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May 5th, 12:00 AM

### The Value of Peer Mentoring in a Service Learning Program

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Harb, Ali and Salek, Archana, "The Value of Peer Mentoring in a Service Learning Program" (2022). *Stratford Campus Research Day*. 125.

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# The Value of Peer Mentoring in a Service Learning Program

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## Background

- Traditional mentorship is when a more experienced professional offers guidance and support to another individual's growth in education, their professional development, or their mental health.<sup>1</sup>
- Peer mentorship is a critical component of service learning programs (SLPs) at several medical institutions.<sup>2-7</sup>
- Reverse mentorship is an effective two-way learning strategy in which both participants cycle between the role of a mentor and a mentee.<sup>1,2</sup> This challenges traditional mentor-mentee roles and allows both parties to learn from one another.
- Near-peer mentoring is when a more senior learner, in similar education level as a mentee, provides support and guidance for the mentee professionally or on a discipline specific topic.<sup>3</sup>

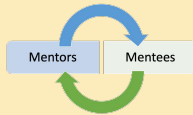


Figure 1. Reciprocity in the mentor-mentee relationship.<sup>1,2</sup>

## Objectives

**To explore** the value of peer mentorship in SLPs within the setting of medical education.

**To describe** an effective mentorship structure that can be utilized in SLPs by employing reverse mentorship and a near-peer mentorship structure to positively impact participants.

## Results

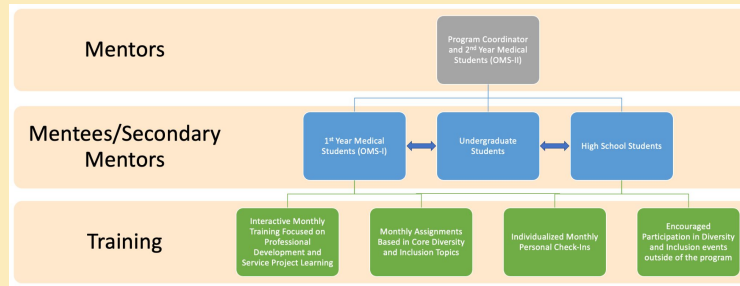


Figure 2. Service learning program structure

**Methods:** Literature review was conducted using PubMed. Keywords used in search criteria included: mentorship, peer mentoring, service learning, healthcare, medical education, and reverse mentorship. Exclusion criteria included any studies unrelated to mentorship in service learning within a health or healthcare environment.

**Values of Mentorship:** Mentorship offers a collaboration and exchange of knowledge through reverse mentorship, offering benefit to all participants.<sup>1</sup> Mentorship can help new members understand the enduring practices of medicine.<sup>1</sup> Thus, making mentees more prepared to enter professional healthcare settings. Near-peer mentorship also provides academic, social, and mental health support to new students.<sup>1,3,4</sup> Mentorship can lead to long-lasting relationships that can even lead to multigenerational mentoring pedigrees. Mentees may be compelled to become mentors themselves and continue to foster growth and development in their mentee.<sup>6</sup>

**Qualities of Successful Mentorship:** Successful mentorship is centered around creating a supportive environment for mentees where they have a hand in planning projects. This includes finding opportunities for mentees, supporting mentees' interests, and identifying what resources a mentee needs.<sup>1,4,5</sup>

## Discussion

- Mentorship, and particularly peer mentorship opportunities, for medical students in a SLP can facilitate professional and personal development, positively impact mental health of participants, reduce stress, and ease transitioning in a new academic setting.<sup>1-3</sup>
- Both reverse mentorship and near-peer mentoring in a SLP require added effort from participants and program coordinators, call for leadership action from executive staff, and necessitate input / engagement of experienced early career staff; however, when implemented correctly this structure can have a profound impact on participants.<sup>1</sup>
- We advocate for the increased adoption of such approaches to mentorship for SLPs in student medical education.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Mary Duggan for her mentorship and guidance over the past two years through the Health Careers Opportunity Program.

## References

Please use this QR code to access our references.

