Supporting Underrepresented Minority (URM) Transition with Peer Mentors During the First Year
Program Overview

An undergraduate peer mentoring experience created collaboratively by the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) and the Office of First-Year Experience and Family Programs (FYEFP).

The Program is co-funded by the Vice President’s Office of Student Affairs and First-Year Experience and Family Programs.
How did we begin?

- The Mentoring Program began as a pilot with 15 LatinX students in Fall of 2012.

- The Mentoring Program is a structured experience designed to:
  
  - Support students academically and socially as they transition from home and high school to CWRU during Fall semester
  - Encourage CWRU community connections with first-year students
  - Help first-year students gain a favorable impression of university offices & resources
  - Build student confidence & awareness so they are more willing to ask questions
  - Help first-year students acclimate more quickly to the institution
Why did you choose this population?

- Increase in Underrepresented students in first-year population
- First Year Advisory Council expressed need to be proactive in serving Underrepresented populations
- Program initially presented at National Conference on Race and Ethnicity
- Change in Case Western Reserve University incoming student population
- Passion for working with LatinX population within Office of Multicultural Affairs
Program Growth

- Pilot program success
- Open program to All Underrepresented Students
- Increased Funding from Vice President of Student Affairs Office
- Add Three Student Coordinator positions
- Added International Students
Transition for Underrepresented Students

- Using Schlossberg’s Transition Theory, Collegiate Connections helps underrepresented students transition through their first semester of college.

- Schlossberg lists four factors that impact a person’s ability to cope with transition: situation, self, support, and strategies (4 S’s)

- Campus Ecology

- Collegiate Connections aims to help students transition with individual focus on each of the S’s
  - **Situation**: by recognizing situations that may be hard throughout the semester
  - **Self**: place a focus on self-awareness of student through Strengths Training,
  - **Support**: provide support through peer-to-peer and faculty/staff-to-student mentoring
  - **Strategy**: Developing a plan of action for academic success with the Office of Educational Student Services
Selection of Student Coordinators

- The Student Coordinators assist and monitor 20 mentoring teams during fall semester, organize activities, monthly meetings, and complete necessary paperwork.

- Provides academic and social resource opportunities for the mentor teams.

- Salary: $200 month

- Challenges
Selection of Peer Mentors

- Outreach to all students - Orientation Leaders and Resident Advisors
- Pipeline with prior Mentees
- Faculty and Staff Recommendations
- 3.0 GPA in the major
- Involved on campus
Selection of Mentees

- Email invitations is sent to all student who identify as Underrepresented Students on the application (African-American, LatinX, Pacific Islander, American Indian)

- The invitation is also copied to their parents

- Invitation is sent out over the summer

- Every application is accepted and match with Peer Mentor based on major, interest, cultural background, city/state
Training Process

- Roles and responsibilities of being a peer mentor
- Reflections on their own experiences with mentoring
- Communication/Listening
- Ongoing training throughout – Strengths, Diversity 360, Safe Space, etc.
Expectations for Peer Mentors

- Meet with mentee 2.5 hours per week (10 hrs/month)
- Assist mentee in their transition to CWRU
  - Learning study habits, time management, connecting to involvement on campus, etc.
- Various group activities (3-4 activities per semester)
- Monthly reflection
- $100 per month
Assessment of the Program

- Increase in GPA of URM students involved in the program versus students not in the program
- Increase in Freshman to Sophomore Year Retention versus the retention rate of those not in the program
- Increased awareness of campus resources and social opportunities
- Expansion through Institutional Initiatives
Benefits of the Program

- Students learn what to expect for my sophomore year, and feel more at home at Case.
- Students like having an upperclass mentor they could talk to and hang out with.
- Students learned a lot about different services at Case.
- Students enjoyed the interactions and communication with upperclass mentors that usually continued after the program.
- The counseling and the events proved decisive in improving a students’ negative state of mind about Case.
What the future holds

- Redesign training for mentors
- More formalized meet-ups for mentors/mentees
- Improve connection with UGS and use of Early Alert System
- Create additional opportunities for professional development (UDC)
- Focusing more on Academic survival instead of sense of belonging (Module)
- Intentional collaboration with International Student Services
Questions/Answers
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