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provided by campus services and eliciting student input in a way that facilitates setting priorities. As with any CV survey, care must be taken to ensure that students are asked about familiar programs using questions that are informative without biasing results. Though this exploratory effort produced estimated values for the campus that are plausible, CV is more useful as a tool for assessing relative student priorities than for directly estimating budgetary allocations.

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Involving Students in the Development of a Peer Education Program for College Women

Laura Nichols Linda Lumley

There are a number of problems that are believed to affect college women in greater numbers than college men. Those most recognized include low self-esteem, depression, eating disorders, sexual harassment, and date/acquaintance rape (Astin & Malik, 1994; Berkovitz, 1993; Bishop, Bauer, & Becker, 1998; Ries & Stone, 1992; Riger, 1993; Weinberg, 1994). Addressing these problems in the college setting is seen as important because of continued development that occur in students beyond their high school experiences (Pascarella et al., 1997; Rosenbaum, 1993; Upcraft & Moore, 1990). One way of addressing these problems is through peer

education programs. Such programs are gaining popularity on college campuses (Gould & Lomax, 1993) because they are economical, provide leadership opportunities for students (Getty & Bannan, 1993; Koszewski, Newell, & Higgins, 1990; Sagaria, 1988; Sloane & Zimmer, 1993), and are another means by which college students can gain information especially in the residence hall environment (Schroeder & Mable, 1994).

While most peer education programs for women have focused on health issues regarding HIV-risk (Kauth, 1993), breast examinations (Maurer, 1997), and smoking cessation (Solo-

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mon, 1996), universities have also used such program to address issues such as date rape, eating disorders, and depression (Division of Student Affairs, 1992; Evans, 1996). However, we do not have research that tells us if these are indeed the topics students are most interested in learning about in a residential, peer education forum. In this paper we provide an example of how students were actively involved in constructing a survey that was used to determine the types of programs female residential students would be most interested in attending. We present both the methodologies used to understand the level of student interest in the program as well as how the data collected were used to recruit potential peer educators. Given that program preferences may differ based on race (Harris, 1995), we also compare the interest levels of White/European American students to those of the African American, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students surveyed.

METHODS

The main purpose of this study was to assess the potential interest of college women in participating in a new peer education program on a college campus of approximately 18,000 stu-

dents in the Midwest while also involving students in the instrument design. We expected that students would be interested in such a program and that their inclusion in the research process would also serve as a means to recruit future peer educators. The research was conducted in four stages: (a) An initial survey was developed based on peer education topics used at other universities, (b) this instrument was presented to two focus groups of resident advisors and topics were added based on their ideas, (c) the instrument was pilot tested with first year, female residential students and revised, and then (d) the survey was distributed on randomly chosen floors in each campus residence hall.

Focus Group and Survey Samples

A total of 16 resident advisors participated in two focus groups. Each of the resident directors on campus recommended one resident advisor to participate in the focus group. Although 2 males were recommended, all of those who ultimately ended up participating in the focus groups were female. Twenty-five percent of participants were African American, the rest were European American. The first group consisted of 9 resident advisors, the second, 7.

TABLE 1.
Demographic Information: Comparison of Students Surveyed and the Undergraduate Population

Ethnicity	Students Surveyed		Total Undergraduate Population	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
White/European American*	250	86.81	16,583	89.80
African American	27	9.38	1,238	6.70
Hispanic	3	1.04	260	1.41
Asian	4	1.39	292	1.58
Native American	4	1.39	93	> 1.00
Total	288		18,466	

* Because it is the policy of the university to include unknowns in the White/European American category those who did not list an ethnicity on the survey were also included in this category.

The survey was distributed to 534 female students living on a randomly selected floor in each of the campuses' 15 residence halls. The overall response rate was 54% with 288 completed surveys ultimately collected and entered for analysis (response rates on the hall floors varied from 28% to 93%).

The demographic information collected in the survey indicated that 42% of the sample were age 17 or 18, 45% were 19 or 20 years of age, 6% were 21 or 22, and 2% were 30 years of age or older. As demonstrated in Table 1, the ethnic breakdown of those surveyed closely reflected the demographics of the total undergraduate student body.

Focus Groups

The two focus groups were facilitated by the first author, a graduate student and a former resident advisor at a different university. In each of the focus groups students were presented with a survey instrument the authors had designed based on the examples of peer education programs for women at two other universities in the Midwest. The resident advisors were asked which topics they would invite peer educators to present to their residents and for suggestions about what other topics they thought might be of interest to students.

Survey

The list of potential workshop topics was revised based on the input received from the resident advisors in the focus groups. The survey was then pre-tested on ten first year female residential students for readability, clarity, and further suggestions. We then met with each student and discussed their ideas on how to improve the survey instrument. The final survey asked students to express their interest in participating in a new peer education program and to rate, on a five-point Likert scale, their individual interest in attending 16 possible workshop topics. The scale ranged from 1 = *Not at all interested in attending* to 5 = *Extremely interested in attending*. An open-ended question allowed students to include any additional topics that were of interest to them. The survey also included a number of demographic variables.

Surveys were distributed by resident advisors to women students living on one randomly selected floor in each of 15 residence halls. Some of the floors were all female and others were co-educational. Resident advisors were asked to give the survey only to female students on their floors.

ANALYSIS

The tapes from the focus groups were transcribed, responses were analyzed, then grouped into one of the following themes: programing topics of interest, experiences with programing, responses to the survey, suggestions for peer education topics, and interest in participating in the program. For analysis of the survey, mean scores were computed for each of the potential workshop topics. *T* tests were conducted to determine if there were any significant differences in mean scores between students of color and European American students.

Results

Overall the focus group participants said that they would invite peer educators to their floors to discuss career and self-esteem issues. They said that their residents had been "talked to death" about date rape and although they thought the issue of eating disorders was important, they did not think their residents would attend a presentation on the issue. They thought if the workshop topic was directed at helping a friend with an eating disorder, students would be more likely to attend. The focus group participants suggested more programs on relationship issues. In addition, two focus group participants volunteered to participate as peer educators.

With regard to the survey, 83% of those surveyed said that attending a workshop presented by their peers would appeal to them. All of the program topics listed, with the exception of one, had mean scores above 3.0 on a five-point scale, with 5 being the most positive response. As shown in Table 2, the topic with a mean score of 2.59 (the lowest) was the "College Climate for Women of Color" because a large number of European American students ranked it low. Yet the interest in that particular topic

by the African, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students surveyed was high (84% of those surveyed said that they were somewhat or extremely interested in attending such a program). The topics that received the highest overall mean scores were: "Building Healthy Intimate Relationships" ($M = 3.88$), "How to Present Yourself at an Interview" ($M = 3.86$), "Building Self-Esteem" ($M = 3.79$), "How Male-Female Communication Differences Affect You" ($M = 3.70$), and "Defining 'Mr. Right' for You" ($M = 3.70$). Seven percent of those surveyed ($n = 20$) said they would be interested in being contacted to be a peer educator.

DISCUSSION

This research shows that undergraduate students are interested in attending peer-led workshops in their residence halls. Students were most interested in attending workshops that dealt with issues about relationships, job interviewing, and self-esteem. These results mirror what the resident advisors involved in the focus groups said would most interest their residents.

Involving students in the instrument design was an important part of the research process. Their input allowed us to include topics on the questionnaire that might have been missed; it also gave students an opportunity to express their

TABLE 2.
Mean Scores for Total Sample Surveyed: Interest in Attending Specific Workshop Topics
($N = 288$)

Workshop Topic	<i>M</i> *	<i>SD</i>
Building Healthy Intimate Relationships	3.88	0.97
How to Present Yourself at an Interview	3.86	1.01
Building Self-Esteem	3.79	1.09
How Male-Female Communication Differences Affect You	3.70	0.96
Defining "Mr. Right" for You	3.70	1.18
Becoming More Assertive in Relationships	3.63	1.04
Developing Confidence in the Classroom	3.59	1.05
How to Reduce Your Risk of Acquaintance/Date Rape	3.49	1.15
Creating a Healthy Lifestyle in College	3.47	1.04
Learning How to Stand Up to Sexual Harassment	3.47	1.17
Learning How to Stand Up to Sexual Pressure	3.37	1.10
Understanding and Coping with Depression	3.34	1.17
Helping a Friend with an Eating Problem	3.28	1.11
Recognizing and Dealing with Emotional and Physical Abuse in a Relationship	3.20	1.24
Overcoming a Preoccupation with Food	3.11	1.29
The College Climate for Women of Color**	2.59	1.21

* Based on a 5-point scale with a 5 being "extremely interested" in the topic and a 1 indicating "not at all interested" in the topic.

** In comparing the differences in mean scores of each topic by race this is the only topic in which the mean score was significantly different ($p < .001$) based on race. The non-White students ($n = 38$) gave this topic a mean score of 4.50 while European American students ($n = 171$) gave it a mean score of 2.40 (the remaining students surveyed, $n = 79$, did not indicate their ethnic background).

interest in serving as peer educators.

There were a number of limitations in this study. First, although the survey was randomly distributed by residence hall floors, bias may have been present because of the differences between those who responded and those who choose not to respond to the survey. Also, although numerous revisions and a pre-test of the instrument helped to confirm the face validity of the questions, because the survey was designed and developed as part of this study and it was not replicated, it is difficult to determine its reliability.

Further, the survey instrument was limited to topics that had been used at other universities and those mentioned by the focus group participants. Although an effective methodology for obtaining feedback on the instrument and encouraging participation in the program, the use of focus groups as the primary means of gathering topic ideas for the survey may have prohibited students from mentioning topics that would have been difficult to discuss in a focus group context. Because the focus group participants were recommended by the directors of the residence halls, there was no assurance that the perspectives of all female students were represented. As a result the questionnaire was void of topics that addressed diverse sexual orientations. Thus the topic, "Defining Mr. Right" that was included in the survey may have alienated lesbian and bisexual students from participating in the survey and ultimately from the program as a whole. It is important therefore that student service personnel ensure that the views and perspectives of marginalized and minority groups are represented in the research process and subsequent programming.

Despite these limitations, the involvement of students in the process was important. Participation in the development of the program allowed students to feel like they had a stake early on in the program and may prove useful in future recruitment efforts as well as in program design. Further, without the input of students, we would have likely developed a program that focused only on those issues that research has shown are important to college

women—namely eating disorders, date rape, and sexual harassment—when the results of the survey indicate that students are more interested in attending workshops that address relationship, career, and self-esteem issues.

However, it would be a mistake to conclude from these results that because these items had lower mean scores, that they should not be included in a peer education program. Students did express an interest in attending such programs and recognized their importance in the lives of college women. While students may not feel comfortable attending these programs in a public forum such as the residence halls, advertising and offering such programs may help give the topics legitimacy and could encourage students to seek further information. In addition, one of the greatest strengths of peer education programs is that they provide peer educators with accurate and reliable information and further resources that they can use beyond the workshop setting in their day-to-day interactions with their peers.

Peer educators live among their constituents, have access to students, and are privy to students' personal lives in a manner that campus professionals are not because the peer educators are present in residence halls, sororities, student organizations, dining halls, and classrooms. (Edelstein & Gonyer, 1993, p. 256)

Based on the results of this study we suggest that peer education programs offer a range of topics that balance student interest with student issues. Further, we believe that it is important to include students in the development of programs that affect their lives, not only because it allows for a diversity of perspectives about what is offered, but also because it encourages student involvement and investment in college programming.

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