Chapter 9
Contemporary Peer Mentoring in Higher Education

Lenis Colton Brown
University of Phoenix, USA

ABSTRACT

This literature review illuminates how contemporary peer mentoring practices typically function within collegiate settings and delineates strategies for further developing and professionalizing the services they provide. Peer mentoring offers many advantages to the university, including the ability meet the needs of an increasingly diverse study body, which encompasses an array of ages, ethnicities, countries of origin, backgrounds, and abilities; the ability to draw from a large pool of student talent at a relatively low cost; and the improvement of retention rates by helping students navigate and succeed in their new environment. Topics include the main service models of peer mentoring; a consideration of what motivates university leadership, faculty, staff, mentors, and mentees to support peer mentoring programs; and the strategies required to ensure successful recruitment, training, deployment, supervision, and evaluation of peer mentors and the programs they serve. Suggestions for future research are provided.

INTRODUCTION

Modern American college students expect guidance services as a staple of the college milieu (Birkeland, Davies, & Heard, 2019). Increasingly, major university campuses augment their student service offerings with forms of peer-led guidance services (Collier, 2017b). Peer mentoring characteristically proliferates via stakeholders who recognize the benefits of students helping themselves (Cornelius, Wood, & Lai, 2016). Peer-staffed programs provide increased supports to mentees while allowing peer mentors to learn valuable skills in an authentic setting (Connolly, 2017). Administrators, staff, and faculty value opportunities to work with advanced students in a collegial manner (Walters & Kanak, 2016).

A major driver for contemporary universities to develop robust peer mentoring services centers on the need to serve an increasingly diverse student population. As defined below, this new college student profile includes non-traditional, high need, and at-risk students, whose identities and needs often overlap. As awareness of vulnerabilities within learner populations increases, so do the calls for heightened

interventions (Alcocer & Martinez, 2018). Many members of the higher education environment believe that knowledgeable and caring peers can effectively guide atypical students through the college landscape (Hillier et al., 2018), and consequently, campus leaders are increasingly utilizing this practice (Gafni Lachter & Ruland, 2018). Interpersonal connection is a significant motivator for students; peers are often uniquely suited to providing emotional support and camaraderie.

Also chief among peer mentoring's advantages to universities is its role in providing a cost-effective way of augmenting staff-based student services by harnessing and systematizing students' natural affinities (Drake, 2011; Shook & Keup, 2012). In the current era of austerity and institutional scrutiny, student services resources often remain fixed or dwindle (Collier, 2017b). The student body contains a large pool of talent that program leaders can typically acquire for a relatively low cost. Administrators often welcome strategies that provide high-visibility interventions for little monetary outlay (Bahran, Miller, Verschuren, & Fairchild, 2018). The popularity of peer mentoring is often based on its cost-effectiveness because professionally-based guidance services usually require significant financial allotments (Wood & Breyer, 2016).

Moreover, peer mentorship, through a variety of traditional and innovative methods, can help retention by ensuring more learners become connected with various levels of the campus community. Multiple points of contact and deeper planes of integration into a school's academic and administrative structure increases the chances that a student will remain enrolled and progress toward academic goals (Lundberg, 2014). Peer mentoring programs can be designed to identify and target students who need specific supports, including educational, emotional, social, or practical provisions (Collier, 2015).

The objective of this review of contemporary literature is to illuminate how peer mentoring practices augment professional university-based student services. The chapter begins by offering a profile of the 21st century college student, which encompasses an array of ages, ethnicities, countries of origin, backgrounds, abilities, and needs, and indicates ways that peer mentoring can benefit them. The chapter's main focus is an examination of current ways peer mentors are used, and delineates strategies for further developing and professionalizing the services they provide. Topics include service models of peer mentoring within campus-wide or narrowly focused programs; attitudes of university leadership, faculty, staff, mentors, and mentees; and recruitment, training, deployment, supervision, and evaluation of peer mentoring programs. Suggestions for future research are provided.

The methodology consisted of annotating and narrating the central points within contemporary articles about collegiate peer mentoring. Many scholarly, academic, and professional resources were reviewed, including peer-reviewed journals, books, textbooks, and government publications. Most of the resources were found using online databases in the West Hills College and University of Phoenix libraries, including EBSCOhost, ERIC, Journal of College Student Retention, LexisNexis, ProQuest, SAGE Journals Online, Taylor & Francis Online, and Wiley Online Library. Other online databanks, such as Google Scholar, were also utilized.

The following keywords and phrases were used to ensure thorough research parameters: college, collegiate, efficacy, engagement, evaluation, guidance, goal completion, implementation, intervention, paraprofessional, peer advising, peer counseling, peer leadership, peer mentoring, persistence, reform, remedial, remediation, retention, student services, student success, training, university and vocational. Compound searches were also conducted with combinations of the above terms. Approximately 95% of the articles used in this research were peer-reviewed. The balance of the research was books or government reports.

19 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/contemporary-peer-mentoring-in-higher-education/253588

Related Content

Teaching Students With Specific Learning Disabilities in the General Education Classroom
Pam L. Epler (2022). *Research Anthology on Inclusive Practices for Educators and Administrators in Special Education (pp. 111-137).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/teaching-students-with-specific-learning-disabilities-in-the-general-education-classroom/292872

Developing and Implementing Individualized Education Programs to Ensure Student Progress
Teri Marx, Steven Prater, Shedeh Hajghassemaliand Nicole Bucka (2022). *New Considerations and Best Practices for Training Special Education Teachers (pp. 101-114).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/developing-and-implementing-individualized-education-programs-to-ensure-student-progress/297216

Culturally Responsive Social-Emotional Learning: Reframing Classroom and Behavior Management for Equity
James Cressey (2020). *Special Education Design and Development Tools for School Rehabilitation Professionals (pp. 1-27).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/culturally-responsive-social-emotional-learning/246669

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
Shailaja Pokhriyal (2021). *Handbook of Research on Critical Issues in Special Education for School Rehabilitation Practices (pp. 324-351).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd/274240

Managing Behavioural Emotional Problems in Inclusive Classrooms and Understanding the Best Practices
Wasim Ahmadand Parween S. (2021). *Handbook of Research on Critical Issues in Special Education for School Rehabilitation Practices (pp. 443-461).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/managing-behavioural-emotional-problems-in-inclusive-classrooms-and-understanding-the-best-practices/274245