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Mentoring: The College Freshman Female Perspective

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By
Catrice L. Reese

May 2014

MENTORING: THE COLLEGE FRESHMAN FEMALE PERSPECTIVE

Date Recommended 4-3-14

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Dean, The Graduate School   Date

This dissertation is dedicated

to my family:

my husband, Derrick S. Reese,

who encouraged me to endure;

to my son,

Derrick J. Reese.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

IV. RESULTS

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

MENTORING: THE COLLEGE FRESHMAN FEMALE PERSPECTIVE

Catrice L. Reese   May 2014   131 Pages

Directed by: Aaron Hughey, Stacy Edds-Ellis, and Monica Burke

Educational Leadership Program   Western Kentucky University

Grant-Vallone, Reid, Umali, and Pohlert (2004) outlined how students who regularly take advantage of student support services, mentoring, or academic support programing opportunities are more likely to accomplish their academic goals. Postsecondary institutions are responsible for providing innovative educational experiences to students. Proactively identifying key delimiting factors that inhibit student achievement can increase the persistence and retention rates of critical populations. Mentoring relationships are especially crucial to the academic achievement and successful matriculation of first-year freshman students. Approximately one out of three freshmen does not successfully matriculate to the second year of the collegiate endeavor (U.S. News & World Report, 2014). Through same gendered mentoring relationships, female students can positively enhance their life and educational involvements (Carroll, 1997). The relationship between mentoring experiences of first-year female college students positively affects their academic achievement and self-efficacy as they relate to their matriculation throughout college.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the problem

Oprah Winfrey once stated, "A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself" ("Who mentored you," 2009). Postsecondary female students today face many barriers and struggles that affect them psychologically, socially, and academically, preventing them from recognizing the hope within. This population requires the encouragement of success coaches in order to see beyond the situational obstacles and find the hope and reinforcement needed for great achievement. All individuals should be provided the opportunity to pursue an education in an interest in which they are passionate. Through positive educational experiences, may enhance life by finding a passion and using that passion to positively change the world. As a global nation, the continual growth of a dynamically diverse and skilled workforce is essential to a growing labor market. This study addresses the importance of mentoring relationships and their effect on the academic success of first-year female postsecondary students.

Background

The demand for acquiring an advanced education was deemed important prior to the 19th century, during which the average age to enter a postsecondary institution was raised from 17 to 18 due to the high demand (Dwyer, 1989). Dwyer's book, *The Freshman Year Experience* reported that the number of postsecondary institutions exponentially increased to close to 3,000 within the United States; this resulted in the concept of going to college as an open opportunity rather than a privilege.

Subsequently, postsecondary institutions have struggled with retention and the engagement of students after becoming freshmen due to mitigating factors. The three

most common barriers inhibiting postsecondary student success are college readiness, financial need, and student services. All are stress points of first-year college freshmen as well. Brock (2010) examined college enrollment and completion and affirmed that developmental education, financial, and student support services are crucial factors for college completion. Postsecondary leaders are charged with the success of the institution by proactively identifying the key delimiting factors that inhibit student achievement. Once identified, a plan must be developed to ensure the efficient matriculation of educated adults. Postsecondary institutions are responsible for providing innovative educational experiences that shape students into productive citizens in society.

This study focuses on the barrier of student support services, including retention through completion. When addressing the issue, the priority is to develop more innovative student engagement opportunities through social, academic, and mentoring programs. Pascarella, Terenzini, and Bliming (1999) argued that out-of-classroom experiences, such as peer tutoring or residence hall life, can be beneficial to retention and academic achievement. Social involvement includes the improvement of student activities and organizations. Academic and mentoring programs focus on peer-to-peer and faculty/student interaction through tutoring or advising. Grant-Vallone, Reid, Umali, and Pohlert (2004) examined the correlation between participation in social and academic programs and college completion. Their study outlined how students who regularly took advantage of student support services, mentoring, or academic support programing opportunities were more likely to accomplish their academic goals. Successful retention and completion are two of the goals of postsecondary institutions. Once these strategies are mastered, other collegiate constraints can be resolved. This concept also was

discussed by Sullivan (2010) who declared that four-year institutions can reduce student costs by increasing the retention rate, thus improving timely degree completion.

The challenges in these delimiting factors include the continuous development of new ideas and possibilities to warrant the success of students. Knowledge of persistence barriers, along with efficiently addressing these factors, are crucial in proactively attaining progress toward future obstacles.

The Problem

"What first-year students say they expect to do in college typically exceeds in almost every category of performance what they actually do" (Kuh, 2003, p. 27). First-year freshmen arrive with high expectations and enthusiasm about their new life, opportunities, and freedom. This new-found freedom and excitement comes with stress when students try to balance academics and various student engagement opportunities (Kuh, 2003). In a 2012 study, Wallpe found that freshmen females experienced a significant amount of stress and self-empowerment through their struggles with social, emotional, and academic adjustment. By examining the benefits of a viable and active mentor in the lives of these students Wallpe provided resolutions that can directly affect the barriers and struggles experience. According to a research study by Carroll (1997), female mentors positively enhanced the lives of the surveyed students, as opposed to having no mentor or having a male mentor.

Purpose

Through an insightful understanding of the targeted population, the goal of increasing student success among female freshmen has the opportunity to be successfully achieved. Dwyer (1989) described the three essential needs of freshmen: clear

information, acceptance, and knowing that someone cares. This generation of women encompasses the next cohort of leaders and innovators; therefore, an improved perception of their needs allows greater opportunities for achieving their highest educational potential.

Many researchers have defined the role of a mentor and the development of the mentoring relationship in various ways. Mentors are afforded the opportunity to cultivate the talents in others and to observe their growth and maturity. For the purpose of this study, the definition of mentoring is referenced by Lockwood (2006) as "individuals who provide an example of the kind of success that one may achieve, and often also provide a template of the behaviors that are needed to achieve such success." With the presence of a role model or mentor, students are given an increasingly high opportunity to overcome social, emotional, or even financial barriers and become successful.

Lockwood (2006) conducted two studies to determine whether the gender of the mentor influenced the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship. Participants in both studies were Psychology majors who received credit for their participation. In the first study, students were matched with role models by the researcher; several were specifically gender matched, while the rest were randomly matched. The results confirmed the prediction that female students were more influenced by female role models, whereas role model gender did not affect the male students. The second study involved a selected population of postsecondary students who identified career-related role models they desired in their life. As in the previous study, female students were gender specific in choosing the role model, and male students were more gender neutral. The researcher concluded that female students were more motivated by same gender

mentoring relationships. When the females identified themselves with an accomplished female role model with similar career interests, they experienced a higher possibility of achieving the academic goals.

Marx and Roman (2002) conducted three studies to identify a correlation between female role models and math achievement levels. In the first experiment, a female role model administered the math exam to exemplify a capable role model for the female students taking the exam. As predicted, the female students scored equally as well as the male students with the female role model and scored higher than their female counterparts who took the exam with a male administrator. The second experiment examined whether the female exam administrator needed to be physically present for the female students to successfully perform. The results indicated that the illusion of a mathematically-skilled female role model being present during the exam broke through the barriers faced by the female students and allowed them to successfully perform. The last experiment identified whether the self-perception and success of female students on a math exam could be influenced by the knowledge of other females who were proficient in similar areas. This also revealed positive results for the female test population.

All three articles concluded that female students can overcome gender barriers when exposed to successful individuals who favor them. These findings directly apply to the research within this study, indicating that the targeted population has the potential for success with the guidance of a female mentor.

Empirical Research Questions

The identified problem for this investigation is that young women in their freshman year of college are not as successful as their male counterparts. A correlational

qualitative strategy allowed the exploration of the effect of mentoring relationships on

highly intelligent female students during their postsecondary experience. The use of an

established mentoring program that provided same gender mentoring services to

freshmen female students set the basis for reliable correlation comparison. According to

the Bluegrass Alliance for Women project taskforce, several mentoring programs focus

on the development of postsecondary students in becoming successful in the career of

their choice. By focusing on one established same gender mentoring program, the effects

of mentoring on the academic success of female students in the postsecondary sector can

be better understood. In addition to the identification of key success factors within the

mentoring program, possible recommendations can be made for future academic success

for female students. In order identify the potential correlational factors of first-year

female postsecondary students' academic achievements and their mentoring experiences;

the research focus is centralized around the following question: What is the relationship

between mentoring experiences of first-year female college students and their academic

achievement and self-efficacy as it relates to their matriculation into the second semester?

Significance of the Study

The chosen research topic is based on the effects of same gender mentoring and

whether it positively affects educational success and self-worth. By using the research

that supported the use of mentoring programs, as well as specifically focusing on same

gender empowerment experiences, the needed support was provided to conduct the

chosen study.

The qualitative correlational approach included three focus groups of female

freshmen within the mentoring program and program mentors. One of the mentee focus

groups consisted of students who had completed the mentoring process, and the other involved students currently enrolled in the mentoring program. The third focus group consisted of current female mentors of the peer mentoring program. The use of this model allowed the researcher a more complete picture of this population's perspective and how it contributes to academic success. The focus group participants were randomly chosen from the mentoring program's current enrollee and graduate listings. Through collaboration with the leaders and mentors of the mentoring program, the designated time and place determine by convenience and accessibility for the focus group participants. Through a predetermined set of questions, success trends of the female students were identified to achieve an overall understanding about their experiences. Recording of each focus group session allowed the assurance of accurate transcriptions. The focus group sessions provided the opportunity to obtain face-to-face experience with all participants in order to become familiar with their situations.

Data analysis provided the information needed to solidify conclusions to the research questions, as reliable data is needed for valid conclusions. The choice of a specific data analysis process is important and vital to the reporting accuracy of the study's results; therefore the constant comparative method was used in this study to develop a grounded theory for the freshman female population.

A predetermined set of questions was utilized during the focus group process to allow for a smooth transition between topics and a consistent structure for both focus groups. The transcription from the recordings of the focus group discussions provided the data needed for analysis organization and coding, and was used to draw detailed conclusions about the female college freshmen.

Limitations of the Study

Internal validity is necessary for trustworthy data. The research must acknowledge any internal or external limitations found, which consists of the unknown students who have dropped out and these who have chosen to go into the workforce. The parameters or boundaries that were set for the focus group process and analysis were the factors that included on-campus or off-campus living, which reduced the occurrence of internal and external limitations. According to Fowler (2009), two possible errors, random error and bias are encountered, when examining the generalization from a sample to a population. In a correlational approach, the cultural background limitations are apparent because the participants are face to face.

A compilation of the information from the focus groups, provided the opportunity to identify common implications for the lack of success in this population. The chosen institution may find this information helpful in creating better programming for incoming and existing female students. Through a more insightful understanding of the targeted population, the goal of increasing student success among female college freshmen can be achieved. This generation of women encompasses the next cohort of leaders and innovators; therefore, an improved perception of their needs affords them greater opportunities to achieve their highest educational potential.

Research Question

What is the relationship between mentoring experiences of first-year female college students and their academic achievement and self-efficacy as they relate to their matriculation into the second semester?

Delimitations

The present study was conducted on the campus of a university in the southwest region of Kentucky. The study engaged current and past students in this universities' peer mentoring program, and focused on their experiences. This university is a public institution with a population representative of other public institutions in the state of Kentucky. An inference can be made based on the findings from of this study and can be applied to the various Kentucky public institution populations.

Operational Definitions

Mentors: "Individuals who provide an example of the kind of success that one may achieve, and often also provide a template of the behaviors that are needed to achieve such success." (Lockwood, 2006, p. 36).

Role model: "A person you respect, follow, look up to, or want to be like." (Bricheno & Thornton, 2007, p. 385).

Freshman: "Newcomer or a novice in any field of study." (Dwyer, 1989, p.26).

First-year freshman: First-time entering student at a college or University with fewer than 15 credit hours.

Freshman Seminar: Intervention program designed "to acquaint students with campus programs that can influence their academic, personal, and career development." (Fidler & Hunter, 1989)

Self-efficacy: Having the confidence in one's ability to achieve desired goals (Farenga & Daniel, 2005).

Academic achievement: "Ranging from global indicators, such as postsecondary attainment and school GPA, to some specific indicators, such as standardized test scores

9

in a specific academic area (e.g., math), and even to such variables as students' academic aspiration and students' academic self-concept" (Fan & Chen 2001, p. 4).

Matriculate: Students moving through or persisting at a college or university (Kelly, Lavergne, Boone, & Boone 2012).

Summary

The challenge faced by student service support personnel involves the continuous development of new ideas and possibilities to secure the success of students. This barrier currently exists; however preparing institutions to efficiently address issue can help to proactively identify and address any future obstacles. Student services and motivation are key factors that inhibit student achievement, although they may work together to ensure success. Student achievement is an evolving factor in education, with the intent search out the key for motivating and engaging students to increase their success.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Women in today's society face various challenges during their educational pursuit: social inclusion, physical image, emotional balance, academic success, and peer influence. These challenges can convolute the process of achieving goals, particularly women who pursue postsecondary education. Academic pursuits and achievements can be lost in the daily struggles of peer acceptance and self-image. Archard (2012) identified a current need to provide women with mentors to assist in overcoming the barriers that may hinder their goal attainment, and conducted two qualitative studies with staff and female students at gender-based schools. The study's findings revealed that the lack of female leader mentors in our society was detrimental to female students' development as leaders.

Women are faced with the media images and societal pressures of who they should and how they should look. The presence in their lives of an individual who looks like them, has similar interests, and has achieved parallel goals, can be beneficial during critical times of self-actualization. An individual possessing these characteristics can be seen as a mentor through the eyes of a younger individual. By entering into a guiding role, mentors have the opportunity to increase the confidence levels of mentees during crucial periods and provide life experiences, and advice to ensure successful goal completion. Many facets are involved in mentoring, and this study focuses on same gender mentoring, to provide the framework for successful academic achievement. The researcher's previous exploration of act of mentoring set the stage for the identification of the benefits of effective same gender mentoring of postsecondary female students.

Who are Mentors?

One must understand the role of a mentor prior to discerning how effective mentoring can be advantageous in identifying a mentee's full potential. Merriam Webster defined a mentor as a "trusted counselor or guide" (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2013). Mentors are individuals who take a special interest in the growth and success of another. According to *MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership* (2006), 33% of mentors are between the age of 35-44, and 32% are baby boomers (O'Connor, 2006). These teachers, counselors, parents, or community members empower others who desire success by helping them find their passion. Through these innovative experiences and positively guided relationships, an individual may enhance their lives by optimizing their potential. Individuals identify with mentors who possess a specific skill set of characteristics for which they aspire to replicate or to possess. "The importance of role modeling for women is in providing examples of other women in particular fields of work and responsibility as well as modeling appropriate leadership behavior" (Archard, 2012, p. 455).

Bricheno and Thornton (2007) conducted a study based on the perception of role models through the eyes of adolescents. In order to understand the basis of the study, the reader must be familiar with the concept of a role model, which is defined by the authors as "namely a person you respect, follow, look up to or want to be like" (p. 385). The purpose of this research was to determine whether students view their teachers as role models. The authors first discussed how society portrays sports figures and celebrities as role models for campaigns for youth, particularly boys, which the question of whether these individuals are more influential than teachers in classrooms. Students

from four schools were surveyed, two elementary and two high schools, on the idea of role model characteristics and individuals who served as their role models (Bricheno & Thornton, 2007). The researchers found that students did not consider their teachers as role models. They viewed parents, sports players, musicians, friends, and/or celebrities as their current role models. Only 2.4% of pupils in this study referred to teachers as role models. According to the article, 31.7% of the surveyed students chose their parents as the most influential role model (Bricheno &Thornton, 2007). The study provided a perspective on how youth view role models, which may differ from the adults around them. A correlation was found between these students' role model choices and individuals they wanted to emulate. They also admire individuals who are successful, which accounts for the musician and sports star choices.

Mentors are servant leaders who empower individuals desiring to be successful by supporting them through their educational endeavors, as well as organizing, developing, and participating in new initiatives that sustain and support students. Liden, Wayne, Zhao, and Henderson (2008), noted that servant leadership focuses on the followers, placing the needs and success of followers before their own and empowering others to become servant leaders. The authors defined nine dimensions of servant leadership: emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills, empowering, helping subordinates grow and succeed, putting subordinates first, behaving ethically, relationships, and servanthood. These dimensions are strive to empower and develop self-confidence in individuals. Liden, Wayne, Zhao, and Henderson relate servant leadership to two other leadership approaches - transformational leadership and leader-member exchange. Transformational and

servant leadership both encourage individuals through motivational and inspirational practices. The leader-member exchange and servant leadership also promote the development of individuals to their fullest potential through various relationship exchanges. This approach highlights the fact that the leader should boost the confidence of others, encourage them, and gain their trust. Lockwood (2006) describes members of society who are perceived as a mentor/role model figure as "individuals who provide an example of the kind of success that one may achieve, and often also provide a template of the behaviors that are needed to achieve such success" (p.36).

Definition of Mentoring

Mentoring is an act of involving oneself with another, the Oxford Dictionary defines mentoring as the actions of a mentor, which include advising, counseling, or training (Oxford Dictionaries, 2013). Stern, Finkelstein, Stone, Latting, and Dornsife (1995) discuss mentoring as a relationship between an adult and a younger individual where the adult provides direction and support to the younger individual, during different stages throughout their life. The mentoring process provided a valuable asset for the younger individual's development.

Georgiou, Demetriou, and Stavrinides (2008) stated that, in the views of adolescents, mentoring relationships have been compared to intimate relationships with parents or close friends and their attachment style. Their study defined the concept of a mentoring relationship, which involves two parties, a mentor and a mentee. The mentor usually is older or more knowledgeable and is beneficial to the mentee. Mentors tend to serve as a mirror into the future on where the mentees hope to be or who they would like to become.

Positive motivation of a mentor influences allows the followers to become passionate and believe in the leader's ideas. Through the process of mentoring, a mentor positively influences an individual to understand and reach the fullest potential. Mentors cultivate the talent that they observe in an individual by providing support and shared experiences. The *Impact Evaluation of the U.S. Department of Education's Student Mentoring Program* authored by Bernstein, Rappaport, Olsho, Hunt and Levin (2009) is a student outcome evaluation report of 32 School Mentoring Programs and 2,573 students in one school. The report stated that "the rationale for mentoring is that supportive adults can serve as mentors and can help students avoid high-risk activities and make more successful transitions to adulthood (p. xiii).

Frederick Herzberg (2003) discussed in an article for the Harvard Review the two-factor theory known as the Motivation-Hygiene Theory, in which motivators are described as that which the followers want to obtain such as professional growth, recognition, and advancement. These traits also are known as achievement characteristics. Herzberg concluded that leaders need to understand the individuals they lead to successfully motivate them to efficiently complete a goal. This is true in mentoring relationships, as the mentor is the leader and the mentee is the follower. The mentor must truly understand the need of the mentee within a successful mentoring relationship

Maslow developed the Hierarchy of Needs five-stage model; which discussed the need for fulfillment of followers. In Maslow's model, the individual needs range from basic survival needs for sustainability to growth needs for full self-realization (Lefton & Buzzotta, 2004). When leaders possess a basic understanding on fulfilling lower order

needs (survival needs) such as physical, security, and belonging, they can move to the fulfillment of the higher order needs of growth, self-esteem, and self-actualization. The result of moving a group to self-actualization is that the group will perform at peak dexterity. It is important for leaders to understand the needs of the followers, as well as connecting the goals of the job to their own needs. As individuals reach self-realization, they successfully understand the benefit of timely completion of their goals (Lefton & Buzzotta, 2004).

Both Maslow and Herzberg believed that one can move people toward successful goal attainment through motivational strategies, which is the mentoring process. Mentees view their mentors as leaders within their professional, educational, or societal arena. Mentors are responsible for motivating individuals toward success through effective mentoring relationships.

Effectiveness of Mentoring

In the field of education, it is important that students are engaged in the educational experience. Engagement leads to retention which leads to successful completion. Engagement is defined as a positive influence for successful student's academic achievement (Edmunds, Willse, Arshavsky, & Dallas, 2013). Colleges and universities across the nation are attempting to discover the best method for student engagement, as rising tuition costs make engagement necessary for student persistence. Mentoring relationships can be a source for engagement, which positively impacts student achievement levels. "Mentoring relationships for adults that were linked to the workplace or higher education exhibited generally stronger associations with desired

outcomes relative to mentoring relationships for youth" (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011, 61).

Students can completely engage in the matriculation process through student support services. A priority in developing effective student support services is to provide innovative student engagement opportunities through social, academic, and mentoring programs. The social involvement includes the improvement of student activities and organizations. Mentoring programs that follow a well-devised implementation and design plan and conduct regular evaluations will provide the most efficient results (DuBois et al., 2011). During the mentoring program evaluation, DuBois et al. found that, overall, these intervention programs provided the support needed to ignite the potential in the youth of today. Effective academic and mentoring programs focus on peer-to-peer and faculty/student interaction through tutoring or advising. Grant-Vallone et al. (2004) examined the correlation between participation in social and academic programs and college completion. Their study outlined that students who regularly take advantage of student support services, mentoring, or academic support programming opportunities are more likely to accomplish their academic goals. Stern et al. (1995) reported that the mentoring model is becoming increasingly familiar in the school and workplace environments as a strategy to improve outcomes.

According to MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, "3,000,000 adults have formal, one-to-one mentoring relationships with young people; an increase of 19% since 2002" (O'Connor, 2006, ii). A national poll was conducted to assess mentoring in the United States to identify changes subsequent to the 2002 poll. MENTOR concluded that effective mentoring can provide encouragement and support to increase positive

behaviors in the mentees. A significant barrier found during this poll was that effective

mentoring takes time and full engagement, as 51% of the respondents stated the that they

had little to mentor, preventing them from becoming a mentor (O'Connor, 2006). Bennis

and Nanus (2007) discussed how successful leaders find mentors to mold their leadership

philosophies and to aid in becoming better leaders. A mentor can identify a mentee, or a

mentee can choose a mentor, but both parties must be fully engaged for the relationship

to be effective.

<center>**Freshman Peer Mentoring Programs**</center>

During the late 20th century researchers had identified the importance of peer-to-

peer mentoring. Dwyer's 1989 study discussed the struggles experienced by newly

established colleges in retaining a high percentage of their first freshman class.

Researchers found that the absence of upperclassmen to alleviate the stress factors of

collegiate life and to provide the support needed caused many freshmen to drop out

(Dwyer, 1989). Providing the framework for peer mentors through the Freshman

Seminar has dual benefits; the mentor is afforded the opportunity for leadership training

and experience, and the mentee has the opportunity to engage with a successful role

model (Gordon, 1989).

The first student seminar courses were established during the late 1800s, but

credit was not awarded until the early 1900s, due to the distinctive adjustment period that

occurred within the first year of college (Gordon, 1989). Freshman seminar experiences

"help freshman make the transition from their previous and familiar social environment

to the more open and familiar on campus" (Fidler & Hunter, 1989, p.221). These authors

also discussed participation in the freshman seminar opportunity and its ability to

decrease the amount of stress and anxiety students experienced during their freshman year, as well as increase levels of persistence, academic achievement, and campus involvement.

"Over 70% of the United States colleges and universities offer special first-year seminars to assure that new students have at least one small class in which a primary goal is the development of peer relationships" (Barefoot, 2000, p.15). Although the concept of a first-year seminar and peer mentoring can be dated back to the 1900s, and the goals and benefits remain constant, these types of programs often face sustainability challenges. Throughout budget cuts and changes in leader priorities, first-year seminar programs are subjected to various changes and possible defunding; despite the value brought to the freshman experience (Barefoot, 2000). The Barefoot (2000) study also identified commuters and part-time students as two populations often overlooked during the planning and execution of first-year seminars.

Pascarella et al. (1999) examined the possibility that not all peer mentoring interactions provide positive results. Through proper planning, peer mentoring relationships need to focus not only on the number of occurrences, but also on the quality and content of the interaction. They concurred that one of the most powerful influences for student success is peer-to-peer relationships. Goodman and Pascarella (2006) provided supportive research ultimately proving that students who engage in first-year seminars are more academically confident.

Same Gender Mentoring

A woman mentoring other women is one of the most powerful influences and provides a foundation of support to encourage women to achieve their fullest potential.

"Women, students of color, first-generation students, and other nontraditional student benefit from getting to know others who share their innate characteristics and who have been successful in higher education" (Barefoot, 2000, p.15). Mentees with a mentor of the same gender provided the self-awareness and self-confidence needed to believe that success is possible. The women mentors with similar characteristics provided an attainable path of guidance; they also provided a sense of gender security for facing the barriers young women encounter during their educational pursuits. Archard (2012) reported that same gender mentoring is the most effective method of encouraging students, stating "mentoring and role modeling may help female students in developing the knowledge and skills required for leadership as well as assisting in an understanding of gender barriers in relation to leadership roles" (p. 451).

Holmes, Redmond, Thomas, and High (2012) explored the benefits and effectiveness of same gender mentoring relationships with future engineering students. Engineering is one of the targeted STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) programs that lacks females and minorities. This year-long study of female engineering students and middle school girls proved correlation between same gender mentoring relationships and higher confidence in the math and science areas. Ruff (2013) noted that women mentoring relationships with other women is the most valuable method in developing a protégé. Not only will this relationship enrich the life of the protégé, but the mentor also will benefit from the intimate relationship. Cotner, Ballen, Brooks, and Moore (2011) found that the presence of a woman instructor increased, the levels of scientific confidence of the female students, affirming that women are more influential in the mentor/role model role with other women.

First-Year Freshman Females

The study by Dwyer (1989) indicated that the concept of allowing women to be admitted in to postsecondary institutions was first introduced during the 19th century at a small college in Ohio, but soon became popular throughout the Midwest. According to the *BCSSE (Beginning College Survey of Engagement) 2012 Institutional Report*, 64% of incoming female freshmen feel it is very important to receive support to help succeed academically, 29% freshmen feel it is very important to receive assistance in coping with non-academic responsibilities, 31% feel it is very important to receive support to thrive socially, and 39% feel it is very important to have opportunities to attend campus events and activities (BCSSE Institutional Report 2012, 2012). Forty-seven of the female respondents graduated from high school as A-students. With these expectations of incoming first-year female freshmen, a high regard for colleges and universities exists to meet these expectations and to provide the necessary tools for success.

During the transition from high school to college, female students face various emotional and psychological barriers that can obstruct academic achievement. More effort on the part of female students is required to adjust to the collegiate environment as compared to their male counterparts. This adjustment period or lack of can cause increased levels of stress during the first year of college. Wallpe (2010) utilized questionnaires to survey first-year freshman students on the impact of specific characteristics such as generational status, work status, perceptions of experienced stress, disordered eating, and protective factors such as personal empowerment. With responses from 155 females, Wallpe found that female students who perceived they had

experienced stress accounted for a significant amount of variance in academic adjustment to college, i.e., female students who experienced, or perceived themselves to experience stress, encountered changes in their academic success.

Charbonneau (2012) studied depression among first-year freshman undergraduate students. The basis for this study was to address the depression and depressive symptoms experienced by young female students during the transition to college. Charbonneau's research found that young women in general exhibited signs of stress and depression, even more so during the collegiate transition. The study tested various intervention methods to lower the levels of stress for this specific population. Results revealed a decrease in depressive symptoms when the female students took full advantage of the intervention options during a six-month time period. Providing intervention options to freshman undergraduate students, such as mentoring programs, reduced stress during the transition to college, this may lead to higher levels of academic achievement.

Carroll (1997) conducted research on the survey results from female students attending Norte Dame College to better understand their perceptions on mentoring, exploring the perception of female versus male relationships, public versus private, and lower versus upperclassmen. The author concluded that female students showed overall positive perspectives and believed that mentoring was an effective method of support.

Summary

Brock (2010) examined college enrollment and completion. The findings affirmed that developmental education, financial, and student support services are crucial factors in college completion. Proactively identifying the key delimiting factors that

inhibit student achievement is crucial to the success of the postsecondary institutions. Once the factors have been identified, a plan must be developed to ensure the efficient matriculation of educated adults. The responsibilities of the Postsecondary institutions are responsible for providing innovative educational experiences that shape them into productive citizens in society. Archard's (2012) findings revealed the importance of mentoring relationships within an educational setting, as female students can bridge the emotional and psychological gaps that hinder their success through these programs. Student success is imperative to the future development of the current postsecondary student population. Implementation of effective intervention processes and programs early in the collegiate student experience provides positive student outcomes. Students have an increasingly high opportunity to overcome social, emotional, or even financial barriers and become successful when paired with a mentor.

Chapter III: METHODOLOGY

In the 2012 Wallpe study, freshman female students were found to have a significant amount of stress and self-empowerment relative to social, emotional and academic adjustment struggles. The study examined the presence of a viable and active mentor in the lives of the first-year female college students and its effect on the barriers and struggles faced. For the purpose of this study the definition of mentoring can be reference in the 2006 article by Lockwood, who noted that mentors are "individuals who provide an example of the kind of success that one may achieve, and often also provide a template of the behaviors that are needed to achieve such success" (p. 36). The research focus is centralized around the question, "Do mentoring relationships have an effect on the postsecondary success of female students?" According to the research study conducted by Carroll (1997), female mentors positively enhanced the lives of the surveyed female students more than the options of having no mentor or a male mentor. The identifiable problem for investigation is whether a relationship exists between mentoring experiences of first-year female college students and their academic achievement and self-efficacy.

Type of Study

A correlational qualitative strategy allowed the exploration of the effect of mentoring relationships on highly intelligent female students during their postsecondary experience. The study's platform is an established mentoring program that provided same gender mentoring services to female students. The peer mentoring program provided mentoring that focused on the development of first-year postsecondary students in becoming successful within the academic environment. This program's foundation is

built on the belief that a student's success in the first year of college, especially in the first semester, can shape a student's entire college experience, even determine future enrollment ("Welcome to University Experience," 2013). By focusing on an established mentoring program with a focus on peer-to-peer and same gender mentoring relationships, benefits were realized regarding the foundation of understanding the effects of mentoring as related to the academic success of female students in the postsecondary sector. The identification of key success aspects within the mentoring program may result in possible recommendations to other institutions for the betterment of future female students.

Database/Participants

Participant selection is important in reducing possible bias and error in inference. The most effective outcomes can be achieved through the identification of the best population for participation in the study. The participants include two focus groups of female freshman students within the chosen mentoring program and one group of female mentors. One of the mentee focus groups consisted of students who had completed the mentoring process, and the other involved those currently enrolled in the mentoring program. The mentor focus group engaged current mentors and served the purpose of gathering information about the mentor's expectations and purpose for serving as a mentor.

The use of this model allowed the researcher to obtain a comprehensive representation of this population's perspectives and how the mentoring relationship contributed to their academic success, understanding whether the mentor/mentee expectations were parallel and how the perceived outcomes were equivalent. The focus

group participants were randomly chosen from the peer mentoring program's current enrollee and graduate population listings. A designated time and place was determined through collaboration with the program leader based on convenience and accessibility for the mentee and mentor participants. The scholastic achievements and income levels, of the voluntary population where available also were examined due to the predisposed assumptions for success. A predetermined set of questions allowed the identification of apparent success trends of the female students, as overall assumption can be made through the constant comparative method relative to their experiences and the success of the relationship. Each focus group session was recorded to ensure accurate transcription. The sessions provided the researcher the opportunity to obtain face-to-face experience with all participants in order to gain familiarity with their situations.

Data Collection Methods

The researcher used the knowledge of questionnaire construction, as suggested by Fowler (2009), to ensure the questions were appropriately phrased and prompted clear response options pertinent to the research. One of the focus groups consisted of female freshman students within the chosen peer mentoring program, and a was conducted on in November 2013 to gain a more meaningful insight into the relationship between mentoring experiences of first-year females and their academic achievement and self-efficacy. The information from the focus group was analyzed to identify commonalities among the students. The focus group protocol is provided in Appendix B. The qualitative research element included three focus groups of peer mentoring program and consisted of participants randomly chosen from the program's mentee and mentor database. The use of the stratified purposeful sampling model allowed the selection of

female participants from the various groups within the program to ensure a holistic voice (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The key benefit to using this method was the ability to recognize trends among the chosen students from the mentee and mentor population, which allowed it to be applied to the entire population. The stratified purposeful sampling model is an attempt to minimize opportunity for bias.

The focus group was scheduled in late October 2013, and the meetings were held at the same location on the main campus to ensure validity of responses. Because the members of the focus groups resided on the universities' campus, travel expenses were unnecessary. A benefit to the student groups was the acknowledgement that they participated in an exercise that would help future females who engage in this peer mentoring program. The students' participation in the study can be considered a learning experience. The students were asked specific questions in an attempt to understanding their experiences in the program. A facilitator encouraged open and honest communication among participants. Interacting with a stranger may be uncomfortable for some students, but all were informed that they could discontinue at any time without penalty if they felt uncomfortable. The researcher had the opportunity to interact face-to-face with all participants to better understand their individual experiences.

During this qualitative analysis, the transcription of the recordings occurred after the sessions allowing the researcher to focus on the participants, and also providing a smooth transition between topics for accurate transcription of the meetings. The researcher selected the transcriber, and the transcriptions provided the data needed for organizational analysis and coding.

The parameters or boundaries set for the focus group process and analysis were

the inclusion of only freshman females and female mentors currently enrolled in the peer

mentoring program. These parameters reduced the occurrence of internal and external

limitations. Time and trustworthiness were two difficulties, as the time necessary for an

in-depth understanding of the population could have become overwhelming and

unreasonable. Gaining the trust of the participants to obtain accurate testimonial

experiences also could have taken a substantial amount of time. The plan that was

formulated to manage time guaranteed the legitimacy of the answers provided and also

included an overestimated time parameter the students prior to the meeting. This set the

tone and provided participants with an awareness that the researcher was respectful and

appreciative of their time.

Data Analysis

The basic process of data analysis provided information needed to solidify

conclusions to the research questions. In order to obtain valid conclusions, data must be

reliable choosing a specific data analysis process is important and vital to the reporting

accuracy of the results. The constant comparative method was utilized to develop a

grounded theory for the freshman female population. A study conducted by Kendall

(1999) reported that the grounded theory was created to set a platform for the process of

constant comparison, which allowed coding and analysis of data throughout collection.

The constant comparative method provided an opportunity to continuously compare the

data throughout the study and to derive a hypothesis after completion of data collection.

Through open axial and selective coding data analysis, dominant categories of interest are

the basis for finding the fundamental relationships between possible evolving themes (Kendall, 1999).

The use of predetermined questions during the focus group process allowed a smooth transition between topics and provided a consistent structure for both groups. The questions were developed from the research surrounding the benefits and expectations of same gendered mentoring experiences. These questions are designed to engage the mentees and student mentors in an inclusive dialogue divulge an accurate depiction of their student experience?

The transcription from the recordings provided the data needed for analysis, organization, and coding. Marshall and Rossman (2011) noted that an analytic procedure would provide a concise method to organize, create categories, and code data. Data coding of the transcriptions provided the researcher with an opportunity to draw conclusions on student perceptions of the research question. The recordings from each focus group session were sent to eTranscription Solutions, LLC, for transcription, (http://www.etranscriptionsolutions.org). Subsequent to receipt of the transcriptions, all responses were indexed based on identifiable patterns, after which a thematic analysis was conducted to link reoccurring themes or ideas identifiably the students. The rationale for conducting three separate focus groups provided the basis for a comparison during the qualitative analysis of the transcription coding. The mentor focus group responses provided a high level comparative analysis for the two mentee focus group responses.

Mentor Focus Group Questions

The first mentor focus group discussion question was "The University Experience Peer Mentoring program on campus, tell me what you know about it. How long have you

been with the program? What did you think of the quality of the program?" the responses were analyzed to determine commonalities, which provided a clear picture the mentors' perceptions of the University Experience Peer Mentoring program. The second mentor focus group discussion question was: "What are your expectations of a peer mentoring program? Are these expectations met? Why or why not?" responses provided the researcher with specific items of comparison with the mentees' expected outcomes. The third discussion question was: "What type of information would you like to see a peer mentoring program provide the female freshman students?" this question inquired about the program materials, curriculum, and delivery formats. The data coding of the transcriptions of these responses allowed the identification of response frequency, which provided the framework for understanding the mentor needs to ensure positive outcomes. The fourth question was: "What are some suggestions that would be beneficial to your performance as a mentor? What would improve your effectiveness in the classroom?" This question allowed respondents to indicate their familiarity with the program and provided the outline for improved student results.

Mentee Focus Group Questions

The first mentee focus group discussion question was analyzed through a review of the response frequency, in order to form a clearer picture of the awareness methodology to be utilized for promoting programs and communicating with other students. The second question was addressed to provide an inquiry comparison of the expectations of the mentors and the mentee experience. The qualitative analysis of the response frequency for this question confirmed or disputed the findings of the set goals and objectives of the program. The third question provided the participants with specific

response opportunities to express their needs as freshman females attending the university. The researcher make first-hand observations and inferences based on the frequency of each response and can gain an awareness of obstacles perceived by students. The fourth mentee question identified the respondents' familiarity with the program purpose and individual self-awareness. An analysis conducted on the transcriptions identified frequency of the responses for this question. The qualitative analysis provided the researcher with confirmation or contradiction findings based on the goals of the mentor program and the responses from the mentors.

The open-ended focus group questions allowed respondents to elaborate on their thoughts, insights, and suggestions. These responses were coded for the qualitative analysis through the response transcriptions. The responses may reveal perceptions and insights not currently addressed through the present framework of the peer mentoring program. In the event that the mentee focus group responses appear to be significantly different from those given by the mentor, the leaders of the program will determine whether its design should be adjusted based on the needs of the audience, to ensure the accomplishment of the programs intended purpose.

Generalizability

The purpose of internal validity is to ensure that the data reported is trustworthy, along with the acknowledgement of any internal or external limitations found. Limitations of this study include the unknown information on the students who had already dropped out, the students who decided to go into the workforce, and those who did not complete or participate in the program. The opportunity to engage the mentors, in addition to the mentees, provided a holistic view of the unknown population, as well as

identified possible methods of support for this population. The use of only one mentoring program also was a limitation, in that a complete representation of the general population was unavailable. During the decision-making process on the specific mentoring program for this study, the goal was to discover a well-established program that had been providing services for an extended period of time.

The peer mentoring program had been established for over 10 years and provided continuous service to first-time freshman students. The mentors in the program were volunteers who desired to shape the future of first-time freshman students. The program focuses on the first semester of freshman who attends the university, and the required length of time for the mentoring relationship is the entire Fall semester. By providing the opportunity for the mentors to express their perspectives of the relationship, the validity needed to draw specific conclusions from the mentee's experience was provided. The cultural background limitations were apparent as participants were in a visual setting. Maximization of the accuracy of the research findings was achieved by setting the initial parameters or boundaries during the focus group process and analysis, such as establishing the length of participation within the mentoring group. These parameters reduced the occurrence of internal and external limitations by providing essential information necessary for a comprehensive analysis. Fowler (2009) noted two possible errors, random error and bias, when examining generalization from a sample to a population. The goal of this research study was to collect the data and information needed from this small population of student mentors and mentees in order to draw an expansive conjecture about the specified population.

Feasibility

Marshall and Rossman (2011) believed that the researcher determines efficiency based on setting feasible boundaries. The feasibility is determined by whether the study is practicable due to the resources and financial constraints of the researcher. The demonstration of background knowledge for identifiable problems validates feasibility. Throughout the literature review, empirical studies have been identified that support the feasibility and chosen method for the study. The research clearly supports and exemplifies the benefits of mentoring relationships, particularly peer-to-peer and same gender relationships. Time and trustworthiness of the participants were the two important challenges of this study. The time needed for an in-depth understanding of the population could have become overwhelming and unreasonable. However, providing a clear structure for the participants of the focus groups allowed the opportunity achieve the stated goals. Gaining the trust of the participants for accurate and legitimate testimonial experiences also could have a substantial amount of time, but working directly with the lead sponsor of the program provided the researcher with the opportunity to gain the mentors' and the mentees' trust and willingness to participate. Working with the student mentors and mentees toward the end of the semester provided a more open environment for the focus groups. The two engaged parties were more comfortable in their roles as student mentors or mentees, which enabled more clearly defined answers during the compilation of information about their experiences.

Policy/Practice Implications

Practice implications permitted reasonable conclusions to be drawn based on the data collected and analyzed. After compilation of the information from the focus groups,

opportunities emerged to identify common implications for the lack of academic success of this student population. The peer mentoring program could use this information to improve the efficiencies and expectations of their programming for incoming and existing female students. Dependent upon the results, the peer mentoring program could serve as a model for other institutions. Foundationally academic institutions are advocates for student success; this study endorsed opportunities to reach a targeted population. Through a more insightful understanding of the targeted population, the goal could be achieved of increasing student success among female college freshmen.

Summary

Young postsecondary female students today face so many barriers and struggles that can affect them psychological, socially, and academically. This generation of women encompasses the next cohort of leaders and innovators; therefore, an improved perception of their needs allowed them greater opportunities to achieve their highest educational potential. The peer mentoring program provided the opportunity to assist and support first-year freshman students in becoming successful in their personal, social, and academic lives ("Welcome to University Experience," 2013). Using a qualitative method approach for this study, provided the best option for the desired results, which offered a more inclusive perception for drawing the conclusions about the correlation between mentoring experiences and academic achievement. This study could serve as a platform for increasing student success among first-year female college freshmen.

Chapter IV: Results

Brock (2010) discussed the struggles experienced by postsecondary institutions relative to college enrollment and completion due to various mitigating factors such as student engagement. Through several emerging discussion topics from focus groups with current students participating in the peer mentoring program, many of Brock's conclusions were addresses. Throughout the study a qualitative approach was used, to ensure accurate measurements of the student experiences. Qualitative data provides a more intimate understanding than quantifiable data (Babbie, 2002). Creswell (2007) states that qualitative research is the study of individuals or groups that are associated with specific difficulties and through data collection and analysis processes, specific themes emerge for final recommendations. Engaging directly with a specific population is an effective qualitative strategy to receive the most comprehensive understanding of the explored issue (Creswell, 2007). Through the use of focus groups the researcher had the opportunity to gain a richer perspective from the student population.

Two focus groups were conducted in November 2013 on the university's main campus. The third was conducted in February 2014 in the same location. The sessions were approximately 45 minutes in length. The first involved students currently enrolled in the mentoring program, the second engaged current mentors and served the purpose of gathering information about the mentor's expectations and purpose for serving as a mentor. The third focus group consisted of students who had graduated from the mentoring program.

The participants were randomly selected by the leader of the peer mentoring program. All focus group participants were current female students of the university

chosen for the study. Due to the random selection and the students' voluntary involvement, the participation attendance varied. The original expected attendance for these two groups was six participants each. However, not all of the student mentors joined, and several of the freshman mentees brought other female freshmen who were participating in the same peer mentoring program. The student peer mentor focus group consisted of three mentors and the freshman mentee who were currently in the program, and included eight current freshmen and one sophomore. The researcher was unaware of the sophomore's attendance until after the session was in progress and subsequently to the Institutional Review Board Human Subjects acknowledgements. The third focus group consisted of three females, who graduated from the peer mentoring program. In addition, the students in this focus group had returned to the program as mentors.

During the first two sessions, the peer mentoring program leader provided refreshments due to the time of day. Prior to each session the researcher confirmed that the students were in attendance of their own choice and not due to any outside obligations. Once the voluntarily participation was established on record, the discussion commenced.

The researcher was present only as a facilitator for discussion transition, to ensure all questions were heard and discussed. All groups were recorded and participants made aware that the recordings were being used for transcription purposes. The recordings were sent to eTranscription Solutions, LLC, for transcription, (http://www.etranscriptionsolutions.org). The written transcriptions were used for the coding of thematic categorical classifications. Pedhazur and Schmelkin (1991) describe classification as a meaningful form of measurement. All transcribed responses were

indexed by the researcher based on identifiable patterns. The indexed patterns were used to identify broader themed connections among the responses.

The qualitative strategies used in this study were discussed by Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, and Zoran (2009), who declared that there was not a specific framework for the analysis of qualitative data collected through focus groups, although the constant comparative method with the use of open, axial, and selective coding are the analytical strategies most suggested and used. The grounded theory data analysis of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding which was introduced by Strauss and Corbin (1998), was used to identify dominant categories of interest that were predicated based on the identified relationships between the emergent themes from the student responses. These two theorists used this strategy to discover conceptual connections by thoroughly examining the data and coding for categorization. Bourgeois (2012) described the use of open coding as initial research findings being identified, coded, and then categorized; axial coding as systematically networking the emergent classifications; and selective coding as deriving a hypothesis from the classifications made through axial coding. Creswell (1998) explored the usage of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding as a strategy of grouping data based on similar associations to identify evolving themes from the text to form a theory.

Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009) indicated that constant comparative analysis was the most effected with several focus groups within the same study to provide a cross-reference, which allows the strategy of keywords-in-context for significant theme identification. The authors outline the strategy of keywords-in-context as a process of providing context

to the words that are essential to the identification of prominent themes. As a result of the data analysis, four dominant themes were identified:

1. The benefits of the Peer Mentoring program

    Freshman mentee: "*I think it is a good--because it's someone closer to my age who recently went through what I went through, can help me on a regular basis*"

2. Expectations and traits of peer mentors

    Freshman mentee: "*And I also--I expect them to be professional because they are mentoring us. So, we need to be able to look up to them in a professional way. So, I need to--I expect them to carry their selves in a positive mannerism, someone that's not ignorant or--you know what I mean, so kind of set an example and be a role model for us as well. I expect that.*"

3. Common freshman stressors

    Student Mentor 1: *"They're not used to living in an area where there is about 20 other females or, in some cases, if they're in a co-ed dorm living with males and females, some of them are not used to that at all. And I've seen some freshmen that are just terrified by it because they have no idea how to interact with it."*

4. Enhancements to the Peer Mentoring program

    Mentee graduate 3: "They were more like lively because they felt more comfortable with me because they knew I was a student just like them. So, I guess more one on one time."

These themes describe the direct effects and perceptions of the peer mentoring program from the student mentors and the freshman mentees. The derived connections established the framework for the use of the constant comparative method in developing a grounded theory for the freshman female population. The constant comparative method authorized the researcher to derive conclusions in forming a theory. Upon development of the theory, the researcher has the premise for establishing future recommendations.

The Benefits of the Peer Mentoring Program

DuBois et al. (2011) believed that mentoring relationships for adults that are associated with higher education result in stronger connections, leading to successful outcomes in comparison to youth mentoring relationships. Throughout the focus group sessions the student mentors and the freshman participants discussed the programs benefit to the freshman experience. The mentees provided a baseline of novice collegiate experience, in which their success was dependent on the guidance and direction of various encounters throughout their freshman year. The females in the peer mentoring program perceived an advantage to their freshman female counterparts who did not participate in the program. They opined that direct contact with upperclassmen peer mentors provided them with the self-efficacy needed to overcome various emotional and collegiate barriers and for successful academic achievement. This fact was established in the final focus group, when the graduates of the program discussed their experiences and the sense of pride they felt since becoming mentors in the program. Student mentor 3 said:

> *"I feel--I gain a sense of pride knowing that I can get--educate other students*
>
> *about different questions that they might have and just making them feel*
>
> *comfortable because, like they said, professors can be sometime intimidating."*

As a direct result of the mentoring program the graduates gained the self-efficacy needed for their academic achievement, which awarded them the opportunity to successfully matriculate into their sophomore year. These individuals realized they had received a powerful experience and an advantage above non-peer mentoring participants, and they wanted to share their knowledge and passion with future freshman females.

All participants within the focus groups believed that being the same gender and of similar age provided the opportunity for building a strong and trusting relationship. Same gender mentoring is the most effective method in encouraging students and causes the knowledge and skills needed to understand and address gender obstacles to become available (Archard, 2012). Many of the program participants felt comforted in knowing the mentors also were students at the same institution, as the peer mentors possessed a better understanding of the freshman experience because they had recently encountered many of the same stressors. Student mentee 2:

> "They make you kind of feel like you're home. They--they're very, very just so
>
> nice, respectful. And they're very, very, very helpful. And they just make you
>
> feel good."

The student mentors felt a sense of duty to the incoming female freshmen to ensuring a positive and enriching freshman experience. They understood the stressors of this population and wanted to participate in their path for success. Mentee graduate 1 detailed:

"I feel like when I got into this program it was my way of being able to give back

to what somebody had done for me because I worked with different mentors--I

have mentors. I have a couple of them. And they're really good people. And I

wanted to be able to be that person to somebody else."

One of the student mentors commented that she and several friends from her

hometown began at the same institution together; however, as a junior, she is the only

one still in attendance. Student mentor 3 shared:

"It was five of us that came. Five of my friends and I, we all came together. And

I'm the one that's left. The only one. And they dropped out freshman year. So,

I've been solo-dolo for three years now."

This scenario prompted her decision to participate in the program to help other female

students and her hometown friends reach the successful achievement of their educational

goals. Several of the other mentors remarked on how the mentoring experience has

guided them in their educational pursuits by choosing a major in the social sciences, one

that is involved in helping others. Mentee graduate 1 stated:

"It's like I wanted to be a teacher whenever I got here, so it was kind of like my

way of testing the ropes of something that I had gave up on. And it was like oh,

I'm really good at this."

A graduate of the mentoring program indicated that her metamorphosis occurred

during the course of the program. She hesitantly began her collegiate experience

reluctant and lacked the self-assurance to reach out to others, but by the end of the peer

mentoring program she possessed the self-efficacy to effectively communicate with her

professors and peers to enhance her academic achievement. Now in her sophomore year,

she has remained in contact with a friend she made during her time in peer mentoring program. Student mentee 3 shared:

> *"I actually had this class last semester. I'm not currently in it. But, I did make a friend while I was in it. And she's--we still talk quite a bit. We actually have a few classes together."*

Another graduate of the program shared that she believed that peer mentoring relationships have endless possibilities of amelioration to the freshman female experience, which was affirmed through her volunteer service as a peer mentor. Through her past experiences and successes, she strives to encourage and motivate her freshman mentees to achieve their academic goals. The comments from the program graduates evidence is an impactful relationship between mentoring experiences of first-year female college students and their academic achievement (shown through postsecondary attainment) and self-efficacy as they relate to their matriculation into the second semester. Within the graduate focus group, participants have not only matriculated to become upperclassmen, but they have returned to the program as mentors to provide guidance in academic achievement and self-efficacy, as was provided to them.

The students currently participating in the program stated that the mentors helped them build self-efficacy and taught them important life skills that aided in the college experience. During the focus group sessions, students reflected that thy felt more comfortable communicating with their peer mentors than with university faculty and staff. Several mentioned the stress involved in the college transition and appreciated the opportunity to interact with individuals who could relate to them and provide leadership and direction for specific circumstances.

Expectations and Traits of Peer Mentors

Mentoring is a relationship between an adult and a younger individual, where the adult provides direction and support to the other during different stages throughout life (Stern et al., 1995). This is the premise for the recruitment of mentors for the peer mentoring program. The freshman and student mentors have specific and somewhat similar expectations, thus the importance of the student mentor role. According to the focus group participants, the mentor's role is critical and essential to the success of the program and the success of the freshman mentees in the program. The mentors have a sense of expectation for themselves and for their counterpart mentors to be effective guides for the freshman students. During the focus groups, they discussed how they tried to find new and innovative strategies, through various campus activities, to engage the freshmen, as they believed their role to be crucial to the academic success of their mentees. Student mentor 3 shared:

> *"I feel like, since I'm older I guess, I feel like I can relate to them more, and I can also give them advice on what I could've did or what I would've or should've, could've did differently so that it can help them and so that it can help brighten their future towards graduation."*

The true essence of mentoring for women is to provide specific examples of those who are currently successful in their field and who embody exemplary leadership skills (Archard, 2012). The female student mentors are chosen based on the scholastic and extra-curricular achievements while attending the institution. The student participants in the program and the current peer mentors have high expectations of the mentoring role within the mentoring program. The mentors are seen as the subject matter experts for the

freshman experience and well versed in overall student experiences at the institution. Student mentor 1 discussed**:**

> *"And I know that they expect us to assist the students to the best of our abilities as*
> *well as helping them if they need it as well, which isn't usually a problem at all."*

The mentors are expected to be responsible, well prepared for the weekly meetings, and to offer an open communication relationship with the freshman students for the program's entirety. The mentors view themselves as someone who can relate to the female freshman students because they are close in age and have gone through similar freshman experiences. Mentee graduate 2 discussed her experience by:

> *"And so, for me it was a way to like, like she said, give back. And then just to talk*
> *to students and see like what they were dealing with. I know that I wasn't far off*
> *from them. I'm a junior. They were freshman. But just to see like their--just to*
> *hear their input was like really beneficial. And it was a good feeling to be able to*
> *give--to I guess help them out."*

The mentors also have a bird's-eye view of the freshman mentees; they need to be observant in order to identify common freshman behaviors that could be detrimental to their success, such as experiences with the opposite sex, social events, or housing issues with peers.

Mentors are servant leaders with a focus on their followers, which entails placing the needs and success of the followers before their own and empowering others to become servant leaders (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008). The mentors who participate in the program are perceived and expected to possess leadership qualities. They are responsible for providing guidance and assistance when necessary to those

participating in the mentoring program. Reflections throughout the focus group sessions disclosed that many student mentors possess the adequate mentor characteristics, but some do not. Mentee graduate 2 discussed her experience:

> *"And I think it was good because I didn't think that my students pretty much were gonna like run up to me or even listen to me. but, what I found was like they really admire, I guess, my advice because I was their mentor but at the same time they saw me as just another student who had like pretty much been in their shoes. And so, it was really--it's kind of comforting for them to have somebody in the classroom that had been there and had, like, made it to another point because I could say yeah, I was a freshman."*

Student mentors without the proper skills hinder the mentoring relationship and program outcomes. The mentors described their training prior to being paired with the freshman students; they revealed that this training provided them with a toolkit for working with this critical population. Mentee graduate 2 described training as:

> *"So, I think that the training it was beneficial because I mean once I got into the classroom setting it was almost just like the training. So, I kind of expected that. I knew what to expect once I got into the classroom."*

This training radiates the mentors' potential in order to meet the needed expectations of this freshmen population. Mentors are members of society "who provide an example of the kind of success that one may achieve, and often also provide a template of the behaviors that are needed to achieve such success" (Lockwood, 2006, p.36).

Common Freshman Stressors

The lack of a smooth transition between high school and college was a recurring theme identified as a definite source of anxiety and stress for freshmen. Student mentor 1 stated:

> *"It's not really a smooth transition for them as well because it's kind of like you graduate, and all of a sudden, you're in college."*

This was especially difficult for female freshmen due to the innate need for perceived acceptance among peers. Young women in general show signs of stress and depression, but more so during the collegiate transition (Charbonneau, 2012). Several mentors shared that they could relate to the freshman mentees because they experienced the same stressors. They perceived that issues, from living with a roommate to potentially living in a co-ed residence hall, could cause terrifying pressures outside of the classroom, which could potentially affect academic progress. They also identified that the combined in-classroom and out-of-classroom stress could directly affect the matriculation of female students to the next semester. The academic adjustment of female students can be severely affected by their perceived stressful experiences (Wallpe, 2010). During the freshman mentee focus group sessions, several participants remarked that composing an email to an instructor was equally as stressful as speaking up in class. They felt that faculty members and their peers are intimidating. Everything in their surroundings was new, which caused a great deal of stress. Student mentor 1 made a comparable assertion:

> *"And I've seen some freshmen that are just terrified by it because they have no idea how to interact with it. Like, you have some girls that live in places like*

freshman dorm. And they're terrified because they have no idea what to really

expect or what's going to be there. And they have no idea how to deal with it

because they do not realize that, while there's--wasn't really much of a transition

to help build them up for college, it's two different areas."

Student mentor 1 also stated:

"And the goal of it is to be able to give these first-year students another outlook I

guess or another way of getting help without feeling the need to go to a professor

because, a lot of times, these students are fresh out of high school. They do not

want to go talk to the professors. They're intimidated by them. So, it's a way of

giving them advice and helping them have another source of reference that they

can feel comfortable going to because we are about their age if not maybe a

couple of years older. So, it makes it easier for them."

During the focus groups the mentees stated that the program provided them with a

stress-free zone, which was very important and advantageous for their college

adjustment. Student mentee 3 said:

"This is very kind of like stress free or stress-relieving type of class, which is

needed, especially, like, when you're coming in as a freshman and all of this is so

new."

The peer mentoring program provided the students with a safe haven where they could

come and ask specific questions and learn about themselves as college students. Many of

the freshmen mentees remarked on the opportunity during the mentoring sessions to

discuss everyday stressors that could potentially inhibit the achievement of their goals.

The mentees added that they were unprepared for the freshman college experience as

many of the comforts to which they were accustomed were stripped away the first day they stepped on campus. They were not given a guide book on dealing with new living and classroom environments, but were expected to be successful. This caused apprehension for all the mentees, even those who perceived themselves as extroverts. Several of the mentors expressed that the peer mentoring program addressed many of the freshman female stressors, but others are more personal in nature and could directly affect student academic success, e.g., understanding, conduct, and communicating with students of the opposite gender. The mentors and graduates shared that the peer mentoring program could possibly serve as a resource for all freshman females on campus through providing guidance and support for such stressors.

Barefoot (2000) introduced the concept of the strategy for women to share similar successes with other women in higher education. This was evident in the focus group discussions as well; the student mentors and the freshman mentees both discerned that a female mentor aided in the relief of the stress they experienced during the semester. They believed the female mentor could relate to them on a more personal level, where many of the stress factors transpired. The graduate responses resound with support for peer-to-peer interactions, which motivated them to become mentors as well as advocates for the freshman female population.

Enhancements to the Peer Mentoring Program

Over half of the colleges and universities in the United States value the importance of the freshman experience and offer first-year experience courses to provide the opportunity for student growth and peer-to-peer relationship development (Barefoot, 2000). The focus group participants reinforced the importance of the program for

freshman female students. Both the mentors and the freshman mentees understand that the first year of a collegiate career is essential. At this time the Peer Mentoring program is not a required course, but all groups reflected that it should be required or a similar course offered. Student mentee 1 stated:

"I guess I think maybe it should be a two-hour class. And maybe you can extend it and add on something to it if you had to because it seems like a huge importance after taking it, well, being--taking it right now, it seems like a huge importance I think every freshman should take and that it should be almost a requirement because it does help out so much."

Participants stressed the importance of a program required of all freshmen could alleviate the burden of transitioning from high school to college. They believed that if given the opportunity, the experiences and direction outlined in the program would result in increased persistence and matriculation of freshman females to their sophomore year. Mentee graduate 1 made indication of:

"So, when this was presented to me I was like oh, yeah, this seems like a good idea. And I wish that more people knew about it because I learned about it through word of mouth. I felt like that it should be put out there more because a lot of people could benefit from it I believe."

Student mentor 3 shared:

"So, I do think this program is worth having and worth keeping because it also helps retain students here at the university."

Several of the students expressed that they would have welcomed the opportunity to develop a deeper bond with the peer mentor. A recurring theme from both mentee

focus groups indicated that students wanted more opportunities to connect with the

mentor on a more personal level to enhance their collegiate experience even further.

Student mentor 1 reinforced:

"More involvement with the students and the peer mentors would be better."

The views of adolescents regarding mentoring relationships have been compared to

intimate relationships with parents or close friends and their attachment style (Georgiou

et al., 2008). The student mentors on several occasions reached out to the mentees at

times other than those for the program to build richer connections because they realized

the freshman students needed the extra support. At this time the established program

length is for only one semester, but a full agenda was provided for the freshman

participants. The peer mentors discussed extending the time parameters of the program,

but recognized that extended structures would require an unfavorable time commitment

from both the freshmen and the student mentors. They concluded that a more strategic

approach was to completely immerse themselves in all aspects of the program each

semester, in an effort to positively affect in the lives of the freshman female students.

Summary

A structured program for freshmen peer mentoring has twofold benefits. The

mentor is provided with the opportunity for leadership training and experience, and the

freshman mentees have the opportunity to engage with a successful student (Gordon,

1989). The focus group participants, both student mentors and freshman mentees

believed that freshmen are in a crucial transitional period in their lives, particularly

females. As defined during the course of this study, self-efficacy is having the

confidence in one's ability to achieve desired goals (Farenga & Daniel, 2005) and

academic achievement is definite indicators that measure student academic aspirations as it relates to GPA, standardized test scores, and postsecondary fulfilment (Fan & Chen, 2001, p. 4). The study's outcomes revealed that, through the positive experiences and support of the peer mentoring program, freshman female students possess increased self-confidence and academic success to ensure successfully matriculation. This was manifested during the discourse with the program graduates, who joined the program as mentors; they substantiated that their transition from freshman mentees to upperclassmen mentors positively affected academic achievement and self-efficacy as a relate to matriculation. These mentors volunteer their time each year, not because they are fulfilling an academic obligation, but because they desire to enrich the lives of freshman students. The mentors have walked in the freshmen shoes, and they want contribute their experiences for the betterment of their peers.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The Study in Brief

This study examined a specific population, first-year freshman females, who were struggling emotionally and academically but had the ability and attitude for success. The data gathered provided an opportunity for the researcher to postulate that mentoring relationships positively impact this population's achievement levels more than traditional nurturing relationships. Through an analysis of the responses from the female student mentors and from the students chosen unsystematically the desired population, results indicated that mentoring experiences of first-year female college students have extraordinarily positive effects on academic achievement and self-efficacy related to matriculation into the second semester. Dwyer (1989) posited that the essential needs of freshman students are to have clear information, to be accepted, and to know that someone cares. According to the data collected, the mentoring program met those needs for the freshman females of the institution. It is apparent that the students who participated in the program have a higher chance of persisting toward their academic goals, as they possess the advantage of building a relationship with an individual who has had similar experiences.

Mentors are the leaders of the future; they enrich the lives of the future generations to ensure the buoyancy and resilience needed to achieve success. Becoming an effective and influential mentor is a process of continuous self-improvement and the firm acknowledgement of the values and principles conceived, thereby becoming intimately aware of the person that an individual has become. This self-awareness can

motivate others to believe in themselves thus creating an environment of camaraderie and progress.

Mentors are collaborative leaders, individuals who develop people to their own individualistic potential (Lefton & Buzzotta, 2004). This style of leadership possesses the characteristics of a driven and goal-oriented, as well as resourceful, individual, which describes the student mentors of the peer mentoring program. These student mentors desire to develop the aptitudes of fellow freshmen and have the opportunity to observe the growth of that ability and potential. Mentors on an individualistic level deliver valuable educational experiences that permit students to unfold to their limitless potential. The student mentors who participated in this study demonstrated the desire to enrich the lives of the students around them by engaging with them to augment their self-awareness and self-efficacy to positively change their freshman experience and the campus community. Student mentors who possess self-awareness provided the necessary means to bridge gaps amongst diverse groups and build relationships that meet the needs and goals of the institution.

Students are inclined to attend a university that is proactive in supporting their social and academic needs (Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004). This study revealed common stressors among the freshman participants; these stress indicators were apparent barriers for the students' achievement of their academic goals. As the critical behaviors and predictive nature of freshman female students are identified, college personnel have the advantage to proactively build initiatives that improve the achievement and retention rates for this population at their institution. Fidler and Hunter (1989) discussed the importance of structured freshman programming, as it provided students with the

opportunity to transition from their previous acquainted environment to one of a different

and unfamiliar nature. The findings illustrated that a peer mentor's guidance through this

transitional period can reduce stress for the freshmen. Educational institutions possess

the potential to grow this imperiled population through the utilization of the results of this

study.

Limitations

Limitations of this study varied based on the different stages of the research.

External and internal validity were addressed to prove that the reported data was

trustworthy. From the beginning of the study, the students who had already drooped out,

or the students who decided to enter the workforce, were unavailable to enable an

understanding their experiences and the barriers they faced prior to departing the

institution. Other populations that were not addressed included student who had

participated in the mentoring program but had graduated from the institution. The

opportunity to understand the effect of their experiences with the program on their

successful completion was not explored, due to the specific understanding that was

needed for the current student population.

The parameters set during the focus group process and analyses were established

by the researcher and the leader of the peer mentoring program. The researcher

postulated that student focus groups would provide the most in-depth understanding of

the freshman experience, although working with live data is challenging. During the

focus groups, the students often would shift from the topic emphasis and provide more

particularized responses. The researcher was challenged to establish an environment

where the students felt comfortable to speak freely, but remain within the established parameters.

Throughout the focus group scheduling processes, course schedules and campus activities conflicted with the participants' availability, forcing the researcher to schedule the sessions late in the evening. With this accommodation, the female freshmen focus group experienced a larger attendance than the other two upperclassmen sessions. Although the upperclassmen sessions were low in participation, they were concentrated with knowledge and perspectives on the student experience. Limitations were anticipated from possible cultural or racial differences among the focus group participants due to the in-person interactions, but this was unfounded. The participants were oblivious to their physical differences, which enabled intense and active dialogue in the sessions. The focus groups were more diverse than was expected, which provided additional insight into the student experience based on race. This was an extension of the researcher expectations, but provided awareness for future research.

The four themes from the research with participants from the peer mentoring program permitted institutions the opportunity to devise a plan through student support services that could lead to successful academic achievement and matriculation of the freshman female population. When addressing the barriers encountered by student support services, the priority would be to develop more innovative student engagement opportunities through social, academic, and mentoring programs. A better understanding of mentoring benefits, mentor expectations, freshmen stressors, and possible peer mentoring programming enhancements can equip organizations with the knowledge needed for the success of freshman female students. The academic and mentoring

programs would focus on peer-to-peer and faculty/student interaction through tutoring or advising, and the social involvement would include the improvement of student activities and organizations. Postsecondary institutions faced a generation of women who are the future leaders and innovators; an awareness of their needs offers the female freshmen greater opportunities to achieve their highest educational potential. Through the use of the study's findings institutions have the opportunity to create improved programming for incoming and existing female students.

Students are dependent on the institution for guidance during the next stage of the life (Kuh, Kinzi, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005). Identification of the most effective method for students transitioning through the freshman adjustment period is fundamental to their ultimate academic achievement. The opportunity to cultivate their potential through peer interactions has been shown to be, not only effective, but preferred according to the research conclusions. Pascarella et al. (1999) believed that external classroom engagement experiences, such as peer-to-peer interactions, can to be beneficial for student retention and academic achievement. The research findings corroborated this theory by revealing the desire of the participants to experience more personal interactions with their peer mentors. The inferences from the results reiterate the positive relationship between mentoring experiences of first-year female college students and their academic achievement and self-efficacy as they relate to matriculation into the second semester.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the findings from this study, recommendations for successful freshmen matriculation include the following:

1. Provide mandatory freshman experience programming to include same gender peer mentoring;

2. Increase opportunities for freshmen to interact with their upperclassmen peers in a mentoring environment;

3. Expand existing freshman experience programs to utilize upperclassmen peer mentors; and

4. Enhance existing, or create new, training for upperclassmen on how to serve as effective peer mentors.

Beginning with same gender mentoring, interaction is advantageous in closing the gap for freshman females, yet going a step further to identify a method to close the gap in its entirety is essential. In support of the conclusions drawn from this study, institutions have the opportunity to empower a more specific and troubled population. Many minority students struggle with social integration at colleges with a more dominant culture, which may hinder their academic success (Braxton et al., 2004). More specifically, African-American students possess a very distinct life experiences that could complement the institution's student body population, through early identification and could result in positive social and academic experiences (Upcraft, Gardner, & Associates, 1989).

Clayton (2009) discussed in her dissertation how race and gender related to mentoring play a part in the upward mobility of African-American women in the executive levels of higher education. The findings of this research revealed that African-American women find mentoring to be beneficial to their success due to the variant experiences. African-American freshman females have to deal not only with the stressors

of being a female on campus, but also being a female who looks different than the majority of the student body at institutions with a predominant majority culture. Sensitivity is imperative when working with this population and other minority students due to the different expectations and experiences of this population (Liang & West, 2007). Assumptions routinely are made that student support services are one size fits all; however, understanding the diverse characteristics of the target student population can increase retention (Upcraft et al., 1989). A better understanding about the perceptions of African American freshman female perceptions, as well as their involvement with student support services such as mentoring, is paramount in creating strategies for their academic success. Freshman students come from many different backgrounds, beliefs, genders, cultures, and races; but institutions need to acknowledge an understanding of these differences and use that knowledge to their advantage in order to ensure the success of the individual student.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings in this study, recommendations for further research include the following:

1. Replicate this study at a different institution with a smaller and less diverse population determine whether similar results are found.

2. Replicate this study, but narrow the population scope by race and gender.

3. Use a quantitative approach by utilizing surveys to determine whether similar conclusions would be identified.

Conclusions

The freshman year of college can be one of the most stressful and critical times in a student's collegiate experience (Wallpe, 2010). Choosing a major, living with a roommate, attending class on a less structured schedule, and making known the previously unfamiliar are stressors that can be attributed to the academic success of freshmen. To better understand the importance of the freshman population, one must be aware that "the freshman year is the foundation on which success is based" (Upcraft et al., 1989, p.277). The key to retaining students through college completion is a successful and meaningful freshman year. Through all the stresses of the unknown, higher expectations, and untapped freedom, freshmen maintain the potential to succeed exponentially with proper guidance. The population that experiences the highest perceived stress level during their collegiate experience is freshman females (Wallpe, 2010). It is imperative for this population to be supported throughout their collegiate experience to ensure academic success. This study proved through the emergent themes posed by the student participants that there is a clear relationship between mentoring experiences of first-year female college students and their academic achievement and self-efficacy as they relate to their matriculation into the second semester. Same gender mentoring relationships afford these students the self-confidence and academic success needed for successful matriculation. Through positive educational mentoring programs, female students can close the emotional and psychological gaps that hinder their true potential for goal attainment (Archard, 2012).

Closing

Students should be provided every opportunity to pursue their education and develop their talents and passions in order to enhance their lives. Through positive mentoring experiences, academic goals can be realized. As institutions struggle with the matriculation of freshman females, student success strategies, such as same gender peer mentoring, are imperative. This study affirmed that mentoring relationships positively affect the postsecondary academic success of first-year female students. Institutions can cultivate a more dynamically diverse and skilled workforce, through the use of a progressive strategy to engage first-year female postsecondary students.

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Appendix A: Measurement Chart

Research Question	Data Collection Methods	Items on Instruments/ data sources	Analysis Strategies
Research Question- What is the relationship between mentoring experiences of first-year female college students and their academic achievement and self-efficacy as they relate to their matriculation into the second semester?	Focus Group	FG #1-4	Interpreting responses based on qualitative procedures

Three focus groups' participants, selected from a university in the southwest region of

Kentucky peer mentoring program, were conducted.

Focus Group Protocol

Script for Invitation to Participate (solicited by phone)*

*The researcher would complete the areas in italics and make decisions regarding the content in parentheses.

"Hello, may I speak to _____?

My name is _____; I am a doctoral student with Western Kentucky University. I am conducting a research project for my dissertation involving students from the institution's peer mentoring program. I would like to invite you to participate in a focus group to identify the relationship between mentoring experiences of first-year female college students and their academic achievement and self-efficacy. I hope to gain a better understanding of your personal experience as a *mentor/mentee*.

There is a possibility that individuals from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and other regulatory agencies may inspect these records. The information collected from the focus group will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Should the information collected be published, your identity will not be disclosed.

If you agree to participate, you are under no obligation and have the freedom to change your mind at any time."

"The focus group will be held on *date and time and will last for approximately an hour and a half.* We will meet in _*room/building*_ on the main campus.

By participating in the focus group you are providing consent to partake in my research study. Is this something we can count on you to participate in? (Respond appropriately). Thank you."

If leaving a voice mail message: *"I would appreciate it if you could return my call <u>by date at   phone number</u> and let me know one way or the other if you are available to participate in the focus group. Thank you in advance. Bye and have a great day."*

Script for Conducting Focus Group

1. Introduction by Moderator

"Greetings Focus Group Participants,

You have been randomly selected to participate is this focus group based on your involvement with the peer mentoring program. The researcher has identified that the needs of the freshman female students have not been effectively met. The researcher is conducting this focus group to gain a better understanding of the freshman female student population needs. At any time during the focus group that you may feel uncomfortable, you have the option to discontinue participation.

 As a result of this, the researcher hopes to identify methods to positively enhance the freshman experience while at this university. Thank you in advance for your participation."

2. Focus Group Questions

Note: The moderator should feel comfortable in facilitating additional conversation based on participants' responses to the questions below.

Mentor Focus Group Questions

1. The peer mentoring program on campus. Tell me what you know about it. How long have you been with the program?
    a. What did you think of the quality of the program?
2. What are you expectations of a peer mentoring program?
    a. Are these expectations met? Why or why not?
3. What type of information would you like to see a peer mentoring program provide the female freshman students?
4. What are some suggestions that would be beneficial to your performance as a mentor?
    a. What would improve your effectiveness in the classroom?

Mentee Focus Groups Questions

1. The peer mentoring program on campus. Tell me what you know about it.
    a. What did you think of the quality of the program?
2. What are you expectations of a peer mentoring program?
    a. Were these expectations met? Why or why not?
3. How can a peer mentoring program better serve the needs of the freshman female students?
    a. What barriers exist for this population receiving services from this mentoring program?
    b. Have you enrolled for next semester? If not, did the mentioned barriers hinder your enrollment?
4. What are some suggestions that would be beneficial to your performance as a student in relation to: The achievement of your goals, self-awareness?

3. Conclusion/ Debriefing

Thank you for participating in today's focus group. Your involvement will be invaluable

to the development of future peer mentoring programs and the enrichment of the

freshman female experience. Thank you again for your participation.

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: ____The College Freshman Female Perspective_____

Investigator: Name: Catrice Reese

Phone: 859-494-4507

Email: catrice.bolton@kctcs.edu

You are being asked to participate in a project conducted through this university. The University requires that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project.

The investigator will explain to you in detail the purpose of the project, the procedures to be used, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. You may ask him/her any questions you have to help you understand the project. A basic explanation of the project is written below. Please read this explanation and discuss with the researcher any questions you may have.

If you then decide to participate in the project, please sign on the last page of this form in the presence of the person who explained the project to you. You should be given a copy of this form to keep.

1.   **Nature and Purpose of the Project:**

For my research, I plan to work with the established mentoring program, the peer mentoring program, which provides same gender mentoring opportunities to freshman female students. By focusing on one established same gender mentoring program. I can

better understand the effects of mentoring on the academic success of female students in the postsecondary sector. Along with identifying the key success factors with in the mentoring program, possible recommendations could be made for the future academic success for female students.   My research focus would be centralized around the question, "What is the relationship between mentoring experiences of first-year female college students and their academic achievement and self-efficacy as it relates to their matriculation into the second semester?"

2.   **Explanation of Procedures:**

A focus group consisting of female freshman students within the chosen peer mentoring program and a group of female mentors will be conducted in late November to develop a more meaningful insight identify the relationship between mentoring experiences of first-year female college students and their academic achievement and self-efficacy. The information obtained from the focus group will be analyzed to identify commonalities among the female freshman students. The focus groups will consist of six participants randomly chosen from the peer mentoring program's mentee and mentor database.

3.   **Discomfort and Risks:**

At this time there are no known risks that will affect any of the participants of the focus groups. Interacting with a stranger may be uncomfortable for some participants, at any time you feel uncomfortable you may discontinue participation without penalty.

4.   **Benefits:**

The only identifiable benefit to the participants, is having the knowledge that they are possibly helping future freshman females by discussing various methods to provide effective support.

As a student you may not personally benefit from participation in the study as it is a learning experience.

5.   **Confidentiality:**

All information provided is held strictly confidential to the extent permissible by law. No names will be used on any of the paperwork involved other than the informed consent form.

6.   **Refusal/Withdrawal:**

Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University. Anyone who agrees to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty.

You understand also that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, and you believe that reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize both the known and potential but unknown risks.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____

Witness   Date

THE DATED APPROVAL ON THIS CONSENT FORM INDICATES THAT

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY

THE WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Paul Mooney, Human Protections Administrator

TELEPHONE: (270) 745-2129

Appendix D

Focus Group 1
November 19, 2013

Unidentified Woman: The 19th, sorry.

Facilitator: Today is the 19th. First, I just want to say welcome. We definitely--

Mr.--you all see the program leader [sp] or anybody in the university experience group,

thank them, and we appreciate and I appreciate, and let them know that you appreciate

providing the refreshments.

But, before we get started, I want to make sure that everyone knows they're here

under their own free will with the consent forms.

It does state that you can--any time you may feel uncomfortable or any time that

you do not want to answer any questions, you do not have to.

And in no way are you forced to be here, correct? Right?

Unidentified Woman: Right.

Facilitator: Very good. My name is Catrice Reese. And I am a doctoral student

of WKU. And I will actually be your moderate for the focus group today. And you have

been randomly selected to participate in the focus group based on your involvement in

the university experience program.

The researchers of this particular study has identified a need in freshman females

and wants to focus on the freshman females and want to make sure that these needs are

effectively met or have identified that they haven't been.

The researcher is conducting this focus group to gain a better understanding of the

freshman female student population needs.

At this--at any time during the focus group that you may feel uncomfortable or may not want to answer any questions, you have the option to discontinue participation or decide not to answer any of the questions.

As a result of this, the researcher hopes to identify methods of--that--or methods to positively enhance the freshman experience while at this university.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Now that we have that out of the way, we will go ahead and start. What will happen--just so you know, you are being recorded just so that, when we go back and look at the research and look at some of the statements, that we are accurate and we identify truly what we can do or how we can enhance the freshman experience.

Now, to start, to make this a little bit easier, I'm going to ask a couple of questions. And if you would like to answer, you are freely to answer. I just ask you that you answer one at a time so that we can get it on the tape and that you state your name before your answer.

And if you forget to state your name before your answer, just state it afterwards so that we--when we're--we can make sure we know who's speaking.

For the first question, the peer mentoring [unintelligible] program on campus, tell me what you know about it. You all are participants. But, tell me what you know about the program and what your thoughts are.

Unidentified Woman: The mentoring?

Facilitator: Yes, the program that you're in, the mentoring program that you are currently in.

Student mentee 1: Student mentee 1. I like it a lot just because it helps me figure out Blackboard because I was so confused with a lot of the stuff at the beginning of the year and helped me--because I lost a lot of money from, like, Pell Grant, things like that. I lost some of that.

At the beginning of the year, I wasn't really sure why. It helped me figure out how to fix that and get that money back. So, I really like the class because it's help me expand my knowledge of all the programs here.

Facilitator: Anyone else?

Student mentee 2: Student mentee 2. I--talking about the university experience part, it has helped me also to teach me about the programs that they have here, different activities.

It has also helped you with enhancing your life skills, where it comes with financial or how to stand up in front of someone and speak to them by doing, like, presentations or whatever.

So, I also think that that--it also helps that way, too.

Facilitator: Okay. What do you think about the quality of the program?

Student mentee 3: Student mentee 3 [sp]--sorry, Student mentee 3. The one that I was in, I felt it was very well structured, was rather casual [inaudible] class I felt was very nice because it wasn't just we are young.

So, the way it was structured for my experience was appropriate I felt.

Student mentee 2: Student mentee 2. And also to add to that, it's also stress free. Like, it's a class that you can come to learn but not have to worry about having so much homework and so much exams, like a regular core class.

77

So, it kind of--it's fun. You enjoy, like, getting--I do--enjoy getting up, going to class, and like, oh, this is like my fun class out of my whole schedule.

I do not have to worry about all this lecturing and everything. It's just nice and discussion.

But, you're also still learning and enhancing your knowledge as well.

Student mentee 3: Student mentee 3. I also felt like these are skills that it's like I can actually use them, as opposed to some other classes, where you get told a bunch of stuff that you might not necessarily use.

So, while it is fun, it's like I can actually use this.

Facilitator: Very good. What are your expectations of the peer mentoring program with your peer mentors?

Student mentee 1: Student mentee 1. I just expect them to be able to help me with, like, any questions that I have most of the time or be able to direct me somebody-- direct me to someone who can help me because, a lot of times, if I ask them a question.

Like, I had a question about study abroad, and the program leader didn't know much about it. But, one of the peer mentors, his name's Zach, he helped out a lot. He-- because he's been to all kinds of study abroad, and he told me a lot about it. And that really did help.

Student mentee 4: Student mentee 4 [sp]. I think it is a good--because it's someone closer to my age who recently went through what I went through, can help me on a regular basis, like, what, three times a month?

Facilitator: I do not know if it--that--those bells are so loud. If you--I'm going to scoot it closer [inaudible] the middle. Will you repeat what you said just now that the bells are not ringing anymore? Sorry.

Student mentee 4: Student mentee 4. And I think it's helpful because they're closer to our age, and they could understand more, and they'd been through what we've been through recently so they can help us like three times a month and understand and check up on us.

Student mentee 2: Student mentee 2. And I also--I expect them to be professional because they are mentoring us. So, we need to be able to look up to them in a professional way.

So, I need to--I expect them to carry their selves in a positive mannerism, someone that's not ignorant or--you know what I mean, so kind of set an example and be a role model for us as well. I expect that.

Facilitator: Okay. Were your expectations met?

Student mentee 1: Student mentee 1. And yeah, they were. They were. They've been so helpful with everything I've ever had to ask questions and with what she was saying that they are very professional.

They're not just kind of slacking off and being ignorant. So, that's very helpful.

Facilitator: Okay. The next question was, why or why not? But, you've already--you answered that.

How can the peer mentoring program, the peer mentors better serve the needs of the freshman female students of this institution?

Student mentee 2: Student mentee 2. I think one thing that just came to mind, maybe getting us one on one, maybe talking to us, or maybe even a group, just get us all together, figure out the perfect time, getting us all together, just talk about what's going on, what's bothering us, or how's class going or just anything, just having that girl time and to just relax and just relieve your mind from what's been going on throughout the whole week. So, I think that would be cool, too.

Student mentee 1: Student mentee 1. And I agree with what she was saying. It would be really nice to get outside of class and not someone where we're going to have to learn something, just be able to get the know the peer mentor kind of one on one in a more personal level so, that way, it's not always just that professional kind of face that we get to see, but actually get to know their experiences and what things that we should-- choices that we should make when going on through college and, like, different classes, do not have this teacher, or this teacher's awesome, things like that.

Facilitator: Anything else? I think they said it all.

What are the--what barriers exist for your--the population, and the population, I mean the freshman females of this institution, receiving services from this mentoring program?

Unidentified Woman: You said the barriers?

Facilitator: And if you do not have any, that's--I mean, you can say that as well.

Student mentee 2: Student mentee 2. I think a barrier for me personally was--is--it still is--fear, fear of--even though they're giving me these ideas, I'm just afraid to kind of get out there because I'm an introvert, so kind of like mingling with other people is kind of--it's a little scary for me.

80

And then also, just getting the motivation, even though I know it's good, sometimes the motivation just to do it is kind of--is a work in progress for me.

Facilitator: Any other barriers?

Unidentified Woman: Just between us and them, or--?

Facilitator: --Between you and your peer mentor, um-hmm.

Student mentee 3: Student mentee 3. I think--.

Facilitator: --Within the program, of course.

Student mentee 3: Within the program. It's--I know, sometimes, reaching out is kind of hard, especially. So, maybe just--like, even when composing an e-mail, so, might write that e-mail, but just--I have self-confidence thing, so, it's like I may delete it a lot.

So, it's--maybe that's a barrier I know that I have is being able to get to actually ask.

Facilitator: To ask questions?

Student mentee 3: Yeah.

Facilitator: Of the peer mentors?

Student mentee 3: Yeah, just, like--because asking questions, even if it's just through e-mail because, face to face, I have no problem. But, you do not always have time for that.

Facilitator: Very good.

What are some suggestions that would be beneficial to your performance as a student in relation to the achievement of your goals and self-awareness?

Unidentified Woman: Like, things that they could tell us to do, like the peer mentors to do, or just--?

Facilitator: --Or, any suggestions, what the peer mentors can do, what the program could do, or anything that you may see.

Student mentee 1: Student mentee 1. And again, with what she was saying earlier about how--getting out of the class, I think, the program leader, he wanted a--at some point in time, [unintelligible] the class--one of our classes, we're supposed to go out and [unintelligible], just all of us, and get out of that classroom I guess idea of each other and kind of see each other outside of class.

And I think that'd be really, really beneficial for the students just to be able to see each other outside of class and see each other, like, and how they react around other people and not just in the classroom because I know that there's this one guy I saw out of class one day, and I tried to talk to him and, like, wave at him, and he wouldn't say anything.

And he's real talkative in class. When I see him outside of class, he's like his head down, doesn't look at anybody. And so, I really do not know this person outside of the classroom, except for just what I know of him in the classroom, so I think could be good to know each other--know other people that are in class outside of the class, yeah.

Student mentee 2: Student mentee 2. And just to touch on that, too, getting out would also help you build relationships and friendships as well because you're in the class with that person.

And then if you go--if you're out of that class, like she said, in just a normal casual atmosphere, you will kind of get to know that person in a different way.

So, you can see how they are to see if this can be a friendship. So, I think that'll also help build a friendship. So, yeah.

Student mentee 3: Student mentee 3. I actually had this class last semester. I'm not currently in it. But, I did make a friend while I was in it. And she's--we still talk quite a bit. We actually have a few classes together.

And so, getting to know her through this class and just talking, like, lunch or something outside, I think it helped. I mean, so, like, I can, like, go to her and ask about class notes and stuff, which is nice.

Facilitator: Your name?

Student mentee 3: I said Student mentee 3.

Student mentee 1: Student mentee 1. And I agree with what she was saying. I had a girl. She dropped out of this class that we had together. It was astronomy. She dropped out at the beginning. But, then we realized we had this class together as well, the university experience class.

And we started talking. And sometimes, if we see each other, we'll talk. And we--she gave me her phone number. We're--like, we help each other out if we can't remember because we have some assignments for this class.

And so, like, we'll be like, "Hey, do we have something to do for tomorrow? And should we remind each other?" And we're actually friends now. So, that's--that was useful.

But, out of the whole class, I think the only person I've ever seen outside of class is her. And so, that's the only person I know. That's the only person I really talk to. And so, I'd like to know everybody else. But, it's just hard to.

Facilitator: Is there anything else?

Unidentified Woman: [Unintelligible].

Facilitator: They're just taking the words right out of your mouth, aren't they?

Unidentified Woman: [Unintelligible] table.

Facilitator: Well, that was the last question. Is there anything else that you would like to let me know about the program or the peer mentors or anything else that you think that would be useful?

Student mentee 5: I think it's just been a helpful--Student mentee 5.

I think it's been a helpful class all around because it gives you things. It gives you the tools to maneuver around campus and to get your classes. And if you have a scheduling problem or problem with your paper, presentation, anything like that, it's there for--to help you through whatever you need to do because it coincides with your other classes.

So, it's kind of an easy course, but it also is very helpful. It's not one that you can just breeze by. You can, but it's very helpful.

Student mentee 6: Student mentee 6. I also agree, too. It's--it helped me out a lot, too. Like, when I first came to this institution, I didn't know anything about loans or how to go about loans. And my teacher, she was the one who actually helped me, like, go through the process.

And then we also have a young lady in our class, too, peer mentor [sp]. She helped me do my schedule and, like--so, they've been mentor, like, in class and outside of class also, too.

And also, like, I just think it's good all the way around.

Student mentee 2: And Student mentee 2. To add to that, it--they make you kind of feel like you're home. They--they're very, very just so nice, respectful. And they're very, very, very helpful. And they just make you feel good.

It's just--when you go in--when you come to the class, teacher and peer mentor, they just--I do not know, just the stress and the home feel--just always just comes over me.

And like, when they--when you are struggling with something, they're always, like, quick to try to figure out--if they do not have the answers, they're quick to go and try to find the answer.

They always--I lost my train of thought--and when--like, if you--they're very lenient with your things, too, not too lenient.

But, like, if you forget to do something, they're like--they're not like, "Oh, you're going to get--just get a zero."

They let you--mistakes happen. They understand that we might--something else was more important. Then that accidentally didn't get done.

So, they're not so harsh when it comes to getting your work done. Yeah, I think that's what I'm trying to say.

Student mentee 6: Student mentee 6. Also, in the beginning of the semester, my advisor had looked at my schedule. And I was not supposed to take university experience. It doesn't count.

My major is child studies. And I have a minor in social work. And it doesn't count.

But, I took the class just because I know peer mentor. Like, she's from my home town. And as I was going to the class, I was like, "Well, maybe I could experience something."

And I'm actually glad that I did take the class, even though it doesn't count, because it also taught me other things.

Like, it taught me more about myself. Me, as a person, I'm extroverted. I didn't know that.

It taught me how to speak to people more. It just taught me a lot of things, like stress, study skills, money.

And also, the peer mentor, like she lets us know, like, different activities that's going on throughout the--throughout campus.

And like, she tries to get every student involved in activity around campus. And if we need her help or something, like today, she gave us her number.

And I just think that them to, like--they're not on actual paper as our mentors. But, they're actually mentors because they're--they help us out as teachers and mentors.

Student mentee 3: Student mentee 3. I feel like this class is just a very kind of stress-relieving type of place just in general, like not--or what's going on for like--just go in there and--as compared to a bunch of other classes, like psychology or very high--I need to get this done. I need to do this. And this is really towards, like, my major.

This is very kind of like stress free or stress-relieving type of class, which is needed, especially, like, when you're coming in as a freshman and all of this is so new.

Facilitator: Your name.

Student mentee 3: I said Student mentee 3.

Facilitator: You did?

Student mentee 3: Yes.

Student mentee 1: Student mentee 1. I really like my class. I have the program leader. And he's been really, really helpful because he tries to get, like--he tries to get on a personal level a little bit with everybody in class as much as he can, even though he has just like a certain time limit that he has to teach in.

And so, it's nice to actually feel comfortable around him and the peer mentors.

But, one thing I have had a little bit of an issue with is, sometimes, when we do not have the program leader in class and we have our peer mentors, we really do not do anything.

And I mean--and that's okay sometimes, just to joke around. But, like, we had a paper due on Monday, and I didn't even know about, didn't realize, didn't think about it. And the peer mentors were supposed to remind us, and they didn't do that.

And so, things like that, sometimes, just like, you are a peer mentor. You are technically supposed to be here to help the students out. And if they do not remind you to do things, if they don't--like they're supposed to do and--then no one's going to remember.

We only had one person out of the whole class I think that turned the paper in. So, it was just kind of like, "Oh, yeah, I have to do that," and just because you do not think about it.

And most the time, teachers, if you have a paper coming up, like, "Hey, by the way, paper Monday," or things like that. And they remind you about it.

And the program leader, I think he's going to let us all turn it in tomorrow. So, that's okay. But, it would've been nice to have been--just to remind about it, things like that.

I do not think they purposely didn't think about it. But, we only had one of the peer mentors out of the two we had. So, it may have just been she was stressed with all the kids and didn't have the other one with her or just--but other than that, I really do like the class.

And it has been very beneficial to me and I think a lot of other students with how to go by--like, scheduling for classes big time because The program leader has kind of pointed out, "Hey, it's not that good of a teacher," because our peer mentors have kind of relayed information on who's a good teacher and who's a bad teacher.

And I really, really appreciated that because I do not want to sign up for a class when the teacher's just really, really hard and just unreasonable.

And so, they really do help out with that. And I really appreciate everything they do.

Facilitator: Anything else?

Student mentee 2: Student mentee 2. And then to add onto that, too, one thing that kind of bothers me in my class with the peer mentor, sometimes, because she is so nice and sweet, sometimes, she--the students, some of the students kind of push over her.

And when she's trying to talk, they're talking. And she sometimes has to, like, yell or something.

So, sometimes, I feel like it could get kind of--because she is so nice, they kind of push over her sometimes.

So, I think some--maybe a little bit more strict I guess. But, for everything else, it's really good, though.

Student mentee 1: Student mentee 1. Another thing--I just thought about this. If--a lot of students--I know a lot of kids who, like, are transfers or even, like, freshmen that didn't take the class and didn't think they needed to take the class and that it'd be no use for them.

And at the beginning of the school year, I really thought it was just going to be like a BS class and just totally not worth taking.

But, I've tried to convince a few people that are--that had been--that transferred over here to take the class because it does help you learn about things at this institution that I didn't even know were even available.

And so, it seems like an unimportant class. I guess they should--I guess this institution as the--as a whole should make a little more of a--make the class with an importance, not so much--it's a one--I think it's a one-hour class.

And so, you really do not get much credit for it. So, a lot of people are like, "Oh, with one hour, I'm not going to take it," because there's not a lot of credit for it.

I guess I think maybe it should be a two-hour class. And maybe you can extend it and add on something to it if you had to because it seems like a huge importance after taking it, well, being--taking it right now, it seems like a huge importance I think every freshman should take and that it should be almost a requirement because it does help out so much.

Facilitator: Okay. Anything else?

If not, I thank you all for your participation today in the focus group. Your involvement, it will be invaluable to the development of the future peer mentoring programs and the enrichment of freshmen female experiences for this institution and for anyone else.

Thank you, again, for your participation.

Unidentified Woman: You're welcome.

Facilitator: We'll go ahead and get started. I'm moving it closer to the middle because we had some bells go off before, and they were kind of loud.

But, I wanted to say welcome. Thank you for coming. We appreciate the program leader [sp] and the university experience course and program leaders for letting us come today and providing refreshments because of the time of day.

But, I want to make sure that everybody understands they're here on their free will and that they are not forced to be here, correct?

Unidentified Woman: Um-hmm. Yes.

Facilitator: Very good. You've been randomly selected to participate in a focus group based on your involvement with the mentoring program.

The researcher has identified that the needs of the freshman female students have not been met effectively.

The researchers are conducting this focus group to gain a better understanding of the freshman female student population needs.

At any time during this focus group that you may feel uncomfortable, you have the option to discontinue participation.

As a result of this, the researcher hopes to identify methods to positively enhance the freshman experience while at this institution. Thank you in advance.

Now, what we're going to do, I'm going to ask a few questions if you all feel free to answer. If you do not want to, you do not have to.

One thing I will ask--oh, to also let you know, I am recording this just so that we can have some reference in the future.

I ask when you do answer a question if you would say your name first and then answer your question so that we can identify kind of how many responses and classify those responses.

For the first question, the peer mentoring program mentor--the peer mentoring program on the campus, tell me what you know about it, how long you've been with the program, and what do you think of the quality of the program?

That's a lot of questions. So, if you would like me to repeat any part of it, but what do you truly know about it, the history, and the background? How long have you been in the program, and what do you think about the quality of the program?

Student mentor 1: I guess I'll go first. My name's Student mentor 1 [sp]. And I've been in the program for two years I guess or a year and a half, yeah, two years.

And I'm pretty sure the program leader was actually the one that started the peer mentoring program on campus. And the goal of it is to be able to give these first-year students another outlook I guess or another way of getting help without feeling the need to go to a professor because, a lot of times, these students are fresh out of high school. They do not want to go talk to the professors. They're intimidated by them.

So, it's a way of giving them advice and helping them have another source of reference that they can feel comfortable going to because we are about their age if not maybe a couple of years older. So, it makes it easier for them.

Student mentor 2: Okay. My name's Student mentor 2 [sp]. This is my first year actually doing the program. And you want to know my understanding of it, or--?

Facilitator: --What do you--yeah, what do you know about it, how long you've been in the program, so you've already said that, and then what do you think about the quality of the program?

Student mentor 2: What I know about the program is we're supposed to serve as, like she said, someone for the students to talk to that's kind of like their age that they can relate to more because sometimes the professors, they do not feel comfortable talking to them at all, or they're like, "Oh, this is so boring, or I'm never going to use this stuff."

And like, we tell them, "Oh, no, you're going to use this again," and let them know their resources around campus and where they can go for this, what they can do.

The quality of it, I think it's a great program, but some of the teachers do not know how to use us properly.

And because of that, we're not like--they see our faces, but we do not do a whole lot. So, they're like, "Okay. You're just here." So--.

Student mentor 3: --Okay. So, my name is Student mentor 3 [sp]. This is my first year being with peer mentor. And could you repeat the other part of the question?

Facilitator: Tell me what you know about it and what the quality, what you think the quality of the program is.

Student mentor 3: Okay. What I know about it, I agree with both these ladies, are they go to a person that students can go to that they feel comfortable going to. They get asked to--well, I make my students feel like they can ask me anything, whether its school related or if it's personal related.

I feel like, since I'm older I guess, I feel like I can relate to them more, and I can also give them advice on what I could've did or what I would've or should've, could've

did differently so that it can help them and so that it can help brighten their future towards graduation.

And the quality of the program, I do think that this is a great program to have, but also, too, this is my major. And this is something that I really enjoy doing.

So, when I'm in the classroom interacting with the students being that person, like when they whisper like, " Student mentor 3, I really didn't understand that. Could you explain that in more detail?"

I feel--I gain a sense of pride knowing that I can get--educate other students about different questions that they might have and just making them feel comfortable because, like they said, professors can be sometime intimidating.

So, I do think this program is worth having and worth keeping because it also helps retain students here at the university.

Student mentor 1: And it's helpful, too, because some of these professors are a little bit younger. So, they may have some experiences that are relatable to the students.

But, a lot of them are much older. And even if they did go to this institution, it was a completely different time for the campus and the students.

So, we're just old enough to have experience that they can relay off of. But, we're not like too old I guess, if that makes sense [unintelligible] peers.

Facilitator: What--we're going to go to the next question. What are your expectations of the peer mentoring program? And are these expectations met? Why or why not?

Student mentor 2: Okay. So, once again, Student mentor 2. They're--my expectations were, like, I would get to interact with the students more. But, I kind of like

do that myself now that the--once the semester got further in, I get to like--I just roam around the classroom [unintelligible] and I, like, talk to each group when she puts them in groups.

So, like, it's easier to do that, whereas before, I'm like, "Well, what am I supposed to do," because she would tell me specific things to do and have me sit in like one spot.

So, now, she actually uses me. Like, I've taught three different classes--well, four actually because, one time, she wasn't there.

So, now, it's like more comfortable I guess. And I guess that they're being met now because I--like I said, I expected to talk to them more and do more stuff with them.

But, now, I got them going to events with me. So, it's working out I guess.

Student mentor 3: The expectations of the--.

Facilitator: --The program [unintelligible].

Student mentor 3: Well, I'm just trying to make sure so I can give the most accurate answer.

Facilitator: Well, I appreciate that.

Student mentor 3: It was the expectations of the program.

Facilitator: Were they met? What were your expectations? And were they met? Why or why not?

Student mentor 3: That's another thing. I agree with you, too. My name's Student mentor 3. I forgot to say that.

I agree with student mentor 2. I feel like I could've been utilized a little bit more in the classroom. But, my teacher, she was very flexible.

And I feel like, since this was my first year, I didn't know what to expect from the program. And I feel like, now, since I know that I could've went up to my teacher and been like, "Hey, can I do more, or can I talk about this more," I know she would've been more willing. But, I wish she would've planned some days in advance for me to go ahead and teach the class, if that makes sense.

Also, too, my teacher, she was nice. So, that was the expectation. And I really, really enjoy having--and I also work with my teacher, too.

So, we sometime--some days, we'll be in there. I help her plan stuff. So, I got to see the opposite side. So, that was very helpful. And she helped me learn about some different Websites that could help them and far as financial aid and stuff like that. So--.

Student mentor 1: --My name is Student mentor 1. And the biggest expectation that I had for it was to work with the students as much as with the professor because, even though we are peer mentors, I almost see us as a T.A., a teaching assistant, as well because we do help with doing lectures, providing examples for the students. And sometimes, we do help with grading and things like Blackboard and all of that.

So, that was a big thing that I expected there, which I've noticed that the first time I did peer mentoring, I was paired with a new teacher. So, he didn't really know what to do with me. So, I just kind of came in. He was like, "Well, do you want to teach this?"

"Sure. I can do that," whereas the past couple semesters that I've done it, I've been doing it under like the Director and the Co-Director of the program. So, they're a lot more organized. They actually gave me specific days that they wanted me to teach and specific lessons. And I'm like, "Okay. I can make that." And it's a lot easier that way.

96

And it's probably really only my expectations of it. And I know that they expect us to assist the students to the best of our abilities as well as helping them if they need it as well, which isn't usually a problem at all. So--.

Facilitator: --Very good. What type of information would you like to see a peer mentoring program provide freshman female students?

Student mentor 3: I wish that we talked--oh, Student mentor 3. I wish that the program talked a little bit more about self-esteem, maybe image here on campus, just get more in-depth like with a personal level and something that males and females can relate to because, not only do females need to pay attention to how they dress and how they present their selves, males also do, too.

So, I wish that it were also to, like, talk about other things besides like just campus activities, campus involvement, resources here on campus. They also need to be educated about how to conduct yourself and at a upper level. So, I wish it talked a little bit more about that.

Student mentor 2: Student mentor 2. I have to agree with her on the self-esteem. And there's, like, a lot of different things that can come up on campus that, like, they're not expecting.

Some of them come from far places. And they get here, and they're like--they feel alone. They're lost. They get peer pressured into doing things they wouldn't normally do because they're like--they want to make friends.

So, I feel like a lot of them--the males and the females, really, because, like she said, they all need similar guidance. It's not really like a one-sex thing, even though I know that's kind of what you all want.

But, it can't really because, like, some things females need to hear from males and males need to hear from females.

Like, if I was to tell the boys, "Oh, this is not attractive," they'll listen to me more than they will to males because they're like, "Oh, you're just saying that."

But, they hear a female say it, then they'll take more heed to it.

When the young ladies hear men say, "That's--no, that's retched. That--no, I do not like that," then they're like--especially if they think it's attractive, too. They're like, "Oh, wait, I've got to fix this, no."

They do not understand how big a deal it is when you're walking around on this campus like--what is it, every day is like a interview almost, like a job interview? You're presenting yourself.

So, you need to act if--so, like run around I guess climbing on top of cars in parking, that's not exactly--you know what I'm saying--the image. Have fun. You know what I'm saying? But, it happened. It happened at the beginning of the semester. So--.

Student mentor 1: --It happens so much.

Student mentor 2: Yeah, they need to learn about self-esteem and how to dress and how--excuse me--to talk to professors especially.

A lot of them do not know--like, I know people who got to their senior year and never talked to a professor, went through the whole class not understanding nothing, but refused to talk to a professor.

They need to understand they're not as intimidating as they look or seem. Sometimes, if you just talk to them, they'll understand.

Student mentor 3: And also, too, like getting into those things, I guess you would put in the category as if they should already know, I have with my job I guess a students' assist coach. I help students who are failing. They come to me. And I help them get back on track and get their grades up.

So, when students come to me and I'll be like, "Okay. Well, have you e-mailed your professor? Have you communicated with your professor, or have you asked them, could you make this assignment up for either half points or whatever? It's better than a zero."

Some of them come in there and just flat out send a e-mail. And I'm like--or type up the e-mail. And I'm like, "You're not going to say hello? You're not going to format the e-mail?"

So, even those little small tedious things that you would already expect for them to know, they do not know. So, it's even also good--a good thing for people to go over those things because, how can they be more professional? How can I get better? And they do not know.

Student mentor 1: It's not really a smooth transition for them as well because it's kind of like you graduate, and all of a sudden, you're in college.

And university experience class is--it's a great class, and it's a great program, but a lot of times, they just focus on the campus part of it and not the person part of it, if that makes sense because a lot of these women are not used to having a roommate.

They're not used to living in an area where there is about 20 other females or, in some cases, if they're in a co-ed dorm living with males and females, some of them are not used to that at all.

99

And I've seen some freshmen that are just terrified by it because they have no idea how to interact with it. Like, you have some girls that live in places like freshman dorm. And they're terrified because they have no idea what to really expect or what's going to be there.

And they have no idea how to deal with it because they do not realize that, while there's--wasn't really much of a transition to help build them up for college, it's two different areas.

So, a lot of times, they do not realize that the stuff that they did in the high school was cute, it doesn't work in college.

So, it's almost like they really stick out from the upper classmen, which I think is really good that most of the peer mentors are juniors and seniors so they see that difference in how we interact and how we dress and what we do.

And just the tact that we have is not what they're used to. So, I think it can be very helpful having us there.

Student mentor 2: Student mentor 2. And like, in my university experience class two years ago, they did DLI [sp] Phase I. In DLI Phase I, you learn a lot about yourself.

Like, they have colors, like you're blue, you're orange, you're this, or whatever. And it deals with your personality. And you get to know other people in the class who have the same color as you and the people that are different colors.

And like, you learn that, hey, you need somebody from each color on your team for this purpose, this purpose, and this purpose.

Like, you learn what you're good at and what you can--like, how you can benefit others, like if you have to do a group project or something like that. You get to know yourself, too.

Like, I think that all the university experience classes should do DLI Phase I because that could benefit the students as people, like, so they get to know their selves before they just get thrown in all these other classes. And they're like--.

Student mentor 3: And that would be easy transition with my experience because that's already a part of the core curriculum.

Student mentor 2: Exactly.

Student mentor 1: Plus, it's kind of hard to talk about those things because there's such a huge mix in the classes. You have men and women in the classes. And then you also have foreign exchange students as well, where the things that we're concerned about for our students are different than what their professors and their version of peer mentors would be worried about over there.

And so, I almost feel like it would be good if our classes maybe took one day where none of the males came to class and you just had the females talking about these kind of stuff because no one's going to talk about how insecure they are or ask the real questions when there's other males there.

And it could go both ways, too. You could have that for males and have the--a male peer mentor come in and talk with them about things and real struggles that they go through that they're not willing to let the opposite sex in on.

Student mentor 3: I do something similar to that with my class. One of--my teacher, she let me just do whatever I wanted to do. So, we--I asked them what they wanted to do. And they said they wanted to do a panel of some kind.

So, I composed different questions. And a lot of them was self-esteem based and, like, gender based.

So, whenever we was talking about it, we just had an open panel. They really gave each other good feedback. But, they really didn't go into depth because I really-- that was the first time that I really exposed them to the self-esteem. And I didn't want to overwhelm the shy ones because we have a couple of students that are really, really shy. And I feel like it would've overwhelmed them.

But, if I have another opportunity--well, I probably--I'll teach again. But, I wouldn't have enough time because I need to prepare them for their finals. But, I do not know. I just--it--sometimes, it works, and sometimes, it doesn't.

I think it's just how you approach your class and how you come in there. And like, if you just be like, "Oh, okay. Well, we can talk about whatever," that's what I do anyway.

Student mentor 1: Yeah.

Student mentor 3: I just make them feel really, really comfortable. But, I do understand where you're coming from. I think that would be beneficial, too, [unintelligible].

Student mentor 1: You've got some students that come in that they're all big and bad. There's nothing wrong with them. They're the coolest ones in there.

So, even in a relaxed environment, they're not willing to set that aside even for a moment.

When I was a peer mentor last year, we did the type of panel where you had--he would bring up a topic. And there would be signs on different sides of the wall, like, that you agree or you disagree or you strongly agree. And he would bring up very sensitive topics.

And so, you even had those type of people that were all big and bad, and there's something wrong with them, and they just kind of like stay where they're at. Like, they do not really go anywhere or do anything. So, sometimes, it's kind of difficult to break those, especially when you have other people there.

Student mentor 3: See, I also feel like, though, it depends on what--it depends on the group of people because I know, honestly, being female, whenever it came to doing all-female things, I hated it because females are so judgmental of each other. I was always secluded. Like, I was always just isolated because I didn't feel comfortable with this group. I didn't feel comfortable with this group.

Girls like, "Hey." So, whenever I got separated and there's no boys because that's who I got along with better, like we talked, played sports, whatever, and I got separated from the boys, and I'm just with a bunch of girls, I would most of the time just be chilling by myself, trying to I guess--you know what I'm saying--integrate with the rest of them.

But, most of the time, I just would always be like here. Like, think about who used to come on the floor, like when I lived in the resident halls.

Most of the time, I was with, like, Lawrence, literally, for real, playing video games or something because the girls--I do not know. Like I said, they're very

judgmental. So, sometimes it's hard to just separate because then there could be that one or two girl--females in the group that are like--they're uncomfortable to even still speak in front of the females because they're scared of being judged.

Student mentor 1: Yeah.

Student mentor 3: And it's more comfortable if guys are around because they can back them up on something, or maybe there is another female that's willing to speak up and back them up on something. But, sometimes there's not. And then you're just, like, there. So, you feel more alone than when you started.

Student mentor 1: Yeah.

Facilitator: Okay. What are some suggestions that would be beneficial to your performance as a mentor, as a peer mentor, and in your--within your same gender relationships? And what would improve the effectiveness in the classroom, which I think we've kind of touched on, but any other--?

Student mentor 1: --I think, if we--oh, yeah, Student mentor 1. I think if we got to be more involved in the classroom that it would be a little bit better because, even for those of use that did have scheduled times that we would come in to teach, it was three, maybe four lectures during the semester, which isn't bad, especially if you spread them out real good.

But, there's so many important topics that I feel like they would be more comfortable discussing with someone their own age that it's not enough.

And half the time that we're not teaching, we're just kind of there sitting, in case the professor needs us to pass out papers or something like that.

So, I think something along the lines of just having more involvement with the students and the peer mentors would be better.

Like, something that I've never seen until this semester was that my professor I worked with, she knew that I was a psychology major. So, for the fifth-week assessments, the first-year students that were struggling in their psychology classes, they were paired with me. And they would talk to me about it.

And so, luckily, those students that were struggling, they had the same professor that I had for PSYC 100. So, I was able to be like, "Okay. I know this professor's horrible. This is what you need to do."

And I'm already starting to see them kind of progress from that. So, it's helped me get really close to those students. But, I feel like something more than that that could affect all of the students, not just those.

But, it's good to have something like that because I'd never seen that done before.

Student mentor 3: I agree with Emily. With my students as well, I'm a person, if I see you struggling, I'm going to you and let you know I see you struggling. And I want to help you.

So, if I see one of my students not paying attention, putting their heads down, acting nonchalant, I'm the one person tapping them on the shoulder, "You need to pay attention to this. I'm going to ask you a question before you leave. And you're going to answer it, or we're going to stay here."

And also, too, like with my job, I have the capability I guess where I can go to those students and make them make an appointment with me since my teachers or my coworker, she'll appoint them to me.

So, I sit them down. Well, what do we need to do? What do you need to create? How can I help you? Let me know now in a one-on-one setting.

So, I feel like sometimes I have the upper hand just because of my job, and I have the capability of doing that. But, also, too, I do wish that I could reach those students who feel like they already have it in the bag or they act like they do not need additional help.

So, I wish I could get to those students or the students that just act so nonchalant or just giving up. And I try to get those students, too. But, once their mind is made up, their mind is made up.

Student mentor 2: Student mentor 2.

Student mentor 3: Why do you say your name like that every time?

Student mentor 2: I do not know. I'm excited. My name's Student mentor 2. I do not know.

Student mentor 1: No, it's not. Its Student mentor 2

Student mentor 2: its Student mentor 2 you're right. So, I agree with both of them, though.

Wish I could just do more in the classroom. I feel like the only reason I got to do as much as I did this time was because she was going through a lot--her mother passed away during the semester. So, she had to leave. And then I was with them.

And I kind of told them about their selves just a little bit because they act funny when she's there, and I do not like it. I was like, "Just like you all talk to me or you all participate for me, if you guys participate for her, class will go faster. She doesn't mind letting you guys go early as long as she knows you understand it.

"But, because you guys never talk to her, we stay in class so long. You all see how class goes by fast when you guys talk to me and then we get all the work done? What's the point of holding you?"

Student mentor 3: Why you think they do that? My students do that, too.

Student mentor 2: They--I do not understand. They--I do not know. I do not know what their logic is.

And they're like, "Well, she's not like you." I said, "How is she not like me?" I said, "If she feels like you understand the material, she'll let you go, just like I do not just let you all leave. I need to know you all understand it. And because you all talk to me, I know you understand it."

Then I'm like, "I'll let you go. There's nothing else to do. There's nothing else to talk about. You got it, critical thinking, you did it. Cool."

But, like, I guess I got to involve them a lot more because she makes them do this seat thing where they have to go to campus events. And I'm like the event queen. So, like, I go to everything.

So, whenever they're like, "Oh, I need two more events," I was like, "Well, they got this, that, and that." And then a lot of them have been coming. And like, a few of them, I didn't mind giving them my phone number.

It's--but, I'll be like two of them contacted me and then lost one, one of them that used to take--or whatever and let me, "Oh, I'm coming to class. Where's the class at now," because they'd be so confused.

I'm like, "Your schedule tells you. But, I'm going to tell you. Meet us here." Lost one. I think he got arrested or something. And then after that, I do not know what happened. So, he's off the roster.

But, I told them, I was like, "Guys, you all use me." And the other day, they were like, "We do. We talk to you." I said, "But, you all don't, like, use me, like, when you need to know something."

And then ironically enough--well, not ironic, but coincidentally, one of the guys showed up for a campus event with me yesterday. And then right after that, I had something else to do. It was groceries on a budget. And another one of them showed up for that for their events.

So, I was like, "Okay. Yeah, we're coming in. We're coming in."

So, I do not know.

Student mentor 1: I almost wish that there was--like, you know how the university experience class is only two days a week? If you have it Tuesdays and Thursdays, those classes are only on Tuesdays and Thursdays. But, if you have the Monday-Wednesday class, you do not have it on Monday, Wednesday, Friday like all the other ones.

I almost wish that we did have that Friday class but it was only with peer mentors, no, only peer mentors, though. The professors would not be there. We could organize it however we wanted.

Student mentor 3: Half the time, they do not want to come to class. So, why would they come on Friday? Like, most of the time, that's when they do not want to come. And I do not want to be in class on Friday.

This is the only class I do on Mondays is the peer mentoring. And I do Mondays and Wednesdays. And I'm cool with that.

Student mentor 1: I do Tuesdays, Thursdays. I'm opposite.

Student mentor 3: Because on Fridays--right, because on Friday, I go do public achievement at the elementary school. So, I'm good. I'm good off that.

Student mentor 2: And you'd be in there Friday by yourself.

Student mentor 3: Well, it's just because Mondays and Wednesdays, I'm here. While the teacher's teaching, they're like this until I go over and talk to them.

So, it's like, yeah, Friday, probably not. They do not like showing up Monday and Wednesday. So, why Friday?

Good idea, though. I see where you were going with that.

Student mentor 1: Well, that or, like, when we have the scheduled lectures that we do, maybe not have the professors there. I know that probably sounds horrible.

Student mentor 3: Mine wasn't.

Student mentor 1: Well, because I know that sometimes, mine will usually just kind of sit in the background and will observe. But, I think that that kind of affects the participation.

And again, if these students aren't comfortable just going to talk to their professor even after class, they're not going to be as comfortable participating in the class knowing that the professor's just kind of like looking around eyeballing everyone because they're not teaching. So, they get to watch everybody more.

Student mentor 3: One thing I didn't like is, when I taught all the time, I didn't know she was going to make them write a paper. They had to write a paper. And I was

like, "I ain't had nothing to do with that." They're looking at me. I said, "I didn't do that. I do not know. I didn't know you all was going to have to do that. I'm sorry."

Student mentor 1: So, this paper that you have to write now--.

Student mentor 3: --When it popped up on Blackboard, I said, "Whoa." When they asked me about it, I said, "I do not know because I didn't." It was like, "I was not informed you all would have to write a paper on that class."

[Unintelligible] I do not know. But, they did it. They're good at writing papers. They just do not like to talk. Now, they're getting more comfortable. And they talk to her. But, it's like--right, and I do not know if it has something to do with the fact that--you know what I'm saying?

Like, when her mom passed away, I had bought a card. And we all agreed we was going to get a card and sign it and stuff. And I was like, "Aw, look at you all."

So, then they passed it around and signed it. And we gave it to her when she came back. We didn't expect her to be back that fast. But, she came back. And they've been better.

Like, one of the students pointed out yesterday when we were at the event, she said, "We're getting better. They're talking more." I said, "Yeah, they are." I said, "I'm proud of you all. I really am," because not talking is just--makes class longer.

"And I keep trying to tell you all, you're all going to use this stuff again." I always tell them that. All their papers--she was talking about, "If you all want, throw them away. But, I wouldn't."

And I was like, "Do not throw them away. You will use them again. Make sure they're on a USB drive, something. You're going to use them again."

I'm still reading some of my own papers. I can use this for this. It works.

Facilitator: Okay. Good. So, is there any--that's the last question. But, are there any other comments or recommendations or questions or anything about the peer mentoring program and, like, same--because of same gender mentoring or anything like that?

Student mentor 1: I think this type of program would be excellent for seniors in high school. I feel like it would be more beneficial because it could be a segue into college because, a lot of times, when they come in, they're learning the stuff about living on campus, living in the dorms. It's too late. They're already experiencing it.

So, it's--they're not prepared enough for it when they get there. But, I feel like having that in the high school systems before they even go to college could really better prepare them. And we would have just a better--more knowledgeable group of students coming into college instead of having to rebuild.

Student mentor 2: Student mentor 2. And I think that, if it was going to be, like, single sex, I feel like they should have that option, like as a choice, not like be pushed into like a all-female mentoring group.

Make it a choice because, like I said, there's some that might not be comfortable with that. And it might make them, like, less comfortable than they would've been at--with an integrated class because, let's just be real. That's not how the real world works.

So, like, when you get a job, you're going to have to deal with all kind of people, whether Chinese, Japanese, black, white, Saudi Arabian.

Like, in my class, I have--well, I had three black kids. Now, I have two and one Saudi Arabian boy, and the rest are white and one at least Irish or something. He has an

111

Irish accent, but I do not think he's--he's from the States. But, he has an Irish accent. So, I'm confused. But, whatever.

For real. I'm going to have to let you all meet him. His accent is on point.

But, we need--it's--that's real because, in my classes, let's be honest, I am like one of two or three black people. Most of the time, it's--I'm the black female, and then there's a black male maybe.

And that's something they're going to have to deal with. That's what it is. So, I guess singling them out, I do not know how much that would help.

But, the reality of it is, on this campus, in your classes, that's most likely how it's going to be. You're going to have to work with other people that are not like you, no matter what, whether you like it or not. That's just how it's going to be.

So, you need to learn early to deal with that, how to work with them, how to--if there's a language barrier--and I was just talking about mine, how to try to work around it, write something down or something like that. And maybe it'll work better or try to understand the culture.

Like, when I--one of the sessions I taught about was diversity. So, I did stereotypes. And I started calling out different people. Which one of you all in here athletes? Okay. We got an athlete right there, talking about stereotypes. They were like, white males, black males. Like, I read all of them out to them. And they were looking around like, "Yeah, right."

And one of the things I told them, it's a quote by somebody. And it's like the only thing we all have in--diversity is the only thing we all have in common, which it contradicts itself, but it's true because, no matter where you go or what you do, you're

112

going to have to deal with other people from different cultures and try to understand that in order to get stuff done. So--.

Student mentor 1: --I always think it's funny when--like you said with the dynamics of your class, it's a majority white. And you have especially some white females that come into these classes who have never had classes with someone who was African American or Indian or Asian or just a foreign exchange student. And it's hilarious watching them because they're terrified.

Student mentor 2: One--I had that actually happen to me. It was in theater appreciation. And I sat beside this girl. And whenever I go to class, I like to talk. You all know how I am. I'm loud and goofy, everything.

So, the first couple--the first week of class--no, the first week of class, I like to establish where I'm sitting at and who's going to be beside me so I can get your number, just in case I miss class or something like that.

So, I'm sitting down. I was like, "Hey, girl, what you doing?" She was like--.

Student mentor 1: --That's weird.

Student mentor 2: So, I kept talking to her every day because I just felt some type of way. I was like, "What is--something, my arms stink or something on me or something like that?"

So, no, I was like, "Hey." I was like, "You know I speak to you every day. Like, how come you do not ever talk to me back?"

And she was like, "Well, I've never had any black friends." And I looked at her. And then at first, I was like, "Oh." I was like, "You never had any?"

She was like, "No, all my high school was white," and all this and all that.

And I was like, "Oh." I was like, "Well, I can be your friend." I was like, "Is that okay?" She was like, "Yeah."

So, we slowly started eating lunch together and stuff like that. And she was--.

Student mentor 1: --Just sounds so awkward.

Student mentor 2: No, it wasn't awkward. I felt like I had the privilege of educating her because she would ask me questions about stuff. And at first, she would be like, "What? You're asking me that question?"

But, then I--it's like, you take a step back and be like, "Hold on." She honestly did not know.

So, it makes me feel good that I can have her feel comfortable around black peoples because, now, I see her. She'll be going to the gym, working out with other people in her dorm.

And if it weren't for me, I feel like she would've never interacted with black people. Like--.

Student mentor 1: --Yeah--.

Student mentor 2: --She would never have--.

Student mentor 1: --It's a very diverse campus. So, the fact that you cut that out, that's like a third of campus right there.

Student mentor 3: Everybody gets offended when she talks. And I'm like, "You all, she do not know."

Student mentor 2: Yeah, she do not know.

Student mentor 3: And that's a big issue to me. Like, I tell people all the time, "You can't complain about something if you're not willing to educate somebody."

Like, what's the point? You can say, "Oh, they're ignorant. They're ignorant."

Ignorance means not knowing. So, why do notion teach them? Why do notion let them

know, "Hey, this isn't okay. This is what they think."

Student mentor 1: Sometimes, there's a communication barrier, though.

Student mentor 3: Exactly.

Student mentor 1: It's hard to say those things.

Student mentor 3: And I think that goes into with--back to our question about

how we can help or additional ways that we can help peer mentor is having more African

Americans be a part of the peer mentor group.

Like, African Americans, like, yeah, we might have females. It's only two of us.

We should have more males, more--like a whole lot more so that they can get exposed.

Like, okay, well, I never did know that a black girl could be a--basically a T.A.

with my teacher.

So, it's like we need more involvement from the African-American community to

let other African Americans know, like, "Hey, you can do this. Like, you can be just as

good as I am, as long as you try and put forth the effort. Like, I've been in the places

you've been in.

"I might not have enough money to pay for school. I might not be able to--or my

grades might be bad at one point in time. But, you need to take all that and motivate you

and do something with yourself, not just stay down in the dumps."

And having more African Americans would encourage those other African

Americans. Since we are a small population, the small population that we do have, we

need for those students to succeed and excel above everyone else.

Like, and the more diverse this program will become is the more diverse other students feel like or the more diverse students in the classroom will feel like that they can succeed themselves. There we go. There we go.

Student mentor 2: And it'll help, like, the white students get--.

Student mentor 3: --Right--.

Student mentor 2: --Used to black students.

Student mentor 3: African Americans.

Student mentor 2: Like, when they don't--when you do not see something a lot and then you start seeing it, you do not know how to respond to it all the time.

So, it could help them get used to us. It's--yeah, it's a challenge. Most classes I go to, I look around. It's just me. I done got used to it.

And the ones I meet, they love me because I do not hesitate. I say what's on my mind. It is what it is. "Hey, I'm Student mentor 2. What's your name? Let's talk. Hey." You know what I'm saying?

I'm friendly. I'm not just a jerk. Like, "Oh, you just said that, no. Like, what you're just saying, oh, yeah, no, we can't talk and go somewhere with all that" or talking crazy to them. No, that doesn't help the situation. It worsens it. And it is going to make them terrified to talk to any other black person ever. Like, that's--.

Student mentor 3: --Stupid.

Student mentor 1: That's so ironic, too, though, because we talk about how diverse these classes are. But, one of the things they do not realize is that this is a lot better than once they get to their senior year.

Literally, in the psych department in my major, I can name one African-American student, not male or female, student that is graduating with a Bachelor's in psychology, one.

Student mentor 2: I believe you.

Student mentor 1: Which is absolutely crazy to think because you walk outside, it's not like you see one African-American person walking around. Like, there's plenty of them. There's plenty of white people. There's plenty of Asian people walking around.

Student mentor 2: What department are you in because, like, I swear, in my classes, I'll just be like whatever, since I've been here.

Student mentor 3: It was five of us that came. Five of my friends and I, we all came together. And I'm the one that's left.

Student mentor 2: Believe it.

Student mentor 3: The only one. And they dropped out freshman year. So, I've been solo-dolo for three years now.

Student mentor 2: That's how it happens. And like, they--.

Student mentor 3: --Solo-dolo--.

Student mentor 2: --They come through, and then they're gone. And you're like, "Well." But, then that's another issue that I have with this school period, like that I'm trying to work on.

For real, like, what incentive does a black student have to be here?

They say that education is for us. But, then they show us it's not.

Student mentor 3: Well, also, too--.

Student mentor 2: --So, it's kind of double standard. And it's like, hmm, well, if I can leave and I can go over here and it's--might be cheaper or I can get a scholarship because I'm black, well, where I'm going to go?

And they actually have, like, a culture house or something, like something that, besides just AFAM where you can learn more. And it benefits not just the black student.

It benefits white students as well because then they get--instead of having a culture shock where they go somewhere and get a job or in their classrooms when they have to work with that black student, they already have some type of knowledge like, "No, we're not all ignorant. No, we do not all just run around cussing. No, we ain't just ratchet. We're not climbing up stuff and twerking everywhere. Just because I'm black do not mean I know how to dance." You know what I'm saying?

Cut out some of those stereotypes, and then we have a better understanding of who each other, like, is. Like--.

Student mentor 1: --Yeah--.

Student mentor 2: --Just because you look that way doesn't mean you do this, this, or that. Just because I look this way doesn't mean I do this, that, or that. We might have a lot of stuff in common. But, how will we ever know if we're terrified to talk to each other?

Student mentor 1: We do have a lot in common, though.

Student mentor 2: We do.

Student mentor 1: I almost wish that, you know how they have the teacher evaluations that students have to fill out online, I really wish they had something like that for peer mentors.

Student mentor 2: Well, aren't we supposed to do that, give them one to them?

Student mentor 1: I do not know. I don't--the professor I work with is like the Co-Director of the program. So, I do not think so because she's not given one to them because it's like we get great feedback from the professors as well as from the program leader, who kind of directs the program.

But, we do not get feedback from the most important part, the purpose of this program, which is for the students.

So, we do not know if we're doing good, if there's stuff that we need to do, stuff that they would like to see from us, stuff that they'd want us to do, maybe add some stuff, maybe take some stuff out, maybe, "Hey, she's a little too intense. You need to calm down."

There's so many things that can help us better ourselves as peer mentors. And that's the biggest thing is hearing from the students what they think of us because the professors take the feedback that they get from students. They change up what they got to do, and they roll with it.

We do not really have that. So, we just kind of assume that we're doing good and keep on with the same stuff we're doing.

Student mentor 2: I'm ahead of the game. I've been telling them I'm going to have an evaluation for doing at the end--.

Student mentor 1: --Well, I wish that--.

Student mentor 2: --I didn't know we weren't supposed to. I thought we were supposed to do one because--.

Student mentor 1: --No, I--.

Student mentor 2: --Some feedback.

Student mentor 1: Well, no, I know. That's what I'm saying. It's not that we're not supposed to. It's that they just do not have one.

Student mentor 2: I make up my own--.

Student mentor 3: --We'll make them.

Student mentor 1: Well, no, I know. And that's probably what I'll do for my class is make one. But, I just kind of wish that there was a standard--.

Student mentor 2: --A set one, yeah--.

Student mentor 1: --For that, yeah. And even for T.A.s that are graduate students, too, because I'm sure they're curious about how they do, even though we do not teach 24/7.

It's good to find out the good and bad points of what we do contribute to these classes.

Student mentor 3: I know being a part of this program because I do plan on being a G.A. and being also--well, my ultimate goal will be to teach university experience class.

So, I know, working as a peer mentor has given me insight in ways that I can teach or do things differently for whenever--for my future goals and plans.

So, I am appreciative of the person who--what's the word I'm looking for, you all, the person that recruited--yeah, the person that recruited me for this program. So, I really like the program.

Student mentor 1: Think I was the one that told you about the program, wasn't it?

Student mentor 3: Yeah, you did. I asked you about it because you e-mailed me. And he asked me about it--I mean, I asked you about it.

Student mentor 2: Look at you, recruiting people.

Student mentor 1: Unintentional recruitment.

Student mentor 3: She told me I would be good for it because I refuse to be a R.A. So, she put me somewhere.

Student mentor 1: Got you. I would never bestow that upon anyone.

Facilitator: Well, good. That's all I have for today. I want to thank you all for coming and thank you all for participating.

You all--your participation in this is definitely invaluable for the research of truly identifying the barriers and where we can improve with the population that we're focusing on with the freshman females.

So, thank you so much.

Student mentor 2: Yeah, we got off track. Sorry.

Facilitator: No, no, it was great.

Student mentor 1: I did kind of feel [unintelligible].

Student mentor 3: [Unintelligible] sideways.

Facilitator: Oh, it was good.

Student mentor 3: We went from females--.

Facilitator: Good evening and welcome. Thank you all for volunteering and coming. I wanted to make sure that you all know that we are gonna be recording this session and that you all have provided the consent that you're okay with us recording this session and that you all acknowledge that you are here on your own accord and you were not forced or promised to give any--to be given anything for being here or anything like that.

And what is gonna happen in the flow of this, is I'm going to ask you a couple of questions based on your--where you all were mentees and now you are mentors and your experience. And then you all can respond anyway you want to with whatever you want to say, okay?

So, the first question is the experience peer mentor program on campus, please tell me what you know about it and how long you have been with the program, and anybody can talk.

Mentee graduate 1: Can you repeat the question?

Facilitator: The peer mentoring program on Campus--is on campus, tell me what you know about it and how long you've been with the program?

Mentee graduate 1: I've been with the program for a year and a half, maybe two years. And I know that you go through a program where it teaches you how to be a peer mentor and then you get the opportunity to work in the classroom with another university experience teacher. And last semester I did it and I got to a chance to teach a lot, like the teacher allowed me to have my own elective and be able to really--I talked, but I was also

there for the students. So, like if the student needed any help with any kind of assignment or anything, they would--they could ask me because I've been there. And that's all I know.

Mentee graduate 2: I've been with the program for a year now. This time last spring was when I took the class, so you take a peer mentor training class. So, it's worth one credit hour and you come in and take it. It's just like a regular class. And then you--basically he shows you pretty much—the program leader was our teacher and he showed us how--like he taught us in a way that we would be teaching the students. So, he gave us lesson plans. He gave icebreakers, like activities and stuff every day. And so, all semester you would take the class and then last fall I was a peer mentor for a freshman class because I know you have to be like more than a freshman or a sophomore, junior.

They prefer like juniors and up just to mentor because we had like a feel for the campus. But, pretty much go in the classroom and, like she said, you had--you can do your lesson plans. It's pretty much up to you and the teacher like how you flow together, like my professor--well, he wasn't a professor, but the one who taught the class, he pretty much gave me dates and he's like okay you can teach whatever you want and pretty much went with like the semester, like towards the end of the semester as they got ready for finals, you know, they were freshman's so they hadn't did it before. So, I got to teach like anxiety and stress management. So, you pretty much like get to feel of the teacher and then you kind of go from there.

Facilitator: One thing I didn't say is we did this last time was if you say your name before you start so that we'll know who's talking. So, you went first, so what's your--you have to tell your name and say you were the first speaker.

123

Mentee graduate 1: My name is Mentee graduate 1 [sp]. I was the first speaker.

Mentee graduate 2: My name is Mentee graduate 2 and I'm the second speaker.

Mentee graduate 1: You need me to answer these questions again?

Facilitator: You can respond wherever you want to when you want to that's up to you. The second--the next question is what do you think about the quality of the program?

Mentee graduate 2: I really like it, honestly just because I think that the training, since we trained for an entire semester, you pretty much learn everything you need to know. And I think it was good because I didn't think that my students pretty much were gonna like run up to me or even listen to me. but, what I found was like they really admire, I guess, my advice because I was their mentor but at the same time they saw me as just another student who had like pretty much been in their shoes. And so, it was really--it's kind of comforting for them to have somebody in the classroom that had been there and had, like, made it to another point because I could say yeah, I was a freshman. I know about meal plans [sp] and stuff like that, but then at the same time I could talk with them about classes and like I helped them with their schedules for like the next semester. And it was kind of comforting for them. So I think it paid off for them mostly. Oh, I'm Mentee graduate 2, sorry.

Mentee graduate 1: My name is Mentee graduate 1. And I agree with Mentee graduate 2. The class that I had last semester we became a little family. And so, it was like I was there to help them and they knew that. So like if they had--they would ask me questions about even other classes just because to them it made it seem like I had made it somewhere. And a lot of them want--was interested in doing the peer mentoring next

124

semester just because they seen how much I liked it and how it's fun for real. It's like I wanted to be a teacher whenever I got here, so it was kind of like my way of testing the ropes of something that I had gave up on. And it was like oh, I'm really good at this. You know, it made me kind of think about it and second guess myself for changing my major. But, I think it's really good.

Facilitator: Mentee graduate 3?

Mentee graduate 3: I think that--from my experience I think it was effective. I mean all the teachers are different. And the one got placed with, she was more [unintelligible] she had less exciting to class. And I think it kind of helped because I was in there because she's an older lady and they didn't really know how to take her, respond to her. They didn't know how to say some things to her and like there were days when she had to be out so I could teach because her mother had passed away during the semester. So there were a couple times I was there by myself. And like the class as a whole we got a card and signed it and gave it to her. But they--they were expressing to me how they didn't know how to like talk to her. They was like no she's not like you. And I was like why is she not like me? They hadn't even tried. But I had to make it clear to them that if you just ask her or tell her look this isn't working. Do you think you can try this? I said she would probably respond to it because there's more than one of you that feel this way and try to change it. But if she doesn't know then she's gonna keep doing what she thinks is working. So, I think it helped.

Facilitator: What are your expectations of a peer mentoring program and were those expectations met?

Mentee graduate 1: Mentee graduate 1. I expected to be able to know everything before I got in front of the classroom. And it was met. I know--I knew more than I needed to know basically for the class. But I think it was met everything that was sold to me was--I brought it and I could sell it back.

Mentee graduate 2: I think my expectations were met. Honestly when I first took the class I didn't know what we were going to be talking about. So, once we came into class and he's like okay this is how you need to talk to the students, this is how you need to approach them. This is how you build community pretty much. And then the training itself was kind of like trial and error because he had us prepare lessons and then get up there, take the whole class period, teach lessons, like every single person in the class had a where they were gonna teach a lesson. So, as soon as we got done it was a learning experience for me because honestly I didn't really know--I've given presentations and stuff in class, but I mean sometimes they're like 10, 15 minutes, but having to teach like the whole class period, I really learned how to slow down and talk and incorporate the students pretty much.

And I got--like our classes gave us feedback. Like they told us what they really liked, what they didn't like, what we could have added, what we could have taken out. So, I think that the training it was beneficial because I mean once I got into the classroom setting it was almost just like the training. So, I kind of expected that. I knew what to expect once I got into the classroom.

Facilitator: Okay. What type of information would you like to see the peer mentoring program provide female freshman students?

Mentee graduate 2: Can you repeat the question?

Facilitator: What type of information would you like to see a peer mentoring program provide female freshman students?

Mentee graduate 1: I kind of feel like everything that is taught in peer mentoring, like I mean being a peer mentor, I think it's effective. I mean if I had to pick one thing to teach a female student I guess it would be just the safety of campus life. We do not touch on that. So, I feel like that might help a whole lot. That's probably the only thing I could think of. Oh, and my name is Mentee graduate 1.

Mentee graduate 2: Mentee graduate 2. I'm honestly not sure because I know that there is kind of a thin line I guess with what you can touch on inside the classroom. I do not really know like what lines you can cross with female students because I mean yeah you can talk--well, we really talk about like academics and how to be successful students, but, like she said, we do not really talk about safety or we do not talk about guys or anything like that. So, maybe that would be beneficial, but maybe in a setting that's more comfortable than a classroom.

Facilitator: Okay. What are some suggestions that would be beneficial to your performance as a mentor?

Mentee graduate 3: [Unintelligible].

Facilitator: What are some suggestions that would be beneficial to you or--if I can read it correctly, what are some suggestions that would be beneficial to your performance as a mentor?

Mentee graduate 1: Mentee graduate 1. Feedback, so like if I talk--like whenever I got a chance to teach the class I would give time afterwards and ask what did I do well? Did I leave something out? Is there something that you felt like I should of

told you that I didn't tell you so that the next time we go around and I could touch everything that I missed last time, so feedback.

Mentee graduate 2: Mentee graduate 2. I agree, my class is really quiet, but then once I asked them if they had any questions some people talked but most of the times they had just like input. But, every time I asked them if everything made sense and they understood it, like my class was just really quiet. So, they seemed like they soaked it all in. So, I guess it's kind of hard because you second guess yourself like if nobody's talking back or nobody says anything or they do not have questions. But, honestly that's about it. That and probably feedback from the professor too maybe.

Mentee graduate 3: Mentee graduate 3. Maybe more one on one time like those--the time where the teacher was in the classroom and I was teaching they still didn't do as much. But then when she was gone it's like they talked more. They were more like lively because they felt more comfortable with me because they knew I was a student just like them. So, I guess more one on one time or like maybe make a way so they can observe but they're not like right there because what we do with them could help the teachers know how to better teach the students I guess.

Facilitator: What would you improve--what would improve your effectiveness in the classroom?

Mentee graduate 2: Mentee graduate 2. The thing that will probably have improved my effectiveness was maybe just like since we did--we trained in the spring, but then we didn't teach until the fall, so maybe as soon as we got back we could have done like a workshop or something that kind of refreshed our memory because we have like really big, like two, three inch binders and it had all this stuff in there. There was so

many like games and resources and activities, but it was like so much. And it was kind of a lot to just like go back and look through. So, maybe just like after your do your training, just like a follow-up like once you're getting ready to do like the actual mentoring thing just to help refresh your memory.

Mentee graduate 1: Mentee graduate 1. I agree maybe we should in the--when you're going through the peer mentoring training, maybe we should be able to teach a university experience class instead of teaching ourselves. So like when we did it we taught each other. But maybe we could get that deal for teaching a university experience class before--you know what I'm saying, so then when you get put in that situation to do it yourself it'll be like you've already done it. You feel comfortable. So like this semester I feel way more comfortable than I did last semester and find it a big difference.

Mentee graduate 3: Mentee graduate 3. I think the only reason why he did it like that was so it would be as smooth because I kind of liked it that way. Like we had a few university experiences to visit and we taught our lesson and we got feedback from them versus standing in front of a class, it's our first time teaching and then we like totally bomb like we do not know what we're doing. And then it's like the feedback you get, what happened when we had our group presentations might happen again, which we never really had one cry. Yeah, like you do not want stuff like that to happen in front of a class. So, I think it was kind of better the way we did it with like a few university experience students and then the class critiquing you because if somebody like that gets up in front of the class and then it's like well, we do not know what you're talking about. We couldn't hear you and then they start crying, that's going to be kind of bad.

Facilitator: That was the last question I had, so if you all have any other--anything else that you want to share about being your experience as a mentee or a student that was mentored and then now being a mentor you can share freely at this point.

Mentee graduate 1: Mentee graduate 1. I feel like when I got into this program it was my way of being able to give back to what somebody had done for me because I worked with different mentors--I have mentors. I have a couple of them. And they're really good people. And I wanted to be able to be that person to somebody else. So, when this was presented to me I was like oh, yeah, this seems like a good idea. And I wish that more people knew about it because I learned about it through word of mouth. I felt like that it should be put out there more because a lot of people could benefit from it I believe.

Mentee graduate 2: Honestly--oh, Mentee graduate 2, honestly I loved it just because I do not necessarily want to be a teacher, but I do want to go into counseling and therapy. And so, for me it was a way to like, like she said, give back. And then just to talk to students and see like what they were dealing with. I know that I wasn't far off from them. I'm a junior. They were freshman. But just to see like their--just to hear their input was like really beneficial. And it was a good feeling to be able to give--to I guess help them out.

And also for me I had never really talked to students of the opposite race, for example, white people, like my class is predominantly white. I had two black students in there. And so, to--I guess to hear their experiences. They're not that different from mine, but to an extent they are because a lot of them are in sororities and they just do different, I

guess, leisure activities. So, it was still beneficial to me just to see, I guess, experiences from a different perspective. And it was really helpful to me as well.

Mentee graduate 3: Mentee graduate 3. I loved it, personally. I mean like I've been seeing some of the students from the class I was in last semester. And like they're still like oh, I'll email you or they'll stop and they'll ask me questions and then they'll see how I'm doing. And they'll tell me like how their classes ended last semester and how they're going now. And I think it's cool because they're like still, hey, like, you know, just because they need something, which means like I made some type of impact on them where they still feel like they can ask me things and know that I'll tell them correctly because some of them even came out to like events I would tell them about last semester. They would come. Like I had a team for a campus event [sp], students came from the class to help with a campus event. I went to like a health program, some of them showed up there. I was like cool, it's like they're actually listening. So, I really loved it because you get to see what kind of impact you have on people, like the fact that they'll still talk to you even outside of that class and they're like, you know, what are you doing? How are you doing? And then they actually want to tell you about what's going on with their lives. It's like oh, that's exciting, cool.

Facilitator: Okay. Well, that's all. Thank you all again.