Learning From Each Other: Developing an Effective Mentoring Program for Students with Disabilities to Facilitate Access and Community

Jennifer Biggers, M.Ed
Ryan McCombs, M.A.
We ask you to join us in creating a culture that reflects…

**Access and Inclusion**

and

**Civility and Respect**

…this week and in all aspects of our organization.
Greetings

Jennifer Biggers, M.Ed (she/her)
Disability Specialist
University of California, Riverside

Ryan McCombs, M.A.
Director, Disability Access Center
Purdue University Fort Wayne
Hello from Ryan

Video of Ryan’s AHEAD Presentation
Objectives

• Participants will use presentation toolkit to implement a students with disabilities peer mentoring program and use presented strategies to monitor and measure student success.

• Participants will learn how to recruit and identify peer mentor candidates to support student mentees with disabilities as they navigate higher education.

• Participants will learn how to support and advise a peer mentoring program for students with disabilities that incorporates best peer mentoring practices that promote persistence, retention, and graduation.
Overview of Session

• Mentoring Based Models
• Overview of UC Riverside’s SDRC Peer Mentor Program
• Overview of Purdue Fort Wayne’s Disability Access Center Peer Mentor Program
• How to Create and Facilitate a Peer Mentor Program that works for your office
• Questions and Answers
Why Start a Peer Mentor Program?

• Holistic Experience
• Lived Experiences
• Sense of Belonging
• Fostering Connections
• Guided Resource

Research supports peer mentoring has a positive impact on the student experience (see last slide for references).
Mentoring Based Models

**Dyads:** One-on-One mentoring that creates strong relationships between mentors and mentees.

**eMentoring:** Mentoring in an electronic format (i.e. skype, email) when participants are not in the same location.

**Group Mentoring:** One mentor works with several mentees as a group. Added benefit of mentees gaining insight from each other. The Mentor/Mentee relationship is not as close.

**Multiple Mentoring:** Mentee has multiple mentors that provide different perspectives and expertise. Essentially a mentoring network.
Mentoring Based Models

**Peer Mentoring:** Mentor and Mentee are the same level and they mentor each other. Typically used for onboarding (i.e. incoming students, new hires).

**Reverse Mentoring:** Junior person mentors a more senior person.

**Team Mentoring:** Several mentors work as a team to mentor several mentees or a Mentor who works with several mentees as a team.

**Triad Mentoring:** A senior person mentoring two mentees OR A senior, Mid-level, and Junior person, with this type mentees get help with their goals as well as see how other work on their goals.
SDRC Peer Mentors and their advisors pose for a picture on UCR campus.
SDRC Peer Mentors serve as a student role model and resource for first year and transfer students with disabilities.

Peer Mentors work with the program’s advisor in improving their self and social awareness skills so they can support their mentee in understanding their own disability(ies) and familiarize themselves with the resources and services available on campus.

Peer Mentors have a 3.0 GPA and are generally third or fourth years at UCR.
Note: This data is from the first two years at Purdue West Lafayette.
Coordinator: DS Practitioner(s)

Senior Mentors: Mentors for a minimum of one academic year

Mentors: Students with disabilities with one year of experience at Purdue Fort Wayne

Mentees: Any student with a disability
  First-year student to Purdue
  Acquired disability
Creating Opportunities to Connect

- **Socials** (interpersonal connections and networking)
  *Game night, bowling, photo scavenger hunts*

- **Workshops** (personal, academic, and career skills)
  *Time management, resume development, and stress management*
### Where to start...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruitment</th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Monitoring</th>
<th>Next Steps</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify students with disabilities in good academic standing with the university and registered with your office.</td>
<td>Select a one-to two day period to conduct training focusing on:</td>
<td>Schedule once a month check-in with a mentors.</td>
<td>Identify potential lead mentors for subsequent years to conduct trainings or support new mentors.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Expectations</td>
<td>Review meeting logs periodically and follow up with mentors if necessary.</td>
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<td>• Campus resources</td>
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<td>• Active-listening</td>
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<td>• Role playing/real life scenarios</td>
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<td>In your first e-mail, outline training, commitment, and benefits of participating in a peer mentor program. In this email, you can include a questionnaire/form for students to complete.</td>
<td>Check in with campus partners to identify additional training.</td>
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<td>Check-in topics for monthly meetings:</td>
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<td>• Boundaries</td>
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<td>• Goal setting</td>
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<td>• Disabilities and functional limitations</td>
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<td>• Active listening</td>
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## Recruitment of Mentees

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<td>Identify opportunities where students are learning about school resources:</td>
<td>Review meeting logs to determine additional supports mentees may need.</td>
<td>If needed, provide necessary referrals to campus partners;</td>
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<td>• Orientation</td>
<td>Refer students to the peer mentor program throughout the year (form to</td>
<td>For developing leaders, direct students to programming opportunities (SWD</td>
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<td>• Tabling Events</td>
<td>sign up at any time) given current barriers.</td>
<td>led organizations on campus or the peer mentoring program).</td>
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<td>• Disability Services Welcome Meetings/Open House</td>
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<td>Other Methods:</td>
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<td>• Emails</td>
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<td>• Social Media</td>
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<td>• Flyers</td>
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Toolkit

Starting a Peer Mentor Program
Presentation Toolkit

The Student Voices
What UCR Students are Saying…

**Mentors**

“I have learned more about handling my own problems by directing others to services that can help them.”

“I have learned that there is great support and strength in relating to someone going through something similar to you.”

“I really benefited from the program. I can apply what I learned to other leadership roles/positions.”

**Mentees**

“my mentor has taught my to have confidence in myself and to be more independent…”

“[I’m] more comfortable in talking about my mental health.”

“[My mentor] has helped me keep a positive mindset during the pandemic”

“It’s nice to have a mentor who knows where you care coming from.”

“I improved my time management and the accountability really helps.”
What PUFW Students are Saying…

“One of my favorite things about the Peer Mentor Program is being a part of a positive, caring, and supportive environment. It is wonderful to be surrounded by those who empower you to be successful. I would recommend the Peer Mentor Program for any student with a disability, especially incoming freshmen. Coming together in this group shows that we are not alone, and others understand us.” –Emily (Mentee)

“I like connecting with others who have similar obstacles in life as me, even though we’re all grouped together and different, we come together and can relate to each other in different ways than I can with my other [non-disabled] friends. I also like helping others in the program with issues I may have already gone through” –Macy (Mentor)
References


Questions?
Session Evaluation

• Your feedback helps shape future programming.

• Thank you for attending!