MENTORSHIP IN COLLEGE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mentoring is widely supported by empirical research as a positive means for college success; it removes barriers to college completion by enhancing persistence (Bettinger & Baker, 2011), improving grades (Fox, Stevenson, Connelly, Duff, & Dunlop, 2010), promoting a greater feeling of connectivity and campus engagement (CCSSE, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980), and reducing transitional hardships (Bordes & Arredondo, 2005). This literature scan highlights research and organizations with established goals mirroring those stated above.

Research has found that college graduation rates fail to keep pace with the number of admissions. The National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) reported that six years after enrolling, almost 42 percent of all students nationally had not completed a postsecondary degree or were no longer attending school (Shapiro, Dundar, Huie, Wakhungu, Bhimdiwala, & Wilson, 2019). When accounting for race, ethnicity, or income, these numbers are even lower. The NSC reported that over 52 percent of black students and 43 percent of Hispanic students from the same cohort had not yet graduated, compared to 28 percent of white students (Shapiro et al., 2019). Additionally, a review of data from the National Center for Education Statistics, conducted by the Brookings Institution, found that the graduation rate for Pell Grant recipients was almost 8 percentage points lower than non-Pell recipients after six years (Kelchen, 2017). College mentoring is a way to promote more equitable outcomes for traditionally underrepresented communities in higher education.

Although mentoring's ability to address inequity, as well as barriers to access and completion of higher education, is generally agreed upon, there is less agreement on how to define "mentoring." There are many variations of mentee/mentor relationships, services provided, and mentoring methods. Critics argue that the lack of a standard definition may hinder practitioners' ability to replicate successful models or point to specific programmatic features that yield the best outcomes.

In many cases, mentoring programs will offer multiple supports, each aimed at further enhancing the student's overall experience by removing specific barriers. Supports can include financial aid, emotional support, assistance with administrative tasks, facilitation of peer connections and student engagement, and enhancement of social capital.

The dynamic between the mentor and mentee can be a crucial component of a successful mentoring relationship.

A SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIP IS WHEN THE MENTOR PROVIDES THE MENTEE WITH THE AGENCY AND CONFIDENCE TO INDEPENDENTLY SOLVE PROBLEMS AND ELEVATE THEIR OWN ACHIEVEMENT OR PRODUCTIVITY.

The established connection between the mentor and mentee is applied in many forms. The mentor may be a peer, near peer, counselor or coach, faculty member, employee, volunteer, or informal mentor found within the student's personal sphere. Additionally, mentors and mentees may be paired based on shared interests and/or demographics. Successful matches can enhance student engagement in school throughout the student's undergraduate experience.

Similar to the range of mentor types, there are different modes of engagement and a variety of settings. Modes may include face-to-face, within groups, virtual (also known as e-mentoring), or a combination of these modes. Settings may include on campus, off campus, and within the program's office building.

Research has shown that well-funded, high-touch/high-frequency programs that utilize wrap-around mentoring supports see significant positive outcomes, such as increased graduation rates (Scrivener, Weiss, Ratledge, Rudd, Sommo, Fresques, 2015). This is especially true in mentoring relationships where participants connect emotionally, or where mentors facilitate students' feelings of integration within their institution. Furthermore, programs that provide support beyond college enrollment by setting goals such as completion offer more significant long-term returns (Deming, 2017). There is, however, variation when it comes to mentoring dosage, duration, and intensity. Dosage and duration may vary in accordance with program requirements and mentees' individual needs.

While this literature scan provides an overview of existing research on mentoring programs, key gaps in the literature exist. First, many programs utilize multiple strategies simultaneously, and research findings tend to focus on the impact of the package of strategies, not the contribution of each one independently. Second, the literature lacks a common definition for mentoring as well as a widely adopted and utilized evaluation framework. Third, not many existing studies evaluate program efficacy based on dose and duration of the program treatment. Fourth, there is a lack of research pertaining to the amount of per-student funding that yields optimal results. Similarly, little is known about how program size may affect outcomes, limiting knowledge about the potential for program scalability. Finally, there is minimal research on virtual mentoring. This is a promising area for future research, considering the burgeoning prominence of technology within contemporary mentoring programs.

MENTORSHIP IN COLLEGE

ECMC Foundation | NORC at the University of Chicago