

COLLEGE MENTORING PROGRAMS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More students from diverse racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds than ever before are entering college—a trend that has grown steadily since 2000. While this is a promising development, many of these students still struggle to stay enrolled and complete their degrees compared to their economically advantaged peers. College mentoring programs can help address this college persistence gap (Bettinger & Baker, 2011).

We know that research has demonstrated the important impacts of mentoring on a variety of outcomes (Eby & Dolan, 2015; Bettinger & Baker, 2011; Fox et al., 2010; CCSSE, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980). Mentoring enhances persistence and degree completion (Bettinger & Baker, 2011; Eby & Dolan, 2015); improves grades (Fox et al., 2010); encourages a feeling of connection and campus engagement (CCSSE, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980); and supports more equitable outcomes for traditionally underrepresented students (Crisp, 2009; Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Kram, 1988; Nora & Crisp, 2007). Mentoring programs often use multiple strategies at the same time, such as removing financial, emotional, or administrative barriers to graduation and using different kinds of mentors, with different levels of intensity and dosage.

While we know that college mentoring programs as a whole are impactful, we do not know how different features of the programs drive these impacts.

NORC at the University of Chicago partnered with ECMC Foundation to conduct a descriptive study of three college mentoring programs, College Crusade of Rhode Island (face-to-face), Beyond 12 (virtual), and One Million Degrees (hybrid), selected by the modality the mentors interact with students. This first-of-its-kind study explores how these modes may be affecting college persistence for students of color who are low-income and from marginalized communities. To do this, we used a mixed-methods exploratory design to describe program outcomes by delivery modality.



Our research yielded several important findings:

- Student persistence in two-year programs using virtual and hybrid delivery modes is associated with increased in persistence rates compared to similar students with data from the National Student Clearinghouse, and the virtual model is associated with substantial positive impacts on two-year degree program completion. The success of the virtual program is particularly relevant in light of COVID-19, which has necessitated more distance/remote learning and engagement and fewer opportunities for in-person support.
- Program staff and students report that a good relationship between mentor and mentee is vital to successful outcomes. Ideally, the mentor provides the mentee with the agency, support, and confidence to solve problems on their own so that they can succeed in college.
- The most effective programs are well funded, offer comprehensive supports, and maintain frequent, close communication with students.
- Developing a universally recognized definition of mentoring, established by understanding and replicating intervention models that yield the best outcomes, would assist programmatic staff in understanding critical elements that shape program features and affect outcomes.

It is important to note that we began this project before the COVID-19 global pandemic outbreak, at a time when multiple modalities of mentoring (face-to-face, virtual, hybrid) were possible. Similar to colleges and universities around the country that quickly moved to remote learning to stop the spread of COVID-19, many face-to-face and hybrid mentoring programs also shifted to operate fully online. The findings from this research are from data collected before the shelter-in-place order that began in mid-March 2020; however, findings from this study have implications not only while programs continue to operate virtually but also when programs are able to resume in-person services.



Other Resources from this Research

Study Report

NORC at the University of Chicago (2021). Study Report: College Mentoring Programs for Student Success.

https://www.norc.org/PDFs/Evaluating%20the%20Impact%20of%20Mentorship%20in%20College/College%20Mentoring%20Study%20Report_zip.pdf

Literature Scan

NORC at the University of Chicago (2020). Executive Summary of Literature Scan: Mentorship in College.

https://www.norc.org/PDFs/Evaluating%20the%20Impact%20of%20Mentorship%20in%20College/NOR%2020200747%20ECMC%20Executive%20Summary_12.2.20.pdf

NORC at the University of Chicago (2020). Literature Scan: Mentorship in College.

https://www.norc.org/PDFs/Evaluating%20the%20Impact%20of%20Mentorship%20in%20College/NOR%2020200747%20ECMC%20Education%20Report_12.2.20.pdf