_
Signature   Date

Appendix F:

Email Recruitment Letter

Dear Dominican University Student,

Greetings! We are graduate students in the occupational therapy program at Dominican University working on our master thesis. We are requesting your voluntary participation in an online survey which asks about your first year college experience and adaptation to any challenges faced during this time. We are also interested in determining if there is a difference in experiences among students who participate in peer mentoring and those who don't.

You are being asked to participate in our survey because you are a full-time freshman Day student in your first year of college at Dominican University of California and between the ages of 18-21. If you do not meet this criteria, please disregard this email. The survey should take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete and your answers will remain <u>completely anonymous</u>. You will not be asked for your name, and there is no way to connect your survey with your email address. Completion of the survey implies consent. There are no risks to you in filling out this survey and there are no costs to you for your participation in this study. You will be given the opportunity to enter a raffle to win one of three $25 Visa gift certificates upon completion of the survey. If you decide to enter the raffle you are implying consent to releasing your name and email address for the purpose of the raffle drawing only.

If you are interested in participating in the survey, please click on the SurveyMonkey link. It will take you directly to the survey.

 http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/freshmanstudy

If you have any questions about the research study you may contact us at duotstudents@gmail.com. You may contact the Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) if you have concerns with the protection of participants in research projects. You may reach the IRBPHS office by calling (415) 257-0168 and leaving a voice mail message or FAX at (415) 458-3755, or by writing to IRBPHS, Office of Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dominican University of California, 50 Acacia Ave, San Rafael, CA 95901.

Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

LaShelle Rullan, Jovita Vazquez, and Julia Wong

Occupational Therapy Student Researchers

Dominican University of California

Appendix G:

Copyright Survey Permission

LaShelle Rullan< lashelle.rullan@students.dominican.edu>

---

requesting permission
2 messages

LaShelle Rullan< lashelle.rullan@students.dominican.edu>

Thu, Jan 10, 2013 at 8:17 PM

To: rgonyea@indiana.edu

Hello,

My name is LaShelle Rullan and I am a 4th year student at Dominican Univesity of California studying Occupational Therapy. I am writing to request written permission to use parts of your developed College Student Experiences Questionnaire and College Student Expectations Questionnaire (Pace and Kuh, 1998) in my group, undergraduate research project relating to the effectiveness of peer mentoring for first-generation college students in their freshman year, and their satisfaction with their college experience at Dominican University. We are not pulling word-for-word questions or full sections from your developed questionnaires, rather, your questionnaires have been helpful in modeling our own survey. Specifically, the sub-section from the CSEQ "Relationships with other Students" and the sub-section from the CSXQ "Student Aquaintances." This project is part of an undergraduate senior thesis requirement in Occupational Therapy at Dominican University of California.

Our research is being supervised by our advisor Stacy Frauwirth, OTR/L, Occupational Therapy Department, Dominican University of California, San Rafael, CA, 94901, (415-257-1380).

If this request meets with your approval, please sign, date, and return this letter to me in an enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

120 Park Street, APT#3

San Rafael, CA 94901

I've attached the letter requesting permission to be signed and dated if approved.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, or if you prefer, Stacy Frauwirth.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

LaShelle Rullan

lashelle.rullan@students.dominican.edu

📄 **LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO USE QUESTIONNAIRES.doc**
29K

Gonyea, Robert Michael< rgonyea@indiana.edu>   Mon, Jan 14, 2013 at 12:57 PM

To: "lashelle.rullan@students.dominican.edu" <lashelle.rullan@students.dominican.edu>

Dear LaShelle,

I have read the attached letter and agree to grant permission for use and adaptation of the CSEQ and CSXQ items as you have described therein. You may accept this email in lieu of a hard copy with signature. Good luck with your study.

Sincerely,

Bob Gonyea

Robert M. Gonyea

Associate Director

Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research

812-856-5824

cpr.iub.edu

From: LaShelle Rullan [mailto:lashelle.rullan@students.dominican.edu]
Sent: Thursday, January 10, 2013 11:18 PM
To: Gonyea, Robert Michael
Subject: requesting permission

📄 **LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO USE QUESTIONNAIRES.doc**
29K

DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA

                                        **LaShelle Rullan<
                    lashelle.rullan@students.dominican.edu>**

Fwd: SERU usage request: Dominican University
1 message

John Douglass< douglass@berkeley.edu>   Fri, Jan 18, 2013 at 4:14 PM

To: lashelle.rullan@students.dominican.edu

Cc: Thomas Dohm <dohmx005@umn.edu>, Christian Kapsen <kapse005@umn.edu>, Gregg

Thomson <gthomson@berkeley.edu>

LaShelle:

Very sorry for my delayed response.

Glad to have you use selectively the questions on the SERU Survey on a one-time basis.

Thanks for seeking our approval.

Regards,

John Douglass

SERU Berkeley PI
Senior Research Fellow - Public Policy and Higher Education
Center for Studies in Higher Education - UC Berkeley
http://cshe.berkeley.edu/people/jdouglass.htm
douglass@berkeley.edu

---------- Forwarded message ----------

From: LaShelle Rullan
Email: lashelle.rullan@students.dominican.edu
Phone: 925-628-5436
Message:
Hello,

My name is LaShelle Rullan and I am a 4th year student at Dominican Univesity of California studyin
Occupational Therapy. I am writing to request written permission to use parts of your developed SER
Student Experience Survey instrument (2007 version) in my group, undergraduate research project
relating to the effectiveness of peer mentoring for first-generation college students in their freshman
year, and their satisfaction with their college experience at Dominican University. We are not pulling
word-for-word questions or full sections from your developed survey, rather, your survey has been
helpful in modeling our own survey. Specifically, the sub-sections: Academic and Personal
Development, Assessment of Development, Campus Climate, and Community and Civic Engagemer
This project is part of an undergraduate senior thesis requirement in Occupational Therapy at
Dominican University of California.

Our research is being supervised by our advisor Stacy Frauwirth, OTR/L, Occupational Therapy
Department, Dominican University of California, San Rafael, CA, 94901, (415-257-1380).

If this request meets with your approval, please respond to this email and I can send you the official
letter of permission to be signed and returned to me.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, or if you prefer, Stacy Frauwirth.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,
LaShelle Rullan
lashelle.rullan@students.dominican.edu
-- inquiry ends --

Appendix H:

Bulletin Flyer

Appendix I:

Classroom Flyer

Freshmen Students Needed for Research Study!

We are conducting a study on first year college experiences. If you are a full-time Day student in your freshman year and between the ages of 18 and 21, please help us fill out this short survey at *https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/freshmanstudy* The survey will take approximately 15 minutes and those who participate will be entered into a raffle to win one of three $25 Visa gift cards.

If you have any questions please email us at duotstudents@gmail.com

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