GET A GREAT START WITH PALS: Peer Advising Learning & Success

Andrew Beverly, Lynda Dioszegi & Ali Pavlicek
University of Michigan-Dearborn
INTRODUCTIONS

PRESENTERS:
Andrew Beverly, START Director
Lynda Dioszegi, START Assistant Director
Ali Pavliceck, Academic Advisor

PARTICIPANTS:
What do you hope to gain from this session?
Our Story
What is Academic Coaching
Outcomes for Peer Advisors
Outcomes for Student Participants
Training our Peer Advisors
Peer Advisor Evaluation Process
Looking to the Future
  - Academic Coaching
  - Training
  - Campus Collaborations
OUR STORY

Initial Idea
Peer Advisors assist with registration, advising forms, and other transactional processes

Fall 2019
Program launched; investigated academic coaching for probation and at-risk students to include as part of our advising practice

Winter 2018
Started planning, but lack of funding for the program pushed back the launch

Winter 2020
Found a good fit for Peer Advisors to take on the academic coaching role as peer academic success coaches; used Michigan Tech as an example of how peer coaching program could look:
mtu.edu/success/academic/support/coaches/
DEFINING ACADEMIC COACHING

COACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION CONSORTIUM
Fostering an individualized relationship with students that promotes their agency, self-understanding, growth, effectiveness, and persistence within the realm of education and across their lifespan.

PALS
Assisting students in identifying academic goals and supporting them with skill development or referring them to campus resources to achieve their goals.
OUTCOMES FOR PEER ADVISORS

BEING A PAL CAN PROVIDE THESE BENEFITS:

- Self-Awareness
- Communication & Interpersonal Skills
- Learning How to Receive Feedback & Improve
- Active Listening & Problem Solving Skills
- Collaboration & Expanded Network

*Outcomes are individual to PALS’ goals & experiences, as measured during the evaluation process each semester.*
“Whether I was doing one-on-one meetings or creating content, knowing that I was a part of a program that positively influences one’s college experience and learning environment made this role much more rewarding.”

- PALS Peer Advisor
PEER ADVISING
LEARNING & SUCCESS
OUTCOMES FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS - DATA

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WINTER 2020 DATA

- 22 students attended 1+ academic coaching session(s)
- Time Management & Study Skills were topics most commonly identified by students/advisors
- 4th & 5th weeks of the semester when students initially met with advisors
- 5th & 6th weeks of the semester when students initially met with PALS
- 13 students met with PALS three times during the semester
- 78% & 90% of PALS participants had a cumulative GPA of 2.0+ & term GPA of 2.0+
OUTCOMES FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS - APPROACH

EMPHASIS ON STUDENTS' INDIVIDUALIZED GOALS

*Ex: Defining success, GPA progress, Behavior changes, etc.*

Explanation of goals during first session with sustained support during follow-up sessions

[Academic Success Plan Tool]

Opportunities for continuous improvement of the tool with further implementation
OUTCOMES FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS - SELF-REPORT

CRASH COURSES - 

Workshops for standalone peer-to-peer learning opportunities

→ Quotes from Ticket Out the Door Activity:

- “After this presentation there [are] a lot of different strategies I can take with me and apply not just academically[,] but [in] other areas of my life.”

- “I [now] want to set aside time not just to take notes or do homework, but to really break down what I am learning.”

- “[The Crash Course] was extremely interesting! It gives me a better understanding about how we think about our thinking and its importance during the college experience”
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| Low event attendance  
Fewer appointments (requests & referrals) | Needed to establish virtual methods |

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| Recording Crash Courses / creating videos  
Explored texting | Marketing video  
Resource development  
Peer program collaborations |
PEER ADVISOR TRAINING

PEER MENTOR TRAINING

What is available

- Certified Peer Educator (CPE) Training
- College Reading and Learning Association

ACADEMIC COACHING TRAINING

What is available

- International Coaching Federation accredited training programs
  - Ex: Life Design Institute
- Coach-consult trainings
  - Ex: Make College Yours, LLC
- Individualized campus trainings
  - Ex: Michigan Tech
PALS TRAINING

Year One (W20):
- Training Handbook focusing on transactional aspects of peer advising
  - Campus policies, common forms / processes, office logistics, etc.
  - Some resources relevant to advising students

Year Two (F20-W21):
- Fall & Winter Retreats
  - Team building, program planning, content presentations, handbook
  - Ex: Motivational Interviewing co-presentation
- Bi-weekly team discussions
  - Informal case studies of recent appointments / reflections
- Article sharing
- Assigned resource development tasks
  - PALS enhance own knowledge by researching and creating tools for peers
- Individualized training goals
  - Ex: Education major reviewing chapters of Teaching Students How to Learn
PILOTED DURING 20-21

Beginning of F/W semester:
- Peer Advisors define two individualized goals

End of semester:
- Peer Advisors self-evaluate performance of job duties, NACE competency development, & progress toward goals
- PALS coordinator reviews evaluation sheets & adds comments / feedback
- Scheduled discussion

Highlights
- Introducing Peer Advisors to formal feedback process
- Encouraging self-reflection, intentional goal-setting, and growth in their roles
- Copy of completed Feedback / Goals sheets provided to Peer Advisors for future reference
PEER ADVISOR EVALUATION PROCESS

EXAMPLES:

**Job Duty / Responsibility:**
“Creating marketing material to promote PALs and our events.”

**Individual Goal (Summarized):**
Collaborate with CAPS to create a crash course about self-esteem and academic impacts (plus outlined steps toward goal).

**NACE Competency Areas (to be updated for 21-22):**
Critical Thinking / Problem Solving, Oral / Written Communications, Teamwork / Collaboration, IT Application, Leadership, Professionalism / Work Ethic, Career Management, Global / Intercultural Fluency
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<th>Self-Evaluation from this Area</th>
<th>Supervisor Feedback</th>
<th>Competencies Developed:</th>
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Activity

Follow remaining prompts on handout to brainstorm resources for your own peer coaching program.
LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

ACADEMIC COACHING

Increasing focus on peer academic coaching services:
- Marketing
- Training
- Programming

Exploring students’ needs and how PALS can meet those needs

Efforts to distinguish PALS from other services
LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

TRAINING

Identify low / no cost peer training opportunities with a focus on academic coaching OR continue to build our own

- Specific academic coaching training for peer programs not available as of recent searches

Considering ‘train-the-trainer’ approach for professional staff to complete training and present to PALS

Important elements for PALS trainings:

- Defining academic coaching - what it IS and what it IS NOT
- Transactional peer advising information still relevant
- PALS co-presenting whenever possible
- Integrating focused onboarding / mid-year trainings AND ongoing trainings
- Opportunities for PALS to refer back to training material and/or track progress
LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

CAMPUS COLLABORATIONS

- Maintaining connections to campus peer education programs for programming, student referrals, and cross-promotion

- Outreach to departments/offices with academic success initiatives
  - Ex: Library

- Social media opportunities

- Classroom Promotion & Faculty Partnerships

- Continued advisor referral
QUESTIONS?

CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

Andrew Beverly
beveram@umich.edu

Lynda Dioszegi
ldioszeg@umich.edu

Ali Pavlicek
alipav@umich.edu

PALS
umdearborn-pals@umich.edu