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Snowden, Michael and Hardy, Tracey

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Peer mentorship: Yes! It does have a positive effect on student retention and academic success!

Dr Michael Snowden

&

Tracey Hardy

Background:

- Changing student profile
- Expectations
- Drive to increase retention
- Drive to enhance standards/performance
- Challenge: Breen et al 2001

Peer Mentoring Programme

- Third and First year HSW students invited to apply to participate in scheme
- Third year student acts as a mentor to first year
- Third year “mentored” by staff member
- Matched – age, gender, interests
- Mentor/mentee roles clarified
- One afternoon training/preparation provided

The study

- Case study:

Ethnographic approach

- Sample:

9 Dyads – comprising first and third year students

- Data collection:

Interview; journals; assessment and student survey data

Questions:

1. What are the effects of introducing peer mentorship on learning and assessment performance
2. What impact do social and cultural factors have upon the peer mentorship relationship
3. What are the institutional influences that impact upon peer mentorship

Findings

1. The learning experience and assessment:
 - Mentored students mean mark 63% (52%)
 - Mentors mean mark 66% (61%)
 - Mentors achieved a 0.8% higher VA score than those who did not act as a mentor
 - Nil attrition in both groups – (15%/5%)
 - 100% Student Satisfaction 100% (80%/90%)

Why?

- Reliability?
- Access to “inside knowledge”
- Early engagement
- Support
- Confidence and self belief
- Motivation

Findings

2. Key social and cultural factors influence the mentoring relationship
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Personality
 - Culture
 - Similarity/aggreableness

Findings:

3. The nature of the institution has a significant affect upon the success of mentoring
 - Time
 - Resources
 - Role

Implications/Recommendations:

1. Clear definition of roles
2. Selection/matching should take place
3. Training for both roles required
4. A contract “frames” the relationship
5. Tri partite model
6. Potential benefits highlighted to promote participation
7. PM to be firmly embedded within Institution/Course

References

- Breen, L. Drew, N. Pike, L. Pooley, J.A. Young, A. (2001) Evaluation of the School of Psychology Peer Mentoring Programme – Semester 1, 2000. *In Herriman, A Kulski, M.M. (eds) Expanding Horizons in Teaching and Learning*. Proceedings of the 10th Annual Teaching and Learning Forum, 7-9 February 2001. Perth: Curtin University of Technology.
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