How Long Can We Keep Them? Staff Retention Through a Mentoring

Program in an Undergraduate Admissions Office

by

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ABSTRACT

Employee turnover is a pervasive issue across industries and at all levels of an organization. Lost productivity, hiring, interviewing, training and increased workloads are costs associated with turnover. As an undergraduate admissions professional charged with the enrollment of new freshmen students, I am constantly assessing the health of my team and working to minimize turnover in admission counselor positions. I implemented a six-week mentoring program in my office to increase second-year employee satisfaction, motivation, development and retention at the Arizona State University Undergraduate Admissions Office. Post intervention data were collected through the use of focus groups and self reflection questionnaires. Results show that mentoring is a mutually beneficial experience for mentees and mentors. Mentees reported benefits from the personalized dissemination of information and institutional knowledge by their mentors. Mentors reported that being in a mentoring relationship made them feel their opinions and experiences were valued. Mentoring can be an inexpensive professional development program designed to assist entry-level employees. While attrition cannot be totally eliminated from a workplace setting the study participants reported that the mentoring program made them feel valued even while acknowledging that there are limited opportunities for advancement within the office.

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Leadership Context and Purpose of the Study

During the six years of my employment in the Undergraduate Admissions Office at Arizona State University (ASU), I have witnessed turnover at all levels of the organization, and the investment of significant time and energy to hire and train new staff to fill critical roles. As the Senior Director of the freshmen recruitment team, I implemented a six-week mentoring program to fill a gap in the professional development of our staff, with the intent of reducing employee turnover (long-term), increasing institutional knowledge and employee satisfaction, and further understanding the professional development needs of admissions counselors.

Managing student enrollment occurs at all levels of a higher education institution, and includes graduate and undergraduate students, and incoming and continuing students. Colleges and universities throughout the country often have one office designated for the recruitment and enrollment of new undergraduate students—an undergraduate admissions office. The undergraduate admissions office is typically part of an enrollment management team reporting to higher levels of institutional leadership, and focuses on new student enrollment, which translates into tuition revenue for the institution. "The combination of state government support, local tax appropriations, and tuition revenue constitutes the principal source of support for instructional programs at

public institutions" (SHEEO, 2011, p. 21). Since the recession in 2008 and corresponding decrease in state appropriations (SHEEO, 2011), tuition revenue is increasingly more important to institutional operations, and it is critical for the undergraduate admissions office to function effectively and efficiently to meet established new student enrollment targets.

Staff turnover and subsequent new employee training and development programs in an admissions office can positively impact or can impede attainment of institutional enrollment goals. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) estimates the cost of replacing an entry-level employee ranges from 30-50% of that position's salary (Provisional Recruiting + Staffing, 2010). Turnover costs aren't solely attributed to lost productivity due to the vacancy. Indirect costs include recruiting, interviewing, hiring, training, disruption of service and relationship management, lost knowledge, and workload increases for continuing employees (Allen, 2010; Blake, 2006).

The Local Context

ASU is a large, public, research extensive university with five locations across the state of Arizona, four of which are located in the Phoenix metropolitan area. More than 70,000 undergraduate and graduate students attend ASU and represent all 50 states and more than 120 different nations (ASU, 2011). ASU has 16 colleges/schools that offer more than 250 different degree programs, some of which are completely online. At ASU, new student enrollment is a shared responsibility, but is

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ultimately the primary function of the Undergraduate Admissions Office (UGA)—enrolling more than 15,000 students each year from more than 45,000 applicants (ASU, 2011).

Office Structure

The Admissions Office employs more than100 full-time and part-time professional staff members and 30 student employees across ASU's four locations in greater Phoenix, and in regional capacities in California, Colorado, Illinois and Texas. More than 150 student volunteers facilitate high-impact, personal recruitment efforts by staffing an information desk and guiding campus tours on each campus (Personal Communication with UGA Human Resource Director, November 12, 2011).

The five members of the executive leadership team oversee the office operations and have 60 years of combined experience in higher education (see Appendix K). Ultimate responsibility for the office resides with the Executive Director, who joined the department in May 2010, and reports to the Vice Provost for Enrollment Management. The major operational areas are designed to work in concert to recruit and enroll students and include: recruitment (freshmen, transfer, international); processing (scanning, verification, evaluation); front line services; systems and analysis (systems, data, analysis); campus visits and events; human resource/ business operations (administrative support services, billing, travel, HR).

Human Resource Systems

The State of Arizona budget crisis in 2008 prompted administrative cuts, program consolidations, furloughs, lay-offs and hiring freezes over the past three years (Keeler, 2008; Crow, 2009). On a positive note, employees receive a tuition discount benefit for themselves, spouses and dependents as part of their benefits package. In some cases, at current tuition rates, the tuition benefit can rival any pay raise, and can provide enough incentive for an admissions counselor to pursue a Master's degree.

UGA staff members represent two of the University level designations—classified staff and service professionals. Classified staff members are typically non-exempt employees with many protections. Service Professionals are exempt, sign annual contracts, and can be terminated at will. There are no academic professionals (faculty) among the admissions staff.

The Undergraduate Admissions Office has a comprehensive, year-round new employee training program in place. Based on the considerations presented above, I decided that time and attention needed to be dedicated to the entry-level employee returning for a second year. "Employees on the low end of any organization are in danger of feeling undervalued and expendable if proper attention is not paid to their professional development" (Dougherty & Andrews, 2007, p. 46).

Current Training Program

The current UGA new employee training program is designed to meet the needs of employees in the following categories: 1) new to Arizona State University and Undergraduate Admissions, 2) an existing employee at ASU, but new to Undergraduate Admissions, and 3) an existing ASU and Undergraduate Admissions employee in a new position within the office. For purposes of this action research dissertation, the participants are all members of the first category—new to ASU and the Undergraduate Admissions Office.

The current training program is facilitated within a five-week period (see Table 1). All new employees to ASU and to the office must first attend the university's human resource (HR) orientation. This is a five and one-half hour session (ASU Human Resources, n.d.) addressing the vision and mission of the university, institution policies and procedures, and employee benefit options. After completing the HR training session, staff members start working in the office. During their first five weeks of employment, new employees receive on the job office training and familiarization with the duties of their specific position (Appendix M). Overall, new employees participate in 72.5 hours of training over the five weeks as coordinated by the Undergraduate Admissions Office. New employees meet with office and department leaders and receive supplemental resources outlining staff expectations, the office mission statement, and internal policies and procedures. Table 1 provides a

summary of the total hours each week the new employee participates in training activities. The remaining hours of each week are dedicated to job-specific activities.

Table 1

Duration in Hours Per Week of Five Week UGA Training Program

Training Week	Hours of Training
Week #1	22.5
Week #2	17
Week #3	15
Week #4	13.5
Week #5	4.5

Participants in this study were part of the freshman recruitment team and participated in an additional two-week update and training program facilitated during the summer. Topics covered included academic programs, university support services/resources and office policies, procedures and updates. Every admissions counselor received an additional 80 hours of training and updates during this timeframe. Table 2 illustrates the content provided during the two week training session. Admissions Counselors must be well-versed on the vision and mission of the university, the academic offerings of the institution, student support services and internal office policies and procedures.

Table 2

Contact Time in Hours for Two-Week Summer Training Program for Admissions Counselors

Topics	Contact Time in Hours	
	Week 1	Week 2
College Updates, Presentations & Lab Tours	35	0
Resources for Students	2	3
Leadership & Administrator Presentations	3	2
UGA Office Policies & Procedures	0	10
Special Tours & Initiatives	0	15
Team Meetings & Goal Setting	0	10
Weekly Totals	40	40

While the ASU Admissions office invests significantly in new employee training, few professional development opportunities are offered for longer-term employees, and more specifically, for those who have been on staff for one year.

As Roberts states in her 2007 research:

Professional development is an individual, supervisory, institutional and association issue. The ultimate responsibility lies in the hands of the practitioners, who must find the time to assess their own areas for growth and devote the

appropriate time and resources to be competent in their

current and future positions. (p. 574)

In designing this study, I realized that this is the perfect opportunity

to implement a mentoring program for employees moving into their second

year in their position with UGA. I saw this as the chance to offer a

"booster shot" to motivate, educate and re-energize second-year

employees. "New student personnel professionals need suitable mentors

who will provide guidance, support and opportunities for them," (Schmidt &

Wolfe, 2009, p. 371).

Key Terms and Definitions

Admissions: A definition provided by Lauren in 2008 states:

Admissions offices—and their staff—are a relatively new

development in higher education. They—and other areas of

specialization—grew out of recognition that the increasing

complexity of collegiate institutions required specialized

services and time to manage them that could no longer be

handled just by giving faculty added work. (p. 1)

The role of the admissions office and the admissions officer changed over

time from a "gatekeeper", managing the influx of students in the

marketplace to "recruiter", seeking out specific students and drawing

attention of those students to the institution (Lauren, 2008, p. 2).

Ultimately, an admissions office can perform a variety of functions which

typically includes generating interest in the institution, the management of

admissions applications and corresponding decisions and enrollment at the institution, the planning, coordination and implementation of a recruitment plan, and marketing and communication efforts to prospective students, their parents and guidance counselors. The admissions office focuses its efforts on students entering the institution or those students more commonly referred to as "incoming" students.

The admissions professional constantly interacts with the external public and is keenly aware of the institution's competitors, the perception prospective students have of the institution and influences on the student's college choice process.

Entry-level Employees: For purposes of this study, entry-level employees will be defined as individuals hired as Admissions Counselors in classified staff positions with a minimum bachelor's degree and one year of related experience.

Admissions Counselors: An Admissions Counselor represents the university and recruits and enrolls new students to the institution. The Admissions Counselor builds relationships with prospective students and high school guidance counselors through personal contact methods such as phone calls, emails and letters, facilitates information sessions on campus and during high school visits, and monitors progress towards enrollment goals (Barnds, 2009; Dougherty & Andrews, 2007). The Admissions Counselor is expected to have a large knowledge base about the university, its colleges and academic programs, student financial

assistance, the overall student experience, and the steps to enroll at the university. Valuable skills for these employees include time management, effective communication, and customer service.

Assistant Directors: For purposes of this study, Assistant Directors are defined as mid-level managers in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions who supervise Admissions Counselors.

Professional Development: Professional development is defined as skills and knowledge gained in a work-setting for either personal or professional growth. Professional development opportunities can occur at the individual, group/program, departmental or divisional level, and can be classified as one of three types: formal (classroom education), non-formal (brown bag lunches, orientation, speakers, professional associations) and informal (observation, shadowing, mentoring, Schwartz & Bryan, 1998).

Turnover in Admissions: Minimal research has been done on this specific topic within the admission field. There are two types of turnover in a professional environment—voluntary and involuntary. Reasons for turnover in an admissions office can be congruent with other industries and can include personal reasons, promotion opportunities/limitations, relocation, and employee dissatisfaction. Dougherty and Andrews concluded in 2007:

> Constant pressure for performance matched with
> quantifiable indicators of success may operate as push
> factors driving individuals out of the profession, often within

the first several years of employment. Not even support staff

employees enjoy the luxury of guaranteed employment in

admissions, as turnover in senior management affects all

levels of office staff. (p. 32)

Chapter 2

Review of Supporting Scholarship

This chapter will provide a broad overview to include explanation of the major topics related to this study and existing literature to support the design of the intervention and the data collection and analysis methods selected for this study.

There is a significant amount of information on employee turnover, professional development, and mentoring that can be found in management, psychology and human resource journals. However, this section will focus on the admissions counselor, an entry-level employee in an undergraduate admissions office, and there is little supporting documentation specifically related to this topic. I found only one source that fully examines turnover within a university admissions setting. Fortunately, there is more literature within the larger domain of the needs of entry-level employees in student affairs.

Managers in any work environment (public, private, for-profit, non-profit) understand the critical need to retain, develop, and promote staff members. Having continuity amongst a team promotes camaraderie and a sense of belonging, while accomplishing the task at hand. "It is difficult to benefit from employee experience and team camaraderie when the composition of an office staff is regularly in transition" (Dougherty & Andrews, 2007, p. 31).

Additionally, turnover in the admissions office equates to an increase in workload for the remaining staff members. At ASU, an Admissions Counselor enrolls anywhere from 300 to 800 new students each year. When a staff vacancy occurs, this enrollment target and the work associated with it must be absorbed by every Admissions Counselor. To enroll any one student at ASU, an Admissions Counselor connects directly with the prospective student via phone, email or in person at the high school. Admissions Counselors also participate in a daily rotation for appointments, events and campus visits, adding the activities needing coverage to their regular workloads. The effects of a staff vacancy ripple through the entire office and can impact staff morale, work/life balance and can increase work-related stress.

Recurring themes in the literature associated with new employees and retention include socialization (new staff orientation), professional development programs, mentoring and supervisors (relationships).

Socialization

New staff training and orientation programs are highly recommended for the overall success of the new employee (Tull, 2006; Wesson & Gogus, 2005). Concepts related to these two topics include training and socialization. These concepts are inter-related and set the foundation for the new employee's experience within the office setting. Socialization pertains to the education of the new employee in the new work setting. The introduction of the organization, its structure, goals, and

culture along with the roles and responsibilities of individuals within the organization is socialization (Ardts, Jansen & van der Velde, 2001; Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein & Gardner, 1994; Klein & Weaver, 2000; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Peterson, 2004; Wesson & Gogus, 2005). Research in this area is substantial with various theories and models that have been developed over time in areas such as the process (stages) of socialization, the content learned within the socialization period (Chao et al., 1994), and the role of the organization (Peterson, 2004). The new employee training program in UGA encompasses the concepts of socialization. Appendix O provides a visual representation of the UGA five week program for new employees and the meetings and activities designed to socialize new employees to the office.

Professional Development

Professional development programs are foundations within the student affairs setting (Roberts, 2007). Historically, budgets are tight within the higher education enterprise and student affairs professionals creatively embrace the challenge to deliver high quality professional development programs (Schmidt & Wolfe, 2009). Given the absence of current professional development opportunities for Admissions Counselors, budget considerations may impact what long-term program(s) can be implemented.

Research indicates there are formal, non-formal and informal types of professional development programs that exist and can be implemented

in an office setting (Carpenter & Miller, 1981; Lorden, 1998; Renn & Hodges, 2007; Roberts, 2007; Saunders, Cooper, Winston & Chernow, 2000; Schwartz & Bryan, 1998; VanDerLinden, 2005). Formal programs include an educational experience delivered through graduate education (Schwartz & Bryan, 1998) and serve as the basic foundation for additional development (Carpenter & Miller, 1981). Student affairs research indicates most new employees in the field often transition into professional positions from an existing graduate program (Carpenter & Miller, 1981; Evans, 1988; Roberts, 2007; Renn & Hodges, 2007). Extensive preparation and theoretical constructs are delivered through the academic experience, and can often be viewed as the initial stage of personal/professional development for most individuals within the field. In relation to this study, only one of the five Admissions Counselors has a Master's degree. One might conclude that the preparation for the research participants is incongruent with current research and may have implications for study results.

Non-formal programs include brown bag lunches, speakers and presentations. Experiences provided through non-formal programs can provide intentional learning opportunities for employees. The freshman recruitment team currently benefits from speakers and presentations as they are incorporated into their existing monthly team meeting format as determined by the freshman team leaders. Often, presenters are identified based on the point in time of the recruitment cycle and information needed

for the Admissions Counselors to perform their job duties. Optional brown bag lunches were implemented within the last 12 months for all employees in the Undergraduate Admissions Office. Topics have ranged from trends in marketing, to transcript processing, to faculty involvement in new student recruitment.

Informal programs include observation, shadowing, and mentoring. Observation and shadowing activities are components of the UGA new employee training program. All UGA employees observe admissions appointments, customer service interactions, and information sessions at each campus location. Admissions Counselors will then shadow colleagues at high school visits, college fairs and information sessions before conducting these on their own. Shadowing colleagues within the enrollment management team or other departments or divisions does not currently exist, but could serve a larger purpose for the university. A mentoring program does not currently exist in the admissions office, and supports the need for this action research.

Mentoring and Relationships

Research on mentoring suggests this is a critical component of any professional development program (Roberts, 2007; Schmidt & Wolfe, 2009; VanDerLinden, 2005). "New professionals were the most likely group to choose a mentor as a means to develop skill in the Professional Development area" (Roberts, 2007, p. 571). This is a direct outcome of

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Roberts' research of both mentors and mentees and their preferences for professional development activities.

Mentoring is an informal professional development opportunity and two types of mentoring relationships exist. Formal relationships are typically pairs of employees intentionally matched for purposes of advancement and development for the mentee (Freedman, 2009; Mathews, 2003; Summers-Ewing, 1994). Informal relationships are established by the employee on their own with either a senior member or peer. Mentoring pairs were assigned for this action research intervention. "In a mentoring relationship, the more experienced and powerful individual, the mentor, guides advises and assists in any number of ways the career of the less experienced" (VanDerLinden, 2005, p. 733). This definition is somewhat simplified, but certainly applicable. A more in-depth review of the literature shows the beginning framework and definition for mentoring is derived from adult development concepts. Ultimately, adult development is comprised of "eras" and "developmental periods" (Levinson, 1986, p. 5) as one ages and moves through life and life's experiences or phases. As one enters a new profession, it is often described as the "novice phase" (Levinson, 1986, p. 7) and as one nears the end of a professional stage, it is described as the "senior" position (Levinson, 1986, p. 7). The roles of individuals and movement through phases within a professional setting can mirror those in adult development—new employee and seasoned professional. Finally,

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research on the topic frequently cites Greek mythology and its definition

as a relationship between a young adult and an older, more experienced

adult counseling the young adult (Kram, 1985).

The outcomes of mentoring and mentoring relationships serve two

functions—career functions and psychosocial functions. Career functions

are associated with the job or "learning the ropes" for success within an

organization (Kram, 1985). Psychosocial functions are tied to the

relationship and builds "competence, identity and confidence in a role"

(Kram, 1985, p. 23). Mentoring programs are organized efforts to manage

developmental relationships. Phases exist within mentor relationships and

include initiation, cultivation, separation and redefinition. The initiation

phase occurs when the relationship begins and is important to both the

mentee and mentor (Kram, 1985). The cultivation phase can last from two

to five years as long as both parties still benefit from the relationship

(Kram, 1985). The separation phase is inevitable and can occur within a

period of six months to two years with a change in role or organizational

structure (Kram, 1985). Finally, the redefinition phase resembles that of a

peer relationship for an undetermined amount of time (Kram, 1985). The

intervention for this action research study concentrated on the initiation

phase.

Relationships within the mentoring experience are of great

importance. There is significant research on the supervisor and his/her

role in the success of the new employee. As stated by Harned and

Murphy in 1998, "no relationship holds greater natural potential to influence self-image, career satisfaction, and professional development than the relationship with a supervisor" (p. 43). While this phenomenon is often overlooked, supervisors can reap many benefits from a mentoring relationship. It is often a chance for a supervisor to realize how much information s/he has and can share with others. The supervisor can use self-reflection to learn more about his or her thoughts and feelings about certain topics, and continue to grow personally and professionally as well. Mentoring can also occur in a peer group setting—where peers within the office can share knowledge and information that is beneficial to the new employee. As Kram explained (1985) ". . .the similarity in rank [of peer mentors] insured a variety of common experiences as well as a relative ease in initiating communication" (p. 214).

Attrition

All of these topics are tied to the larger issue of attrition, which has received significant attention in business, psychology and human resource settings. Much of the research conducted on attrition is quantitative in nature, and little research exists on turnover in undergraduate admissions. This action research study followed a qualitative approach to improve the chances of persistence by study participants and to understand further the thoughts and perceptions of the new employee as they moved into their second year within the

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admissions office.   More research has been conducted within student affairs and is used to define the topic.

Employee turnover can be either voluntary or involuntary, and in general, each type of turnover can be of benefit (or detriment) to an employer. "Attrition rates have been found to range from 32% within the first five years of work in the field to 61% within six years" (Lorden, 1998, p. 208). Research shows individuals may have varying reasons for leaving a position or an employer. Reasons such as fit, organizational culture, work/life balance and dissatisfaction can result in employee turnover (Bender, 2009; Evans, 1988; Lorden, 1998; Renn & Hodges, 2007; Tull, 2006). Specific student affairs research on attrition established "limited opportunity for advancement" as a consistent reason for leaving (Evans, 1988).

Research has indicated that individuals in student affairs do not intentionally choose this career path, rather they "fall into" employment in student affairs, which may contribute to the attrition rates (Bender, 2009; Lorden, 1998).

Ultimately, the mentoring program for this intervention was designed to provide second-year employees with a positive additional set of professional development opportunities. Numerous quantitative studies have established the significance of relationships among turnover "reasons". It follows that creating new, positive mentor relationships is likely to help reduce turnover in this local setting. I

approached the evaluation of the mentoring interactions from a qualitative perspective and utilized focus group interviews and self-reflective exercises to document the participants' experiences with the mentoring intervention and their claims about the immediate consequences of being in mentoring relationships.

Focus Groups

Information captured through focus groups can be used for many purposes such as product or program development, customer satisfaction, planning and goal setting, understanding employee concerns, and as a research tool (Kreuger & Casey, 2000). Focus group interviews are appropriate for exploratory, clinical and phenomenological research approaches and can be used as the sole research tool or in conjunction with other methods (Vaughan, Schumann & Sinagub, 1996). This study employed the use of focus groups as the primary method to understand better the experiences of second-year employees in the undergraduate admissions office. This study is aligned with the phenomenological approach and the purpose is to ". . . understand the issue or topic from the everyday knowledge and perceptions of specific respondent subgroups" (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996, p. 25).

Focus groups are comprised of five to ten individuals who share commonalities relating to the topic of study, and they express their thoughts, feelings and perceptions with the researcher or moderator

(Ho, 2006; Kreuger & Casey, 2000). "The group interview is an information getting technique by means of which opinions of several individuals are obtained simultaneously" (Edmiston, 1943, p. 593).

There are advantages to using focus groups in a qualitative study. Focus groups allow and encourage diverse opinions consistent with multiple views of reality (Vaughan, et al., 1996). Focus groups allow the researcher great flexibility as this method recognizes the role of the participants and the researcher and how each can coexist within the interview (Vaughan, et al., 1996). Finally, the goal of the focus group is to provide an interactive and safe environment for dialogue to provide a more in-depth understanding of participants and their experiences, beliefs and attitudes within a particular context (Vaughan, et al., 1996).

I conducted separate focus groups for the mentees and mentors before and after the formal mentoring experience. This method of data capture is best facilitated in a safe environment where participants feel comfortable to share with each other and the researcher (Kreuger & Casey, 2000). Conducting separate focus groups reduces the complications that may arise from power and status differences among the participants that may influence responses or hinder interactions. I wanted to know the participants' thoughts prior to the mentoring experience and how their thoughts, feelings and perceptions may have changed after the experience. "Focus groups have been found useful

prior to, during, and after programs, events, or experiences" (Kreuger &

Casey, 2000, p. 19).

Data gathered from focus groups is not meant to be generalized

to a larger population because participants for the study are selected by

the researcher specifically based on their common experiences in

relation to the research topic to allow for a more in-depth examination.

The sample size is smaller to accommodate for the more descriptive

data shared by the participants through the use of open-ended

questions.

A protocol exists for researchers utilizing focus groups as a

research method. If the protocol is followed, the researcher has data

that can be used to describe the experience and can be verified through

a trail of evidence (Kreuger & Casey, 2000). Despite this protocol,

criticisms remain and include doubt about the scientific nature of focus

groups as a research method, researcher bias and subjectivity, varied

participant involvement based on group dynamics, and less

understanding of the topic based on the group discussions versus

individual interviews (Ho, 2006).

Chapter 3

Research Design

Action research solves problems, generates new knowledge, and allows the researcher to present findings in a narrative approach (Coghlan & Brannick, 2001). This action research study was designed to address the issue of turnover in an undergraduate admissions office. A short-term mentoring program was designed, implemented, and assessed for its impact on attrition and employee satisfaction, motivation, and development. Focus groups and self reflection were used to provide a robust narrative account of the participants' experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Creswell, 1998).

The action research question was:

What impact does implementing a professional mentoring program have on second-year employee satisfaction, motivation, development, and retention at the Arizona State University Undergraduate Admissions Office?

Role of the Researcher

My theoretical orientation is in alignment with that of the constructivist view (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). As I further my research on the topic of employee development, I find my role as the researcher linked to my simultaneous role as a participant in the setting in which my research was conducted. The experiences, background, and influences that I bring to the table help me connect to other participants and create

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knowledge through our interactions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Given the setting of this study in the admissions office, action research is the best platform to utilize given my role within the community. Action research can help practitioners solve problems immediately at the local level, within their community of practice (Creswell, 2009; Herr & Anderson, 2005). Staff retention impacts me directly as I oversee the employees charged with first-time freshman enrollment. I have personally filled at least one entry-level position each year over the course of the last six years, and in some years filled up to six vacancies. Success in reducing employee attrition through implementing a professional mentoring program for second year employees will benefit me as a supervisor as well as benefit the employee and the ASU Admissions enterprise more generally.

Research Design

The intervention for this action research study was a short-term mentoring program. Mentoring programs can help reduce turnover in an organization (Gregson, 1994; Mathews, 2003). Research recommendations conclude successful mentoring programs are those programs designed to meet the specific needs of the organization (Kram, 1950/1985; Mathews, 2003). Additional factors to take into consideration when designing and implementing a mentoring program are the career stages of the participants (Freedman, 2009; Mathews, 2003). Once these factors are identified and defined, the decision about the type of mentoring relationships to foster—informal or formal—becomes evident. Informal

relationships are typically pursued by individuals individually and are less structured (Mathews, 2003). Formal mentoring programs match mentees and mentors, and often provide additional structure through defined expectations, scheduled meetings, and established discussion topics (Kram, 1985; Mathews, 2003).

The mentoring program for this action research study was designed specifically for the ASU Undergraduate Admissions Office and took into account the career stages of the participants (entry-level employees). I established the mentoring pairs to develop more formal relationships and to provide a framework for the assessment of the program. There was an established timeframe for the overall intervention, but I allowed for flexibility for each mentoring pair to determine their own topics, meeting times, and locations to allow for a more "organic" experience. Since this was the first attempt at a mentoring program in the office, I wanted to provide an environment that fostered open discussion, individual experiences, and candid feedback based on the needs of the participants. Responses from the participants can be used to shape future staff development programs.

Participants

In alignment with the qualitative approach, I purposely chose the participants to participate in this intervention (Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 2002; Polkinghorne, 2005). Two groups of participants were necessary for this study—mentors and mentees. Both groups were employees in

Undergraduate Admissions at a four-year, public institution (Arizona State University). The first group for this study included all (five) entry-level, freshman admissions counselors in the Undergraduate Admissions Office who were new employees to both ASU and UGA within the last 12 months. The second group for this study included five Assistant Directors on the freshman and international recruitment teams in the undergraduate admissions office. Each admissions counselor (mentee) was paired with an Assistant Director (mentor), but not with a direct supervisor. By definition, this was a formal mentoring relationship since the pairing was determined by me. Two of the five pairs had both the mentee and mentor located in the same office area on the same campus. Two other pairs had the mentee and mentor located on different campuses. The fifth pair had the mentee on campus and the mentor at an out-of-state location.

Table 3 provides a visual representation of the participants based on their role within the study and shows the level of education, the number of years of work experience, years employed at ASU, and gender. Mentors, by definition, have more experience than the mentee, which holds true for this study. Information on the gender of the participants was captured, but was not a major influencing factor for this intervention.

Table 3

Participant Levels of Education, Employment, Work Experience and Gender by Role

Category	Mentees	Mentors
Level of Education		
Bachelor's Degree	4	3
Master's Degree	1	2
Years Employed at ASU		
Less than 1 year	5	0
1 to 3 years	0	1
4 to 6 years	0	2
7 to 9 years	0	0
10 years or more	0	2
Gender		
Male	1	3
Female	4	2
Years of Work Experience		
Less than 1 year	1	0
1 to 3 years	3	0
4 to 6 years	1	0
7 to 9 years	0	2
10 years or more	0	3

Timeline

I facilitated a pilot program in March 2011 to examine the new

employee training program and its potential implications for staff retention

in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. I interviewed the Executive

Director and his assistant about the new employee training program, and

discovered a shared concern regarding employee turnover and

recognition of the need for expanded professional development

opportunities within the office. The action research pilot study gave me

added assurance that the turnover problem was worth addressing in this

setting and gave me valuable experience with interviewing and qualitative

data analysis.

Recruitment of the participants occurred via email in May 2011

(Appendix B). Upon agreement to participate (Appendix C), separate

focus groups for mentees and mentors were conducted prior to the start of

the mentoring program. "If there is a power differential, some participants

may be reluctant to talk" (Kreuger & Casey, 2000, p. 27). Holding separate

sessions allowed me to focus on each participant group and to provide a

comfortable environment for greater success of uncensored dialogue. I

served as the moderator for the focus groups which were held in a

conference room on campus. I started each session with a brief

introduction of the purpose of the study, established ground rules, and

asked open-ended questions that invited group discussion. I was able to

verify participant thoughts and feelings, or "member check", on certain

issues at critical points throughout the focus groups (Vaughn, et al., 1996). The pre-intervention focus group for the mentees was conducted on May 25, 2011, and lasted two hours. The pre-intervention focus group for the mentors was conducted on June 2, 2011, and lasted two hours.

The participants were instructed to start the mentoring program, which included a minimum of six one-hour meetings over the course of eight weeks. This timeframe was established based on the perceived availability of participants during the summer months when high schools are closed, and concluding prior to the two week summer training activities. No training programs on mentoring or on how to mentor were conducted for either participant group prior to the mentoring experience. No other parameters were set. No other instructions were given to either the mentees or mentors.

All participants received a self-reflective questionnaire (Appendix G and Appendix H) to be completed and emailed to the researcher after each interaction. Self-reflection is an objective exercise or assessment used to improve a situation or to identify patterns, behaviors, and emotions. The self-reflection activity provided an additional data point for the study. Occasionally, emails were sent to the participants to encourage submission of the questionnaires. The mentoring program concluded on July 29, 2011. Separate focus groups were conducted after the intervention as well. The follow up focus group for the mentees was conducted on August 1, 2011, and lasted 90 minutes. The follow up focus

group for the mentors was conducted on August 3, 2011, and lasted two hours. Figure 1 provides an overview of the timeline of the mentoring program and interactions that occurred by mentoring pair.

Figure 1. *Timeline of mentoring program – Focus group sessions and mentoring meetings by pair*

Week of	Mentees	Mentors	Pair #1	Pair #2	Pair #3	Pair #4	Pair #5
2-May-11							
9-May-11							
16-May-11	Recruitment Email	Recruitment Email					
23-May-11	Focus Group (Pre)						
30-May-11		Focus Group (Pre)					
6-June-11			Meeting 1 In-person	Meeting 1 In-person	Meeting 1 & 2 Phone	Meeting 1 & 2 In-person	Meeting 1 & 2 In-person
13-June-11			Meeting 2 Phone		Meeting 3 & 4 Phone	Meeting 3 In-person	Meeting 3 In-person
20-June-11			Meeting 3 In-person	Meeting 2 In-person	Meeting 5 Phone	Meeting 4 & 5 Email	
27-June-11			Meeting 4 Email		Meeting 6 Phone	Meeting 6 In-person	
4-July-11				Meeting 3 In-person			Meeting 4 In-person
11-July-11			Meeting 5 In-person				Meeting 5 In-person
18-July-11			Meeting 6 In-person				
25-July-11							
1-Aug-11	Focus Group (Post)	Focus Group (Post)					

Methods of Data Collection

Methods for collecting data included pre and post focus groups (group interviews), observation and self reflection questionnaires. These types of data collection methods were utilized to help capture information useful in understanding participants and their experiences (Creswell,

1998; Maxwell, 1996). Focus groups also allow for the capture of more and varied information (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). I took hand-written notes in addition to tape recording each focus group to ensure accuracy in presenting themes and direct quotes expressed by the participants. Using audio aides throughout the data gathering process enabled me to observe non-verbal gestures made during this process and transcribe data more accurately to contribute to the greater understanding of this phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Polkinghorne, 2005). I have also observed the mentees and mentors in their natural settings over the course of the recruitment cycle. This prolonged exposure to the participants allowed me to "catch" the meaning of the glances, and understand the pauses in conversation. "Combined with observation, interviews allow the researcher to check description against fact" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 82).

Chapter 4

Analysis and Results

Qualitative research studies generate volumes of data on the research topic. Analysis of the data is a critical component of the research design creating the need for protocols to assist with data capture, analysis and storage.

Data for this study was captured through the use of focus groups and reflective surveys. "Focus group analysis is systematic, sequential, verifiable, and continuous" (Kreuger & Casey, 2000, p. 128). In qualitative research, transcribing the interviews is a first step in getting the data ready for analysis. Coding is the next step, and a critical step that drives the data analysis. Coding the data uncovers the themes that exist amongst the participants in the study. The themes can then be used to inform the researcher about the next steps to take in the data analysis process. If the data captured is comprehensive, the researcher can easily move to present the research findings (Creswell, 2009).

I compiled focus group notes in a Word document to have a master record of the discussions. I used audio tapes to confirm the accuracy of the information shared in the focus groups and updated the Word document. Once the interviews were transcribed and the data confirmed, I identified common themes amongst and against the data from both the mentees and mentors. Data analysis occurred through constant comparative data analysis. "In grounded theory research, the inquirer

engages in a process of gathering data, sorting it into categories,

collecting additional information, and comparing the new information with

emerging categories" (Creswell, 2008, p. 443). I used research memos to

record my developing understanding of parts of the data corpus

throughout the course of the study. The research memos also provided a

foundation for the organization and structure of the final report (Creswell,

2009).

The Intervention

The mentoring experience occurred over the course of six-weeks.

As discussed earlier, great flexibility was afforded to the mentoring pairs to

determine their own meeting schedule, meeting locations, and topics of

conversation. Table 4 shows the physical location of participants, the

number of mentoring meetings held, and the format for each meeting by

mentoring pair.

Table 4

Characteristics of Mentoring Pairs by Location and Quantity of Mentoring Meetings by Type

	Pair #1	Pair #2	Pair #3	Pair #4	Pair #5
Location of Participants	different campuses	same campus	campus & out-of-state	different campuses	same campus
Location of Meetings					
In-person (student union)	2	1	0	2	3
In-person (office)	1	2	0	1	2
Phone meeting	2	0	6	0	0
Email meeting	1	0	0	2	0
Total	6	3	6	6	5

Only two of the five pairs had participants located on the same campus (Pairs #2 and #5). One of the mentoring pairs had one participant located in an out-of-state location (Pair #3). Two of the mentoring pairs had the mentee and mentor on different campuses (Pairs #1 and #4).

Mentoring meetings were facilitated in-person, via phone, or email. In-person meetings were held on campus either in an office or in the student union over lunch or coffee. Pair #3 conducted all meetings by phone given the location of the participants. The pair reported that they attempted to "Skype", but the connection was unsuccessful. The remaining four pairs reported that their first meeting occurred in-person.

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Pairs #1 and #3 utilized email for at least one of their meetings. Each pair indicated this format was used due to their vacation schedules. They reported this was their preferred method to communicate with each other while out of the office. Pairs #2 and #5 met fewer than six times during the mentoring experience. Interestingly, these two pairs had participants located on the same campus, which presumably means they had greater access to each other and had the location barrier removed. The reason for fewer meetings was not reported by the participants of either pair.

Despite the absence of prescribed topics for discussion, themes such as higher education, professional development, personal development, and networking emerged from the mentoring experience. Mentoring pairs also reported discussing work-related concepts including organizational and political structures, data and decision making, leadership, and differences between resident and nonresident recruitment efforts. Each mentee reported that their mentor provided at least one specific recommendation for them moving forward. Mentor recommendations included areas to gain additional experience, ways to build professional skills, internal and external networking opportunities, and tips for overall success. Figure 2 provides a summary of topics covered in each mentoring meeting by mentoring pair.

Figure 2. Summary of topics discussed during mentoring meetings by pair

Meeting	Pair #1	Pair #2	Pair #3	Pair #4	Pair #5
			Topics Discussed		
1	professional development	personal and professional development;racial demographics	personal and professional development; networking; resident/nonresident recruitment, affordability, excellence	personal and professional development; networking	personal and professional development; organizational structure and politics
2	professional development; organizational structure and politics	personal development	professional development, WUE; rewards of job; challenges and rewards;	higher education	career progression; professional development
3	job duties and expectation, challenges in position, training, processes, recruitment of students	higher education; professional development	professional development; networking; organizational structure and politics	professional development; networking;	personal and professional development; organizational structure and politics; professional growth
4	networking; higher education		networking; personal growth	professional development; higher education	working with supervisor; ways to challenge self in position
5	cost of attendance, value, rankings, quality; organizational leadership styles		recruiting styles	current situation in office	networking; organizational structure and politics
6	higher education		professional development; data driven decisions at UGA and ASU, "why we do the things we do"	higher education; networking, professional development	

wr = work related

Focus Groups

Focus groups were the primary method of data collection. The groups were facilitated according to recommended guidelines to maintain standards for research purposes. Participant selection and size, meeting frequency, location and environment, question development, moderator experience, and data analysis were consistent with the focus group guidelines (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The mentees and mentors were invited to attend the focus groups separately, so as not to influence any of the interactions or responses. Focus groups were held before and after the mentoring program to detect any change that may have occurred as a result of the intervention. The themes identified from the focus groups were mentoring, working in higher education and admissions, the first year, development and career progression, and retention/attrition.

Participant Engagement

Mentees. In the group interviews, the five mentees were asked a series of open-ended questions to understand more about their backgrounds and why they chose to work in higher education and undergraduate admissions, to gauge their interest in, understanding of and satisfaction with their position as an admissions counselor, and to understand their views on development and longevity within their position. I observed that there was a sense of nervousness and anticipation, but the mentees were forthcoming with their information. The mentees had a

sense of familiarity with each other, and quickly and openly shared their ideas and information.

Mentors. The interaction with the mentors was more free-flowing. I have worked with these individuals for anywhere from three to 13 years. Each group interview generated good overall conversation infused with good humor and ideas. Given the solid foundation of relationships with this group, the discussions felt like on-going conversations we have had over the years. The intervention allowed for the participants to take a step back and discuss the impact of turnover related to our daily work.

Mentoring—Finding Common Ground

I established a common understanding of mentoring with each group and found commonalities among them. Mentors' and mentees' talk about mentorship within a professional setting were consistent with current definitions found in research and publications. Responses from the mentees included phrases such as, ". . .open-minded and supportive of my goals" and ". . .someone who asks the right questions and directs you to the right places". The mentors generally agreed that a mentor is someone who listens and provides feedback and is a good professional role model. A mentor is a resource to help the mentee achieve the next level and to help provide a different perspective on situations.

Feedback was mixed from the mentees when asked if they currently had a mentor in the office at the beginning of the action research study. Only one of the five mentees indicated she thought of her current

supervisor as a mentor. The others did not identify a specific individual within the office as a mentor providing evidence to support the need for the program.

When mentors were asked if they benefitted from a professional mentor and to describe the role mentors have played in their career progression, four of the five commented they had a mentor who positively impacted their career progression. The most salient comments from the mentors included, "My mentor made sure I had exposure to a vast professional network to make sure I had access to resources."; "My mentor provided guidance and advice and would really try to help me grow and look to the future."; "My best mentors are the ones that let me work independently on something and cared enough to contribute to my professional growth and development. I value those people that take an interest in me personally and what happens to me." Knowing that the mentors had personal experience with a mentor brought more credibility to the experience and their ability to develop and facilitate a mentoring experience for someone else.

Working in Higher Education and Admissions

When asked why they were interested in working in higher education, the mentees and mentors unanimously answered they had a strong desire to help others and enjoyed working with students. The mentees shared comments like, "Going into student relations and outreach was exciting and meaningful. I enjoyed the student interaction

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and could see the difference education could make for a student." And "Working in higher education allows me the opportunity to build meaningful relationships with students in a casual setting." And, "I think universities are an exciting place to be, and I'm not counting down the hours to punch the clock. I wanted to do something rewarding and be in an environment that would allow me to grow personally and professionally." Mentor comments were similar and included, "I value higher education because it can make the difference for others." And, "It's fun to be around smart people."

In a university setting, there are a variety of employment opportunities. At Arizona State University, individuals can work in an academic college, student affairs, enrollment management, research, alumni affairs, or development. When asked what motivated them to pursue a position within Undergraduate Admissions, only one mentee cited previous experience with an admissions office. The mentee said, "I was driven to undergraduate admissions because I worked in admissions as a student at my previous institution. I gave tours and it felt like playing all day long, and I got paid for it." The other four mentees felt the admissions office was a great place to start within the university based on their skill set, and to learn the inner workings of the institution, to "see behind the curtain".

One mentee said,

I didn't necessarily have the skills needed to go directly into a

specialized position. I wanted to be at the university and this was a

great way to enter the university and expand my skill set. I could

learn about many facets of the university and get a broad

understanding of a lot of departments. Selfishly speaking, it was a

way to get into the university system with the qualifications that I

have.

Other mentees described their motivations through comments such

as, "Admissions is the broadest place to get rapidly acclimated to a large

university and how processes work"; "In the Admissions office you're not

sitting behind a desk day in and day out"; "It's a great place to start—a

great training ground to learn a little about everything." One mentor

commented, "We recruit students one at a time, and we have that

individual impact, but we know we're going to recruit some fantastic

students that will go on and do amazing things. To know that I had a part

in *that* is fulfilling."

The First Year

Mentees were asked to talk about their first year as an Admissions

Counselor. The mentees overwhelmingly agreed their first year had been

fun and an enjoyable experience. One mentee explained further, "I've

never liked my coworkers this much. I think we're all similar. We share

similar values and we're all here because we want to work in university

administration. I've never met anyone who hates being an admissions

counselor." Since each mentee came to the position with different

experiences, how they described this first year varied. One comment

summarized their first year—"it was a whirlwind of experience" –which is

often mentioned by new admissions counselors since not only are they

learning about their job and institution, but also balancing communication

with students, high school guidance counselors and even parents while

working towards enrollment goals. There was a sense of a common

experience shared among the mentees which was demonstrated through

laughter and glancing looks with one another when one of them blurted

out "the highs and lows."

When discussing the transition into the second year as an

Admissions Counselor, one mentee shared,

> I'm excited having been through a cycle. I now know what to
>
> expect and won't have a knee-jerk reaction to things
>
> throughout the year. I want to be more strategic about my
>
> next year and I feel I know what I can do to make it more
>
> productive and exciting for me. I know how to build off the
>
> basics I have learned and I can contribute on a larger scale.

Another mentee said,

> I'm excited to go into next year with the confidence of
>
> information. It's amazing to be so young and to be respected
>
> by parents, counselors and students. I'm looked up to when

I'm at presentations and college fairs. The responsibility I

have received at such a young age is rewarding. It's fun and

my confidence has grown. Next year I will be that much

stronger.

Another mentee shared, "I'm excited to take ownership of my area

and create and build partnerships." One mentee said, "I felt I was doing a

good job 'faking it' last year. This year I feel I'm more empowered to

develop relationships and answer questions." One mentee admitted, "I

didn't like not knowing things. I like to be the authority in my position and it

took a while to learn what I needed to know to feel confident in my role."

Development and Career Progression

Mentees. When asked about their training experience and how

they receive information and if more is needed, the mentees commented,

"There's always more to know." "Departments are always changing." And,

"I'm looking forward to another summer of training so I can really put all of

my experience together with everything I've learned." There's always new

information presented by the colleges and new information to learn about

how to help students with their transition to the university. One mentee

specifically commented, "I felt I absorbed a lot in the initial training. I felt

empowered going out and talking about ASU immediately." One spoke

about her experience throughout the year, "I appreciate the monthly

meetings and the guest speakers who attend and share information and

updates. I enjoyed the mini training we had in the middle of the cycle. I

appreciate all the updates. The training and information is constant and on-going."

When asked what has contributed to their success as an admissions counselor mentees expressed that both colleagues and their supervisors were critical to their success. Colleagues were helpful since "supervisors can't always be there to help you. You need to use a larger group of staff to get answers to questions and to have someone confirm information". When mentees talked about supervisors they said, "There was never a feeling that we were asking stupid questions". "Supervisors care to a great extent. They don't hesitate to answer a question or to make you feel comfortable about learning a process. All supervisors are accessible and approachable." One mentee shared a different opinion about success in this type of role.

This would be one of those positions where it's hard to be successful in if you're not passionate about what you're doing. It's a hard position to do if you're not enthused about it. It's easy to get by and be complacent with the job duties, but you need to be driven to do well.

Mentors. I wanted to know the perceptions the mentors had about the office culture and our commitment to professional development. The mentors, in their roles as supervisors, are expected to train new staff and serve as a resource for them in their role as admissions counselors. They work with their staff members to establish trust and respect, and a good

working relationship. They commented that they are invested in personal and professional development opportunities for staff, but often find challenges associated with helping to make the connections for each individual. One mentor shared, "We talk a lot about what we need to do, but a lot of times we forget to make the time to have discussions with our people aside from the performance review meetings." Another mentor agreed and commented, "Sometimes I forget to ask them what they want to do." They also expressed an interest in making sure that all staff felt connected with each other and the larger team, regardless of where their office is located.

One mentor commented,

> We wish we had more opportunities for staff to engage in professional development, but we're challenged with providing them those types of opportunities. Figuring out strengths and weaknesses will help them develop in areas we know will help them move to the next level.

Another mentor commented,

> It's important to find out quickly how interested they are in staying in higher education. Those folks who are interested in higher education, we should encourage them to make the right choices such as getting a master's degree. We should try to support them as much as possible to move into higher roles more seamlessly. We should get them connected to

national and regional organizations, present on research

projects. Folks enjoy those things and get a lot out of them.

Retention

Pre-mentoring. I felt that it was critical to understand what the

mentees thought about their career paths. The question I used to get a

sense of their goals was, "Where do you see yourself in five years?" which

is a variation on questions asked in other research to determine turnover

intentions (Dawley, Andrews & Bucklew, 2010). The responses were

similar amongst the participants prior to the mentoring program, and some

expressed changes after the mentoring program.

Some of the comments from the mentees prior to the mentoring

program:

I see myself starting a grad program in 2012 and

completing it in two to three years. I envision myself still at

ASU, but not in this specific position. Hopefully I'll be in a

position related to my graduate program, but I'll definitely be

finished with my graduate program in five years.

I'm in a Master's program and I'll be done in spring 2013.

I'm hoping during that time I'll be able to hone in on my

interest in education in general. I want to explore

international admissions and affairs potentially even in study

abroad program. I hope I can get access to the things I'm

interested in as well as other areas my Master's program

may expose me to that I'm not currently aware of. I hope at the end of my three years with Admissions that I'll have enough skills to be promoted within ASU, that I'm potentially a viable candidate for something better than an entry-level position at another college or university.

I will start my Master's program in fall 2011 and I'll be done in 2013, and I'll be here through that. I would like to stay at ASU and maybe serve as an academic counselor or in some other capacity. I want to explore and pick other people's brains to learn what is out there to move into a higher position that's not entry-level.

I see myself still in Phoenix, still at ASU. I want to be in a higher position working with students and helping to shape their experience while students at ASU. I want more autonomy shaping administrative policies. I want to be out of an entry-level position.

In five years, I will be done with a Master's program. I see myself in educational advocacy or teaching classes at a community college or even going into K-12 (middle school). I think teaching is a more viable alternative that provides more involvement with students. Teaching is a great opportunity, but not in Arizona. I'm not opposed to moving to another state.

Post mentoring. Comments from the mentees after the mentoring program included the following. One mentee said,

Yes, I feel like my thoughts on the subject matter changed, just because my perception, and this isn't an ill reflection on this department at all, but we're not pushed. We are trained to be enrollment counselors. It's a reactionary job—we get a mandate and we do it—so there's not a lot of outside pressure to take a look at what we're doing. The mentoring program has been a way to take a step back and look at what I do and evaluate what I'm doing. Yes, I like it. It's a step, but not a loop. It's good to have external perspective on what we do.

Another mentee explained,

I don't think my perception has changed, really. It reinforced that we are making a difference and that we have a lot of ownership for our areas and it's up to us to take ownership. I want to have great responsibility and learn to do more to meet my enrollment numbers. This allowed me to see that I need to really take ownership of my responsibilities.

One mentee described,

I think I still view my job in a similar way. What we do is valid and worthy and I can always think of one or two stories

each day that shows how we help others. My mentor's perspective was valuable since he's been in higher education for a while and hearing about the different roles and capacities he has served in. Learning that it's meaningful relationships with students, and it's those relationships that can exist, no matter where you go in the system. I feel I'm happier after this mentoring program. One mentee said,

I don't know if my view of my position changed. I talked with my mentor a lot about seeing outside sources and talking with others in different departments. He said that supervisors really don't want to see us in the same position five years from now. He said to be focused on the things I need to do my job and to do my best work to move up. I believe I can do well in anything I choose.

The final mentee communicated,

What I appreciated about the mentorship was the pairing. I felt I could be very direct in my conversation to learn more about the organization, history, political things. I learned to ask my mentor about things I had heard in the office and if there was any truth to the statements. It's nice to know how some things work.

At the time of the first group interview, the mentees had experienced a complete recruitment cycle. It was important to learn more about the mentees and their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions about being an admissions counselor. Most of the mentees expressed they really did not know what to expect during their first year of employment as an Admissions Counselor. They communicated that they knew it was an opportunity to be a part of a larger team dedicated to helping prospective students, but they could not grasp the scope of the position. Interestingly, after one year of experience, two mentees shared that their views about how long they may stay in this position had been altered. One mentee commented, "I didn't come into this position thinking it was short-term, but now that I've gone through one cycle, I've learned that we are equipped with so much knowledge and information that I can go on and be successful in other positions." A different mentee had the opposite experience,

> I was more anxious to leave this position when I started than [I am] now. I came into the position thinking it was 'just admissions counseling'. I forgot how cool it was to connect directly with students and how the smallest things you do can make a huge impact on them.

Since many individuals do leave the Admissions Counselor position, I wanted to understand how or why their feelings have changed over the course of the recruitment cycle to determine if changes or

improvements could be made within the office to affect change in the future. The mentees commented on their feelings about the position as a career and how this first year has been a learning experience preparing them for a second year. The mentees really echoed each others' comments in both of these areas. When discussing the thought of making a career of being an Admissions Counselor, all expressed they knew it was an entry-level position and had no expectation to stay for an extended period of time. Comments expressed included:

- "Not somewhere I want to live and die"

- "I'm only going to be here a couple of years"

- "I'm making sure I enjoy things about this job now because I might not be able to do this type of work again in the future"

- "As I look at other jobs that interest me, I try to figure out what skills I need now to get to that position"

- "I'm young and new in my career and I'm going to grow."

- "There will be a lot about this job I will miss."

Research on attrition has uncovered many factors that contribute to employee turnover (Bender, 2009; Evans, 1988). One such aspect is the culture of one's office. The Undergraduate Admissions office employs more than 100 individuals which may impact the development of a unified culture within the office. I asked the mentees to comment on how connected they felt to the office to see if this was a major factor impacting their job satisfaction or tendencies toward attrition in the ASU

Undergraduate Admissions Office. The mentees unanimously expressed

their connection and cohesiveness with their fellow admissions

counselors, but a major disconnect with the processing and evaluation

teams.

The Mentoring Experience

Mentees were asked to describe their mentoring experience.

Overall, four of the five mentees expressed having a positive experience.

Given the different personalities of the mentees and mentors, how the

relationships developed varied with each mentor pairing. One mentee

commented, "I didn't know how to approach my mentor initially. I see this

person everyday and I struggled a bit to figure out what to talk about with

my mentor."

Another mentee explained,

I was excited to spend time with my mentor. I had heard

bits and pieces about him and his experience at the

University, but he opened up and shared a lot of information

that made me feel I was in a safe environment which allowed

me to open up as well. Personally, I wanted someone to talk

with about higher education in general, and I often found

myself with rapid fire questions during most of our meetings.

Throughout our meetings, we discussed my goals and he

provided good direction for me for the next six months and

year. He helped identify job skills to acquire and in our last

meeting, he had me write down five goals that I wanted to accomplish within a specific timeframe. It was fun to have someone to talk with about higher education and he provided me with things to think about throughout different stages of my career—good professional tips to grow from. It was a great experience for me.

A third mentee explained,

I had a good experience with my mentor. We had some difficulty coordinating time, but we mostly held information meetings throughout the mentoring program. Our meetings were a little more directed because we had discussed and established what we both wanted out of the experience from the beginning. I was asked a lot of questions early on about my personal and professional goals, where did I see myself going? Based on the feedback I provided, my mentor shared thoughts on possible directions for me, people she has worked with who have similar interests, and helped create a plan. We really discussed my experiences more than hers.

The fourth mentee said,

My experience went well with my mentor. We initially learned more about each other personally and professionally, and about our backgrounds. It was never a forced conversation, but we did struggle with the short

amount of time provided. We discussed my goals and where

I want to go along with my skill set, strengths, weaknesses

and ideas for training. We talked about current events in

higher education and we expressed our opinions on those

topics. We both shared equally, and I look forward to the

continual relationship we will have.

The final mentee shared,

I also had a really good experience. My mentor was

wonderful—our meetings felt very much like a conversation

that we were on the same level, he wasn't a high and mighty

power imparting wisdom on me, but he was very

conversational. I felt a little nervous with our first

conversation like I should have had questions prepared, but

our conversation was very comfortable. I asked him a lot of

questions about his background and how he ended up in his

position. I felt like he gave me good direction. He tells it like it

is and I love that because I'm so indecisive and I like to have

someone provide me with direction. I have never worked

with my mentor and I can say I developed a friendship with

him.

Research shows that colleagues can serve as mentors, and the

participants in this study reported that they had some informal mutual

assistance relationships in the office. Most mentees had utilized co-

workers for help, assistance, feedback, and support up to this point, but explained that this more formal experience was beneficial since they were paired with someone they did not choose and someone not similar to themselves. One mentee explained, "I wouldn't have sought it out. You gravitate towards people around you. I wouldn't have sought out my mentor because her office is on another campus." Another mentee reported, "This provided me with a good opportunity to connect with my mentor. I would have been too shy to ask."

Self Reflection Exercises

The mentees and mentors were given a set of questions to respond to after each mentoring session. The intent of this exercise was to document the exchange of information and ideas within each mentoring session. Additionally, the purpose was to provide each participant the opportunity to reflect upon the mentoring session and how s/he benefitted from the interaction. Consistent with qualitative research, themes emerged from the self-reflection exercise and included personal development, professional development, work-related discoveries and benefits of the mentoring program. The self reflections were emailed directly to me. This allowed me to review the information immediately and ask additional questions about the experience and to validate information directly with the participant while the experience was fresh in memory.

Given my role within my community, I found the comments provided through the self-reflections informative and actionable. I am able

to use that information to make additional changes and adjustments in the office to benefit the entire team. Additionally, all five mentors commented on how important this self-reflection exercise was and how they need to incorporate it more into their daily activities. Figure 3 represents the major themes identified from the self-reflection activities and quotes from the mentees and mentors.

Figure 3. Self reflection themes and quotes by participant role

Theme	Mentees	Mentors
Professional Goals and Development	"My mentor explained the differences between student affairs and academic affairs to help me understand what area I want to learn more about." "We discussed my strengths, weaknesses and areas for growth to help me prepare for the next level."	"I was challenged to think long-term about my career."
Networking	"My mentor recommended I meet others on the team to expand my network." "Knowing people is the key to new job opportunities and potentially re-location."	"I could help make introductions for my mentee with other student affairs professionals and even faculty members."
Work-Related	"I learned more about the how decisions are made in the office, which are driven by data." "We discussed the different styles of leadership within the office and how this ties in with our office structure." "I learned more about the differences between in-state and out-of-state recruitment."	"It allowed me to re-think processes of why we do things from a management perspective." "It helped me understand and re-connect with what new employees experience, and how I can be a better supervisor."
Benefits of Mentoring Program	"It's rewarding to know that feedback to supervisors is encouraged." "I gained insight into others' perceptions about me." "It's reassuring to know I have someone other than my supervisor to learn from and share my ideas." "It wasn't initially what I expected, but it was useful." "It's important to have someone cheering for you, someone to tell you what you're good at." "Positive reinforcement is beneficial in the workplace."	"It makes me feel as though my opinion is valued." "I feel more competent and knowledgeable about the things I know." "It allowed me to share things I wouldn't have normally shared with staff I supervise." "I got to know someone who I may not have known otherwise."

The data gathered from the group interviews and self-reflection questionnaires provided answers to the research question. The intervention was implemented to fill a gap in the professional development of second-year admissions counselors with the intent of reducing staff turnover. Based on feedback from both the mentees and mentors, this goal was met and the effort was appreciated by the participants. One mentee shared, "It's useful to have feedback from someone. It provided insight for me to leverage the skills I'm not using and to take ownership of my skills." Another mentee said, "It's nice to have an advocate outside of your supervisor. Someone to teach you the little things you don't learn in training. A mentor can fill in the gaps about ASU culture."

Specific feedback and appreciation for the mentoring experience was consistent among the groups. The mentees shared positive comments like, "You feel like you're somebody's investment in a way" and "it creates a sense of belonging, like you're part of something, you feel more connected and embedded in the office". Mentors expressed similar thoughts such as "For the organization, I think it shows that we care and we've invested in our staff and they are important resources. I think that's an important message these days."

I learned more about second-year employees' professional development needs, their level of satisfaction in their positions and within the office, and whether or not a mentoring program would reduce turnover. Staff retention is the hardest factor to control and to predict. Data gathered

through this study indicates turnover will continue to occur in this entry level position at intervals typically consistent with graduation from Master's degree programs. Two poignant comments from individual mentees were shared, and the others nodded their heads in agreement. The comments reflect their understanding of the role and expectations of the admissions counselor and the lack of potential for career advancement within the office. The first comment shared and supported by all:

> I think I'll be frank. Financially this is not a position to stay in for a long time. It's just kind of logistically hard to stay in a job like this. I would love to do this for a long-time, but logistically and financially it's hard to see myself here long-term. It's ideal for single people without children—those who are mobile.

The second comment also garnered unanimous agreement among the mentees,

> From where I sit, there is not a lot of vacancy at higher levels within the organization. Even if there were, I don't think I would be the most qualified candidate. I don't see my advancement as something that can happen in the next couple of years so I have to look outside to get to that position.

The mentors discussed this issue in one of the focus groups. The mentor

identified the same concern about advancement within the office,

> The challenge in our office is that most of the time there isn't
>
> the opportunity for advancement within the office. A new
>
> employee will recognize that fairly quickly and ask 'Where do
>
> I go from here?' And, 'What do I need to get there?'

Since feedback about limited advancement opportunities in the

office was consistent among the participant groups, one can conclude

Admissions Counselors will need to pursue careers in other areas within

the university. The mentors continued to discuss this topic and tried to

dissect it and identify a solution. Suggestions included building in a career

ladder for the employee within the larger university environment, and

deliberate exploration with the staff member to identify career interests

and goals and provide opportunities to gain experience in those areas.

There are limited human resources that can be tapped into at the

university level, but a number of sources suggest creative ways to develop

and promote staff. One common suggestion made is job rotations and/or

sharing. An example of this could be an admissions counselor spending

time in the financial assistance office to learn more about that component

of enrollment management. A mentor even commented on this by saying,

"Maybe it's just a day or two you spend in each office. It should be easy to

do with our partners in enrollment management right now." This can be an

effective way to give employees the opportunity to experience something new.

Limitations

Limitations of this study include timeframe of the action research, timing of the intervention, and training for mentors prior to the intervention. Employee retention is a long-term topic and for the purposes of this paper, is not something that can definitively be determined in such a short timeframe. Based on Kram's definition of the developmental relationship phases, this intervention involved only the initiation phase of a mentoring relationship (Kram, 1985). Fortunately, given the researcher's role in the UGA office, it is possible to continue this research discussion for an extended period of time.

The time of year when the mentoring program was implemented was ideal for the workflow for the office, but occurred over summer, which is also a popular time for employees to take vacation. This potentially impacted the frequency and/or time in between mentoring sessions potentially influencing or impacting the feedback and interactions amongst mentees and mentors.

No training was provided for the mentors prior to the action research study. There was no prescribed procedure developed regarding meeting times, locations or topics. I intentionally designed the study without this component to allow for flexibility in the interactions and discussion between the mentoring pairs. Results from the study show

significant relationship development among the mentoring pairs and thorough discussion. I did not ask the Assistant Directors if they were currently participating in a mentoring relationship, which may have contributed to some of the differences in experiences reported by the mentees in this action research study. Offering a training component in future mentoring experiences may provide different results.

Surprise Findings

Most of the information captured through this action research dissertation was what I expected to find. This section describes the surprise findings from the intervention. A qualitative approach, utilizing various data collection techniques, is intentionally responsive to unexpected data (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 107-8).

I was initially surprised by the mentors' responses. Based on the self-reflections submitted and the discussions in the focus groups, this intervention had a bigger impact for mentors than I anticipated. The mentoring program has re-energized the mentors as the experience has allowed them to re-define their role within the office, and re-think how they interact with their direct reports. The mentors provided good insight into how we can make positive changes in the undergraduate admissions office to provide more professional development opportunities. I even reacquainted myself with the make-up and backgrounds of the supervisors on the freshmen recruitment team.

Research indicates that supervisors are a significant influence in the success of new employees (Harned & Murphy, 1998; Kram, 1985). The mentors in the study have significant work and life experience and can contribute greatly to a new employee. Research indicates most individuals within student affairs receive significant "training" through a graduate degree program. Interestingly enough, only two of the five mentors have Master's degrees. While on-going education is of great interest and is supported in the office, it is possible that this group of individuals may still benefit greatly if encouraged to pursue Master's degrees. I realized that a gap in professional development exists for this population as well.

> Those who supervise supervisors need to encourage continuing development of supervisory skills and should create explicit standards for supervisory activity. If supervision is to become a more intentional, systematic, and thoughtful activity, those at the highest level of authority must demonstrate effectiveness in their own supervisory relationships. (Saunders, et al., 2000, p. 190)

An unexpected activity resulted from the mentoring program and occurred during the intervention. Networking was a common theme identified in the self-reflection comments. Mentors often talked about networking as a tool to help mentees get to their next desired position. In conversations, mentors would talk about other professionals they knew on campus who would be good contacts for the mentees. Based on all this

immediate feedback, one of the mentors took it upon herself to help the mentees network. A happy hour was set up and individuals from throughout the university attended to mix and mingle and share experiences with the mentees. The mentees said the happy hour was beneficial because they were introduced to ASU professionals from other areas of the university, expanding their ASU network.

While all the mentees expressed experiencing a "disconnect" with the other internal units, two mentees expressed an additional disconnect with staff located on other ASU campuses, and this was also an issue for the mentors as well. As described by a mentee, "It's always a struggle if you're not based at Tempe. It's hard to feel connected. Everything is Tempe-centric. I feel so far from Tempe." One mentor shared the greetings she often receives "We never see you" and "Oh, I forgot about you." One mentee agreed, "I don't feel like I know the folks on the other campuses. I feel like they are 'out there'." One mentee felt a larger connection to ASU as a whole, but not necessarily to the UGA office, "I see myself as a part of the larger ASU, not just UGA." I was surprised by this finding because I know that I personally interact with staff throughout the university on a daily basis. From my perspective, I feel very connected to all groups in our office and staff located on all the campuses and in regional locations. Clearly, what is true for me is not true for all staff members.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Conducting this action research provided me with the opportunity to learn and grow personally and professionally. I selected a topic that has impacted me in my work setting for more than six years at ASU. I recognize employee turnover occurs and can be necessary and even beneficial for an office. Given the day-to-day demands on employees in the Admissions office, getting to the point of having "planned" turn-over would be a step in the right direction. This would allow for a seamless transition of relationships and activity, and cause less interruption in the daily work of meeting enrollment goals.

Interviewing and interacting with both the mentees and mentors opened my eyes to how individuals view our office structure, decision making and team dynamics. Given my role in the office, I am often unaware of what new employees and entry-level employees want to accomplish in their professional roles. I challenged myself to explore a topic outside of my area of expertise, but in an environment that I participate in on a daily basis, and I have learned more about attrition and professional development as a result of the experience.

Implementing change within my organization can be easily facilitated with the proper planning, staffing and coordination. I have autonomy within the freshmen recruitment team and can implement change readily and quickly. Implementing change in the larger

66

undergraduate admissions office involves consensus building and greater levels of coordination. ASU is a dynamic institution and change is constant. I experienced some challenges implementing this program as office priorities continued to shift over the course of the study, and often overlapped with some of the activities occurring within the study. Measuring the change from this intervention will be an on-going effort as the mentees and mentors continue to connect, communicate and grow. Those changes will continue to reveal themselves over time.

Implications

This initial action has confirmed that a mentoring program is successful in this environment, but a longitudinal study can contribute greater understanding to causes and cures of retention and turnover. The participants shared their thoughts, feelings and perceptions about this experience and much of it was about what they learned, what they can do better and why they enjoyed participating in the study. One mentee shared, "I liked the free-form nature of the program, and because it was not a real defined structure it allowed for more of a conversation to happen. It wasn't forced or contrived. It was organic."

Since only a small group of individuals were involved in the study, other employees throughout the office expressed great interest in being part of this experience. Some even felt left out. This shows a larger interest in and need for professional development for all staff members within the undergraduate admissions office. One mentees' comment

supports this idea, "I think a mentor program would be beneficial to have with everybody, regardless of how long they've been here in UGA."

Each participant reported benefitting from the mentoring program, and they continue to share what they've learned with others throughout the office. Comments from mentees included, "She really made me take a step back and evaluate my actions" and "I enjoyed having someone else to talk with who wasn't my supervisor, especially if I wanted to discuss something that I was not comfortable with discussing with my supervisor" and "It was nice to get the feedback about where I might be successful in my next position." A lesson I have learned throughout this process is that the things that appear to be simple are often complex in nature.

This paper is only a partial record of the total experience. Research shows that ". . . people with mentors become quickly socialized to an organization or profession, obtain high-visibility assignments, stay well informed of future opportunities, and are coached to 'success'" (Summers-Ewing, 1994, p. 7). There is benefit to a mentoring program in the Admissions office based on evidence provided by the participants. A mentoring experience allows the new employee to foster another relationship within the office. This intervention showed the admissions counselors engaged with peers the most to learn about the work environment and job responsibilities. A relationship with different leaders in the office would allow for varied learning opportunities. As one mentor explained, ". . . we get into the habit of talking so much as managers to

teach and provide direction, especially in group situations, that until we get into a one-on-one situation where employees are more willing to ask questions that they won't ask in a group setting."

The mentors demonstrated their care and concern for new employees. Throughout the intervention, they expressed the importance of their role to welcome, train and develop new staff. One immediate step we can take within the office is to document opportunities that exist for new employees. In a related comment, one mentor said,

> Recently we have tried to identify some different things to help staff grow professionally. I'm not sure there is anything documenting . . .how we should help, that these are activities that will expand their network or develop skills for the next level.

This dissertation can serve as a tool for supervisors to help new employees make appropriate connections for professional development opportunities. It can provide clear direction for different career paths within the university.

It is important to acknowledge differing viewpoints on mentoring programs. Research shows there are misconceptions about mentoring such as: primary beneficiary is the mentee; mentoring relationship is always a positive experience; mentoring relationships look the same in the work setting; mentoring relationships are readily available to those who want them; a mentor is key to individual growth and advancement (Kram, 1985 p. 194).

While the focus of the study was on the mentees, it was evident that the mentors benefitted from the experience as well. The comments provided in the self-reflection activities show that the mentors took the time to process what occurred in each mentoring session, and realized how they can improve how they work and interact with others. One mentor commented, "I think it's important development and growth for both groups. It's just as effective for the mentors as it is for the mentees. It's an opportunity for self reflection, an opportunity to grow as an individual and team. It helps the mentor too."

An overriding theme identified through this research is the time and attention paid to supervisors in the Undergraduate Admissions Office. A research topic worth studying would be the role of the supervisor. Based on this research experience, literature points to the importance of the supervisor and his/her experience and his/her relationships with entry-level employees. As I scan the environment of the Undergraduate Admissions Office, few activities exist to support the supervisor. Further research on the needs of supervisors within the office could be of greater benefit. Supervisors recognize their responsibility to help develop the potential of others. Investing in this group of individuals can exponentially increase overall employee engagement and satisfaction.

Future Implications

Data captured through focus groups provides rich, descriptive experiences for a specific setting, but transferability of the findings can be

explored. While this study design does not lend itself to generalizability, it's possible that my findings can be helpful in another setting if someone deems it as a good fit (Kreuger & Casey, 2000).

This action research study showed that a mentoring program can be implemented in the Undergraduate Admissions Office and can positively impact all participants, enhancing their professional experiences through personal relationships and self-reflection activities. Moving forward, I intend to formalize this experience throughout the office to provide this professional development opportunity for all staff.

I am currently leading a committee within our enrollment management team on employee training, development and customer service. Representatives from the University Registrar's Office, Student Financial Assistance and Enrollment Marketing and Communication serve on the committee with me. We are charged with identifying and implementing employee training and development opportunities across the division. Information and experience from this action research study has increased my capacity to contribute to this important agenda. Additionally, opportunities may exist to collaborate with academic and student affairs partners based on the mentees comments regarding their potential career paths and interests.

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APPENDIX A

IRB/HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

To: Christopher Clark
                              FAB

From: Mark Roosa, Chair $S\gamma\gamma$
                              Soc Beh IRB

Date: 02/17/2011

Committee Action: **Exemption Granted**

IRB Action Date: 02/17/2011

IRB Protocol #:   1102006033

Study Title: Undergraduate Admissions Staff Training and Development Program

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.   It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT EMAIL

All,

I'm in a doctoral program and conducting my dissertation on employee training and retention programs for new Admissions professionals. I will be implementing a six-week mentoring program. The intent is for you to meet/talk with your mentee/mentor once/week over the course of the six weeks, and provide some reflective feedback from your interactions. I will then hold a focus group before and after the mentoring experience to get your thoughts and feedback.

I will absolutely go into greater detail next week, but I can answer any questions you might have beforehand as well.

Thanks again for your help and support! I look forward to seeing you soon!

Thanks!
--Missy

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM FOR GROUP INTERVIEWS

Date
Dear Participant:
I am a doctoral student in the Teachers College at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to better understand the importance of new employee training/mentoring programs.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve a one-hour group interview. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop participation at any time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. This will not affect your work performance or employability.

Responses from your interview will be used to make informed recommendations of changes or updates to the new employee training program of the office of Undergraduate Admissions. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Your responses will be anonymous, but confidentiality cannot be guaranteed due to the nature of the group interview process. The field notes will note use participant's names, but will be coded. Field notes pertaining to the interview will not be transcribed, but utilized for verification of notes and specific quotes. The code key will be hand written and retained by the Co-Investigator in a separate locked file from the audiotapes and field notes. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used.

I would like to audiotape this focus group. You will not be recorded, unless you give permission. If you give permission for to be taped, you have the right to ask for the recording to be stopped. Tapes will be deleted upon completion of the study.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at: Principal Investigator: Christopher Clark—602-543-6300
Co-Investigator: Melissa Pizzo—602-300-1076

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.
By signing below you are agreeing to participate in the study and agree to be taped.

Signature   Date

APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Name:

Title:

Start date in Undergraduate Admissions:

Number of years employed at ASU:

Number of years in workforce:

Campus Office located on (circle one):   Downtown   Polytechnic
Tempe   West

Level of education (circle one):   HS Diploma/GED   Associate's Deg
Bachelors' Degree   Master's Degree   Doctoral Degree

APPENDIX E

PRE MENTORING QUESTIONS—MENTEES

1. Why are you interested in working in higher education?

2. What motivated you to pursue a job in Undergraduate Admissions?

3. Tell me about your first year as an Admissions Counselor.

4. What has contributed to your success in this role?

5. Describe your thoughts, feelings and perceptions about being an Admissions Counselor.

6. Have your feelings changed over the course of the recruitment cycle?

7. If you weren't currently an Admissions Counselor, what do you think you would be doing?

8. Do you feel connected to the office? How and why?

9. Are there suggestions you have to engage others?

10. Describe your career aspirations.

11. How does your current position contribute to your career aspirations?

12. Do you see longevity in your current role? Or, within the admissions profession?

13. What is your definition of mentorship in a professional setting?

14. Do you have a mentor within the office? Outside of the office?

15. Where do you see yourself in five years?

APPENDIX F

PRE MENTORING QUESTIONS—MENTORS

1. Tell me about your role as a leader within the Undergraduate Admissions Office. Do you assist with training and development activities? What and how?

2. Do you feel you are engaged in leadership activities within the office? How and why?

3. Are there suggestions you have to engage others?

4. Tell me your perceptions of your office culture and commitment to professional development.

5. What is your role in the office to help individuals develop professionally?

6. What are skills/abilities you can share with others to help them learn more about the profession?

7. How does your current position contribute to your career aspirations?

8. What is your definition of mentorship in a professional setting?

9. Did you benefit from a professional mentor? What role have professional mentors played in your career progression?

APPENDIX G

SELF REFLECTION QUESTIONNAIRE—MENTEES

1. What were the topics you discussed this week?

2. In what environment did your meeting take place?

3. Did you learn something new from your interaction?

4. How does this contribute to your personal growth and
   development?

5. Was the meeting beneficial? If so, in what way? Did it meet
   your expectations?

6. What surprised you during the meeting?

7. What was the most interesting?

APPENDIX H

SELF REFLECTION QUESTIONNAIRE—MENTORS

1. What were the topics you discussed this week?

2. Did you initiate the conversation or your mentee?

3. In what environment did your meeting take place?

4. How did you help your mentee?

5. How does being a mentor personally benefit you?

6. Did you perceive yourself as having assisted your mentee?

7. What more do you need in order to help your mentee?

APPENDIX I

POST MENTORING QUESTIONS—MENTEES

1. Describe your mentoring experience?

2. Was it beneficial? Is there any benefit to others in the office?

3. Did you set personal goals/outcomes for your experience?

4. What did you learn from this experience?

5. Would you have sought this opportunity out on your own? Why or why not?

6. Describe your thoughts, feelings and perceptions about being an Admissions Counselor. Have your feelings changed through your mentoring experience?

7. Do you feel connected to the office? (more or less after this experience)

8. Did you learn more about the admissions profession?

9. Has this experience impacted your career aspirations? How?

10. In your opinion, what is the value of a mentor/mentoring program?

11. Do you want a formalized mentoring program? Will it benefit others?

12. If you weren't currently an Admissions Counselor, what do you think you would be doing?

13. Where do you see yourself in five years?

APPENDIX J

POST MENTORING QUESTIONS—MENTORS

1. What did you learn from this experience?

2. Were you equipped to mentor?

3. In your opinion, what is the value of a mentor/mentoring program?

4. How does mentorship contribute to your office culture?

5. What is our expectation for staff to stay in an entry-level position?

6. Are there others who can benefit from a mentorship experience? Entire office?

7. Tell me your perceptions of our office culture and commitment to professional development.

8. What is your role in the office to help individuals develop professionally?

9. Was this of benefit to you?

10. How would we implement this in our office knowing summer is not our busy time? How do we commit to something and make it work?

APPENDIX K

PILOT STUDY QUESTIONS

Questions to ask individual implementing/monitoring training (Assistant to Executive Director):

What is your role?

What are the office goals/objectives of the new employee training program?

What do you need to facilitate training in the office?

How is new employee training implemented? How many days/weeks/months does training take place?

Are there differences in training programs depending on function within the office? Do you use job descriptions as a guide to build the training program?

How do you work with office leaders on the training program?

How do you work with the supervisors?

What do you want supervisors to do? How do you want them to be engaged in the training?

Do you facilitate a pre/post test?

Are there opportunities for improvement? If so, what?

What are barriers keeping you from implementing changes?

What types of resources are available to you to facilitate the training program? Are there resources you need? Have you asked for those resources?

What are the three things you think all new employees in the office should know?

Questions to ask Executive Director

What is the basic structure of the Undergraduate Admissions Office?

What are your overall goals/objectives for the office?

What are the office goals/objectives of the new employee training program?

Who is responsible for new employee training? Is it different for continuing training programs/opportunities for current staff?

What are the three things you think all new employees in the office should know?

What are the three things you think all Admissions employees should know?

Does the training program align with job duties/descriptions?

What are your expectations of office leaders in new employee training?

What are your expectations of supervisors in new employee training?

What are your expectations of current employees in new employee training?

What are your expectations of new employees in new employee training?

How is the new employee training program facilitated in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions? Is it effective?

Are there changes you would make or recommend?

Are there financial resources committed to the new employee training program? If so, how much?

What other resources are committed to the new employee training program?

What are other aspects of new employee training that you are committed to?

What type of office culture are you trying to create?

Are there any gaps in knowledge/skill/ability in the office? In specific areas of the office?

Is there on-going training for all staff members? If so, what?

APPENDIX L

UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS MANAGEMENT TEAM

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Undergraduate Admissions
Executive Director

Senior Director
Systems &
Processing

Senior Director
Freshmen

Director
International
Applicant
Services

Director
Domestic
Applicant
Services

Director
AZ
Recruitment

Director
Transfer
Admissions

Director
Research and
Analysis

Business
Operations
Manager Senior

Assistant Director
National
Recruitment

Management
Research
Analyst

Assistant
Director
International
Recruitment

Assistant Director
Recruitment
Communications

Assistant Director
Campus Visits/
Events

International
Admissions
Specialist

Leadership Team

APPENDIX M

UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS FIRST TIME FRESHMEN TEAM

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

First Time Freshmen
Senior Director

AZ Recruitment
Director

National Recruitment
Assistant Director

Coordinator
Social Media &
Telecounseling

Denver
Coordinator

Program
Coordinator Sr

Chicago
Coordinator

Student Support
Specialist

Dallas
Coordinator

Student Support
Specialist

Southern California
Coordinator

Student Support
Specialist

Southern California
Coordinator

Tele–Counselor
Students
(21)

Regional
Recruitment
Assistant Director

Regional
Recruitment
Assistant Director

Regional
Recruitment
Assistant Director

Regional
Recruitment
Assistant Director

Program
Coordinator Sr

Coordinator

Student Support
Specialist

Student Support
Specialist

Student Support
Specialist

Student Support
Specialist

Student Support
Specialist

Student Support
Specialist

Student Support
Specialist

Student Support
Specialst

Student Support
Specialist

APPENDIX N

UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS

NEW EMPLOYEE FIVE WEEK TRAINING PROGRAM

New Employee Training and Development Procedures

Training and Development for All New Employees: Week 1

| Human Resources Orientation (Full Day) | Review of Admission Materials / Requirements / Websites / ABOR Policies (6 Hours) | Participate in UIS – Talk and Tempe Campus Tour (3.5 Hours) | Participate in UIS – Talk Only (1 Hour) | Observe / Listen in with Customer Service Representatives (4 Hours) |

Training and Development for All New Employees: Week 2

| Talisma / PS Training (3 Hours) | Participate in UIS – Talk Only (1 Hour): Talisma / PS Training (2 Hours) | ***Information Session / Campus Tour DPC (4 Hours): | Work with Customer Service to Apply Talisma / PS Knowledge (3 Hours) | Observe / Listen in with Recruiter Phone Calls / Push Calls (4 Hours) |

Training and Development for All New Employees: Week 3

| Observe Admission Appointments (4 Hours) | Group Meetings with Individual Leads – 3 Meetings (1.5 Hours) | ***Information Session / Campus Tour Polytechnic (4 Hours) | Group Meetings with Individual Leads – 3 Meetings (1.5 Hours) | Review the Processing and Evaluation Procedures with Applicable Staff (4 Hours) |

Training and Development for All New Employees: Week 4

| Observe Admission Appointments (4 Hours) | Group Meetings with Individual Leads – 3 Meetings (1.5 Hours) | ***Information Session / Campus Tour West (4 Hours) | Observe / Listen in with Recruitment Staff (4 Hours) | Lead Discretion |

***Individualized Training and Development: Lead Discretion Week 5

| ***Introductory Meetings with College Representatives – 3 Meetings (1.5 Hours) | Lead Discretion | ***Introductory Meetings with College Representatives – 3 Meetings (1.5 Hours) | Lead Discretion | ***Introductory Meetings with College Representatives – 3 Meetings (1.5 Hours) |

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