Moving from Advising to Mentoring: How Peer Advisors Contribute to Student Success

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Introduction

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Reflection

• Thinking back on your own college experience...was there a peer mentor/peer educator who had an impact on you?

• What kinds of things did they do or say that impacted your success?
Today, we will discuss:

• Research supporting Peer Mentoring
• Overview of Peer Advising at the University of Louisville
• COVID-19 impacts to the program
• Peer Advising → Peer Mentoring
• Reflections/Takeaways from Student Leaders
• Discussion/Sharing
Why Peer Mentoring?

“...the student’s peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years...”

Astin, 1993
Why Peer Mentoring?

In their groundbreaking work *How College Affects Students* (1991), Pascarella and Terenzini discuss the many influences that college and a peer relationship can have, including:

- Intellectual development
- Political, social, and religious values
- Academic and social self-concept
- Interpersonal skills
- Moral development
- General maturity
- Personal development
Peer Advising at UofL

• College of Arts & Sciences
• 15 student Peer Advisors
• Full-year commitment
• 3 main components:
  • Summer orientation advising
  • Teaching Assistant- First-Year Experience course
  • First-Year mentor
• Assist with other initiatives as needed
COVID-19 Impacts: Summer 2020-Present

• Eliminated summer component
  • Orientation moved online

• 2020 Training- 100% virtual
  • Asynchronous through Blackboard
  • Synchronous through Microsoft Teams

• 2021 Training- In-person/masked!
COVID-19 Impacts: Summer 2020-Present

• Fall 2020- Hybrid Gen 101: Arts & Sciences First-Year Experience course
  • PA role was physically present in the classroom, along with advisor/instructor
  • Virtual office hours

• Fall 2021- In-Person Gen 101: Arts & Sciences First-Year Experience course

• Mentoring
  • 2020-2021: 100% virtual
  • 2021-2022: Currently a mix of in-person and virtual
Advising → Mentoring

Old Program (pre-2018)
• Advised during summer orientation AND throughout academic year
• Mentoring included but not focused on
• Teaching role not as well-established

Current Program
• Advising only during Orientation
• More focus on mentoring role/active mentoring training
• Teaching role is extremely active and hands-on
Why the change?

• Advising Case Load Model
  • Advise students from orientation to graduation
  • Peer Advisors help facilitate conversation/relationship between student and advisor

• Impact on the student experience
  • Peer-to-peer connection
  • Morale boost
  • Transition guidance/assistance
  • Resource connection
  • Retention initiative
Peer Advisor Quote:

“I tried to always give students an actionable solution to a problem. If I didn’t know the answer, I made sure to connect them to a resource on campus or a person that could directly help them.”

DeAsia King
Advisor Quote:

“The voice of current student experience is invaluable in a first-year seminar course. Older students sharing their experiences helps the students in our class bond with our Peer Advisor. This allows the students to be more open and willing to share when they need help or advice.”

Kourtney Hall
Peer Advisor Notes

• Provide insight into the student experience
• Help advisors understand what is going on PRIOR to academic advising appointment
PA meeting #2

Today I held a meeting with [_____] to discuss her time in GEN 101. We first started talking about the topics from our last meeting, more specifically her CHEM 201 class. [_____] explained to me that she is frustrated with the class itself. She just complete her third exam and is not doing as well as she planned, however, after talking with her peers she learned that she is not alone. Part of this comes from not understanding the teaching style as well as not getting proper feedback. On the bright side, [_____] really loves all of her other classes, especially biology. I then asked her about GEN 101. She said that she really enjoys the class, and that even though she entered the University of Louisville with knowledge about all of her options and opportunities, she has gained some extra information. Her favorite assignment so far has been the my life story because it required her to really think about herself. I then proceeded to ask [_____] about her short-term and long-term goals. Her short term goal is to pass chemistry and her long term goal is to graduate knowing that she tried her best. Overall, the classes she is taking and plans on taking are overwhelming, but [_____] knows that she has all the resources to help her accomplish her path to success.
Note

PA Meeting 2:

is thinking about adding on a Neuroscience major and says his classes are going well. The only thing he is struggling with is the work and getting it in on time. His course grades are fine but could be higher if he got the work done. He says he does well on the exams but keeping track of the work that is due, especially online is making classes more difficult for him.
Student Leader Reflections & Impact
Student Learning Outcomes

As a result of participating in the Peer Advising program, students will...

- Gain an increased understanding of their leadership potential.
- Increase their knowledge of campus resources through personal involvement and interaction with campus partners.
- Enhance interpersonal skills (mentoring, advising, counseling, etc.) through training and interactions with students.
- Strengthen confidence and ability in presentation/facilitation skills.
- Serve as a role model for their peers.
- Network with UofL faculty, staff, and Peer Advising alumni to build connections for future endeavors.
Skills Assessment

Each year, Peer Advisors self report an increase in their skills in the following areas:

• Leadership
• Creativity
• Communication
• Listening
• Confidence
• Responsibility
• Flexibility
• Enthusiasm
• Initiative
Reflections- DeAsia King

Goals:
- Improve self-confidence and public speaking skills
- Be a good resource for her students, help others

Takeaways:
- More confidence
- Increased empathy
- Adaptability
Reflections - Rahaf Alrefai

Goals:
- To push herself outside of comfort zone
- Public speaking skills
- Help others

Takeaways:
- More comfortable talking to others/increased confidence
- Advocating for yourself is important - ask for help when you need it!
Takeaways

- Networking skills
- Resource knowledge
- Practical experience
- Great memories and friendships
Let’s Talk!

• How do you utilize Peers at your institution?  
  • Are they advisors, mentors, both?

• What are you taking away from today that you want to bring back to your teams?
Questions?

Thank you!

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