CENTRE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS
STUDENTS SUPPORTING STUDENT LEARNING (SSSL)

SUMMARY REPORT
SEMESTERS 1 & 2 2016
OVERVIEW
IN 2016
98 STUDENT MENTORS
ASSISTED MORE THAN
1,500 STUDENTS
18,750 TIMES
ACROSS 5 CAMPUS.

KEY FINDINGS IN THIS REPORT

• Priority equity groups were well represented among attendees of all SSSL programs.

• Students received significant academic benefits from SSSL support.

• Student evaluation of all SSSL programs was highly positive, demonstrating the programs’ many additional benefits in terms of student engagement.
Students Supporting Student Learning (SSSL) is a suite of peer mentoring academic support programs coordinated from within the Centre for Student Success. SSSL programs focus on students helping other students to learn, both within the classroom and in other learning contexts across the many campuses and academic colleges of Victoria University.

SSSL supports the strategic direction of Victoria University as the University of Opportunity by supporting significant numbers of students who are first in family, from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and who have English as an additional language. This Summary Report demonstrates the ways in which SSSL programs operate within the Participation and Success Framework and have a significant positive impact on the First Year Experience.

SSSL recognises that students themselves are the University’s most powerful yet under-utilised resource in enhancing student learning. Student Mentors provide accessible support to students through sharing experiences of adjusting, persevering, and succeeding as students of Victoria University. The Student Mentors are provided with ongoing development and support to perform as visible role models of progress and success for other students. In doing so, they enable learning in a non-threatening and supported way and students experience the university as an accessible and more familiar learning environment.

In addition to core programs, SSSL lecturers contribute to students’ learning experiences in a variety of innovative ways. For example, in 2016, SSSL facilitated an online international peer mentoring program with Chinese students using WeChat, as well as exploring WebX and Facebook as platforms for remote peer mentoring for domestic students.

This report focuses on the core business of SSSL, which consists of the five peer-mentoring program types outlined in the figure above. In 2016 these programs supported 1,500 students at all levels of study, in all academic colleges, and across 5 campuses. A staff of 98 casually employed Student Mentors and Student Rovers, trained, supervised, and continuously developed by the team of SSSL lecturers, made contact with students over 18,750 times throughout the year to provide them with support in a wide range of academic skills and practices, enhancing students’ experience of study at Victoria University by improving academic and social engagement outcomes.

This report outlines the benefits of SSSL programs - in terms of both academic results and student engagement - as well as giving an overview of the demographic features of users of the programs, and the evaluation of the programs by students. Finally, evaluation of the programs from the perspective of the Student Mentors who were engaged in running the programs is also included.
HIGHER RETENTION RATES AMONG STUDENTS ATTENDING SSSL PROGRAMS

A statistical analysis of results, enrolment and attendance data shows that students using SSSL programs have a higher retention rate than their peers. This applies to students using both college-based and learning commons-based programs. The analysis looked at students who were:

- domestic undergraduate students
- commencing in Semester 1 2016

Students who fit these categories and were still enrolled in Semester 1 2017 were counted as “retained”.

Programs were selected and grouped according to the nature of the available data. Similar data was available for PASS programs and Trident Study Space, so they were grouped together, and retention results were compared to peers enrolled in the same units but who did not attend academic support. Retention of students who attended the Student Writing Mentor Program (SWMP) was compared against the VU average for domestic students. This was because of the great diversity of units (more than 35) and courses (more than 100) in which SWMP attendees were enrolled, making the SWMP a more representative sample.

As is shown in the charts below, students who attended SSSL Peer Mentoring programs were retained at a rate 14% higher than the VU average.

*SOURCE: INFOVU. Domestic U/G commencing in 2016: n = 5,211.
WHAT ARE COLLEGE-BASED PROGRAMS?

SSSL lecturers and college academic staff work in close partnership to tailor and implement college-based peer mentoring programs that fit the specific needs of students in different learning areas.

Three types of college-based SSSL programs were offered during 2016:

- Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS)
- Study Spaces
- Peer Assisted Tutorials (PATs)
Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS)

Units for Which PASS was Available

- College of Business
  - BAO1101 Accounting for Decision Making*
  - BAO1107 Accounting Information Systems*
  - BEO1106 Business Statistics**
- College of Health & Biomedicine
  - HFB2120 Applied Pharmacology
  - RBM1103 Bioscience 1
  - RBM1518 Human Physiology 1
  - RBM1528 Human Physiology 2
- College of Law & Justice
  - BLO1105 Business Law*
- College of Sport & Exercise Science
  - RBM1174 Human Physiology*

*Offered in both Semesters 1&2. **Run in Study Space format.

Demographics

In 2016, 333 students attended PASS sessions for 14 units (counting each semester, including Business Statistics Study Space) - approximately 11% of all students enrolled in relevant units. Students from low-SES and non-English speaking backgrounds, as well as those born overseas, were enthusiastic uptakers of PASS. Students in each of these targeted demographic categories were more likely to attend PASS than not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PASS Attendees (n = 333)</th>
<th>Non-Attendees (n = 2,776)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low-SES</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English speaking background*</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born overseas**</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Domestic student, speaks LOTE at home, arrived in Australia within last decade.
**Domestic students only.

Results by Frequency of Attendance

Attendance at PASS sessions was associated with higher marks, with more frequent attendees (those attending six or more times) achieving the highest marks.

Student Feedback

"Loved it! Highly recommend to anyone, whether you are struggling or not." - BLO1105 Business Law

Students consistently gave PASS programs positive feedback and high scores on evaluation surveys.

"Attending PASS helped me..."*

- increased my understanding of the subject... 97%
- increased my understanding of the subject... 97%
- increased my confidence... 94%
- apply effective study strategies... 87%
- develop different ways of learning... 87%
- [was helpful overall]... 93%

*Based on 99 survey responses
The Trident program is specifically designed to provide support to first-year students in core Maths and Physics for Engineering units. A conveniently located Student Mentor-supported Trident Study Space is made regularly available every day throughout the semester for students in each unit. Student Mentors also offer support in Peer Assisted Tutorials, which are integrated into the Engineering curriculum. More than 1,100 Engineering first-years have benefited from the Trident program since its 2010 debut. During 2016, 128 students attended Trident Study Space sessions over 320 times.

Trident attendees were less likely than the majority of their peers to receive marks in the fail-low pass range of 0-59.

Attendees gave Trident Study Space consistently high ratings on evaluation surveys (below). You can also hear Trident Student Mentors explain the benefits of the program in a short self-produced promotional video.

"Attending Trident helped me..."*

- increased my understanding of the subject... 100%
- apply effective study strategies... 100%
- [was helpful overall]... 100%

*based on 36 survey responses from Trident participants

In 2016, students from low-SES backgrounds attended sessions at the Trident Study Space in high numbers. More than half of Trident students were from the first generation in their family at university. Women were represented among Trident attendees in equal proportion to non-attendees.

**UNITS ASSISTED THROUGH TRIDENT STUDY SPACE**

- NBC1101 Maths for Builders
- NBC1104 Structural Principles in Construction
- NEC2102 Solid Mechanics
- NEC2104 Engineering Surveying
- NEC2201 Introduction to Structural Engineering Design
- NEC2203 Hydraulics
- NEC2204 Highway Engineering
- NEC3202 Civil Design 1
- NEE2102 Computer Systems
- NEE2201 Linear Systems with MATLAB Applications
- NEE2203 Experimental Data Analysis
- NEF1101 Maths 1
- NEF1102 Physics 1
- NEF1103 Engineering and the Community
- NEF1201 Maths 2
- NEF1202 Physics 2
- NEF1205 Engineering Fundamentals
- NEF2101 Fluid Mechanics 1
- NEF2251 Fundamentals of Electrical & Electronic Engineering
- NEM2201 Thermodynamics 1
- NEM2202 Engineering Dynamics
- NEM3101 Engineering Analysis and Modelling
- NEM3202 Fluid Mechanics 2
- NEM3203 Stress Analysis
- NFP0102 Foundation Engineering Physics
- RCM1712 Mathematical Foundations 2

**KEY DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trident Attendees</th>
<th>Non-Attendees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low-SES</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First generation</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female students</td>
<td>0.2:1</td>
<td>0.2:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ratio to male)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Peer Assisted Tutorials (PATs) are designed to distribute the benefits of student peer mentoring to the greatest number of students by deploying Student Mentors within a traditional learning environment. PATs are normally-scheduled tutorials with the added presence of one or two Student Mentors working alongside the lecturer. In 2016 PATs were offered for four units. Around 300 students attended PATs during 2016.

**KEY DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS**

In 2016, PATs reached a large number of students from low-SES backgrounds - more than twice the number of students in non-PATs tutorials. The PATs program was also effective in reaching the 2% of students with a disability in relevant units.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PATs Attendees</th>
<th>Non-Attendees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low-SES*</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with a disability</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Domestic students only.

Peer Assisted Tutorials (PATs) are offered in both Semesters 1 & 2.

**STUDENT EVALUATION**

PATs received positive evaluations from a majority of evaluation respondents.

"Having a Student Mentor in my tutorials helped me..."*:

- [was helpful overall...] 100%
- approach to studies in other subjects... 94%
- increased my understanding of the subject... 92%
- develop different ways of learning... 91%
- apply effective study strategies... 81%

"It was good having a Student Mentor, good to know someone was there always wanting to help us."

- First-year Engineering student

* based on 21 survey responses in PATs participating tutorials, 2016
LEARNING COMMONS-BASED PROGRAMS

STUDENT MENTORS ASSISTED MORE THAN 800 STUDENTS IN THE LEARNING COMMONS DURING MORE THAN 15,500 VISITS.
STUDENT ROVERS

Student Rovers are employed to provide ‘just-in-time’ and ‘just-in-place’ learning support to other students in the University’s Library/Learning Commons at Footscray Park, St Albans, City Flinders and Footscray Nicholson campuses. The Student Rover program aims to increase the student-friendliness of the Learning Commons by facilitating social and educational engagement among students. Each day of semester, Student Rovers assist with hundreds of library, research, learning and technology-based queries.

In 2016 the total number of recorded consultations across all campuses was 14,185.

Most visits were of brief duration, with two-thirds of queries were resolved in three minutes or less; 89% in less than five minutes. However, Student Rovers frequently demonstrated their ability to help students deal with more complex queries, assisting in almost 1,600 visits that lasted 10 minutes or longer. Student Rovers assisted students from all academic colleges with a variety of types queries, as shown in the charts on the right.

EVALUATION

Evaluation surveys were received from 138 students, a sample that was representative of the spread of College enrolments of users of the program, which was estimated based on a sample of 2,453 program users (see bottom right). Students from the Colleges of Business, Health & Biomedicine, Arts, and Engineering & Science completed 85% of surveys. In keeping with previous Student Rover evaluation surveys, responses were overwhelmingly positive.

Student Rovers...*
...are friendly and make me feel welcome... 97%
...increase my confidence about using the Learning Commons... 96%
...help me to feel connected to Victoria University... 96%
...pass on useful skills to me... 96%

*Combined Agree and Strongly Agree responses on 214 surveys.
Student Writing Mentors are selected for their excellent academic writing skills and trained by SSSL lecturers to make academic writing assistance available five days a week at Learning Commons at Footscray Park, City Queen, City Flinders and St Albans. The Student Writing Mentor Program was utilised for a diverse group of students for a wide variety of different kinds of writing assistance.

The Student Writing Mentor Program is an academic support program that suits the needs of Victoria University’s diverse student body. Students who used the program much more likely to be born overseas and from a non-English speaking background (NESB) than students from the wider student cohort (see table below). The program was also critical in increasing the engagement as participation of students from low-socioeconomic status backgrounds.

**Comparative Demographics: SWMP v VU**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SWMP</th>
<th>VU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NESB***</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born OS**</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low SES**</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International students</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Generation HE**</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*HE onshore VU students only. **Domestic students only. ***Domestic students, migrated to Australia within last decade.

Students at all levels of study sought assistance from the Student Writing Mentors in 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Study</th>
<th>SWMP</th>
<th>VU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1ST. YR UG:</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ND. YR UG:</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3RD. YR UG:</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4TH. YR +UG:</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSTGRADUATE:</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE/VE:</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

99% of respondents described the SWMP as helpful/very helpful.

90% of respondents said they would probably/definitely return to the Writing Space.

“You guys are doing the best thing for students so I just want say thank you and keep it up!”

- 1st-year student, St. Albans

“Yes, strongly agree that Student Writing Mentors and Academic Support are very helpful to new students and second language students.”

- 2nd-year student, Footscray Park

*Based on the results of 71 evaluation surveys given to students who attended consultations at the Student Writing Mentor Program during 2016.
Students from all academic colleges attended the Student Writing Mentor Program. Attendance patterns across colleges, and the courses and units for which students most frequently sought assistance through the SWMP are outlined below, along with some additional information about the most frequently seen students at right.

### Courses and Units for Which SWMP Attendees Sought Assistance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Unique students</th>
<th>Visits</th>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law &amp; Justice</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering &amp; Science</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students enrolled in the Bachelor of Social Work ABSW (73 consultations) and Bachelor of Psychological Studies ABPA (53 consultations) were the most frequent attendees. Units for which Arts students most frequently sought assistance were ASS2004 (26 consultations), APP1013 Psychology 1B (16 consultations), and ASX1003 Foundations of Social Science Research (15 consultations).

Over 64% of the consultations from the College of Health & Biomedicine were attended by students enrolled in Bachelor of Nursing HBNB (204 consultations). Bachelor of Midwifery HBMW (28 consultations) and Bachelor of Health Science HBHL (22 consultations) follow. The two units that students most often sought assistance for were HNB1103 Professional Studies 1 (47 consultations) and HFB1111 Professional Practice 1 (27 consultations).

Among students from the College of Business, those enrolled in Bachelor of Business attended the most consultations (149, or 56%). The two units for which Business students most frequently sought assistance were BHO1171 Introduction To Marketing (32 consultations) and BMO1102 Management & Organisation Behaviour (24 consultations).

Nearly two thirds of the consultations attended by Law & Justice students were accounted for by students enrolled in Bachelor of Laws BLAW (61 consultations) and Bachelor of Laws (Graduate entry) BLGE (50 consultations). These students sought assistance with a wide variety of units, foremost among which were BLB1114 Legal Research Methods (43 consultations) and BLB1101 Australian Legal System in Context (27 consultations).

### Patterns of Attendance Frequency

Consistent with previous semesters, students used the Student Writing Mentor Program in a variety of ways. While two-thirds of visits were once-off, other students incorporated sessions with the Student Writing Mentors into their regular study routines.

- **Visited once**: 23%
- **2 or 3 visits**: 10%
- **4 or more visits**: 67%
STUDENT MENTOR EVALUATION

In 2016, 98 students worked as Student Mentors and Student Rovers. Student Mentors and Student Rovers are high achievers within their College cohort, and their personal and professional learning and development are integral parts of SSSL pedagogy. Students are invited to apply for Student Mentor and Student Rover positions, and successful candidates are trained, supervised, and provided with ongoing support and weekly development workshops by SSSL lecturers who focus on developing learning and mentoring practices as well as a strong team ethos and sense of belonging. In addition to the many personal and professional development benefits gained from participating in SSSL programs, Student Mentors and Rovers — who each work a set number of casual hours per week — are remunerated at a HEW 2.1 rate. This payment includes attendance by Student Mentors and Rovers at development workshops and participation in an online forum.

At the end of each semester Student Mentors and Student Rovers are given the opportunity to complete anonymous evaluation surveys regarding their experiences during the semester.

Evaluation surveys were returned by 30 Student Mentors across all programs, and 22 Student Rovers. Questions about student engagement and employability indicators were responded to on a 5-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree (as displayed below). In an open-ended question, Student Mentors and Rovers also wrote about the rewarding aspects of peer mentoring work. Some of their responses are shown to the right.

The best aspect of being a Student Mentor/Rover was:

“Being valued. I have feel more sense of belonging to the University because I am able to help other students by sharing with them my experience in both settling in a new environment and learning strategies for tests, exams.”

“Being able to give back/help other students out.”

“The ability to relearn while assisting others with the topics of the lectures. The interactions with others give a better appreciation of my weaknesses and strengths.”

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT*

Being a Student Mentor/Rover has...

... increased my friendship network 89%
... helped me to feel positive about my own studies 78%
... added to my sense of belonging at Victoria University 78%
... increased my level of access to academic staff in my course 78%

*Based on Agreed/Strongly Agreed responses to 15 evaluation surveys.

EMPLOYABILITY ATTRIBUTES*

As a result of being a Student Mentor/Rover, I think I’ve personally developed my:...

... ability to solve a variety of problems 90%
... awareness of my own strengths and weaknesses 89%
... verbal and written communication skills 89%
... self-confidence 89%
... interpersonal skills for building professional relationships 89%
... time management skills 89%
RESEARCH & ENGAGEMENT IN 2016.

EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT


PUBLICATIONS & CONFERENCES


Gill Best. Development of transferable skills in a low SES population through peer assisted study sessions. (poster w/Deanne H. Hryciw & Kathy Tangalakis), ACSME conference 2016.

Rhys Cooper. How the Western Front changed the Australian hero. The Social and Cultural Experience of WW1 Symposium, Melbourne, May 2016.


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