THE SIX ELEMENTS OF A CULTURE OF MENTORSHIP

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MENTOR COLLECTIVE

WHAT IS A CULTURE OF MENTORSHIP?

Mentorship is a widely celebrated and touted method of improving student success. With over five decades of research into its effectiveness and just as many years of practice and impact on students, there is no shortage of evidence that mentorship is one of the most promising and prolific practices in higher education (and beyond).

But how does one do mentorship well?

If you ask champions of mentorship what it looks like to achieve excellence, they will often cite a 'culture of mentorship' - something that permeates the organization at every level. While inspiring, the concept of culture needs to be more clearly defined if we are to develop and measure it successfully.

This framework sets out to do exactly that. By providing higher education practitioners with a grounding framework to define what a 'culture of mentorship' means, we can all pursue excellence in our practice.

METHODOLOGY

Mentor Collective analyzed the historical performance of over 200 mentorship programs in 2022-2023 to form this definition. We identified a subgroup of the top 10% that demonstrated high-performance characteristics, such as higher opt-in participation rates, participants self-reporting positive outcomes, and recognition by external entities. This assessment resulted in a set of commonly used practices and identified some less widely used yet promising practices associated with higher outcomes.

Grounded in a review of prevailing scholarly literature and research on mentorship practices (Collier, 2023; Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Lunsford, 2016), these characteristics were incorporated into a framework of excellence that other institutions can emulate. It was modeled after other cultural definitions published in higher education, including the Culture of Evidence framework (Culp & Dungy, 2012).

Strategic

Aligning Mentorship with Institutional Objectives

A strategic mentorship initiative does not stand alone; it should be connected to your institution's broader student success strategy. Mentorship should be a part of your overall student success plan and an integral part of achieving your student success goals.

Clearly Articulated Goals

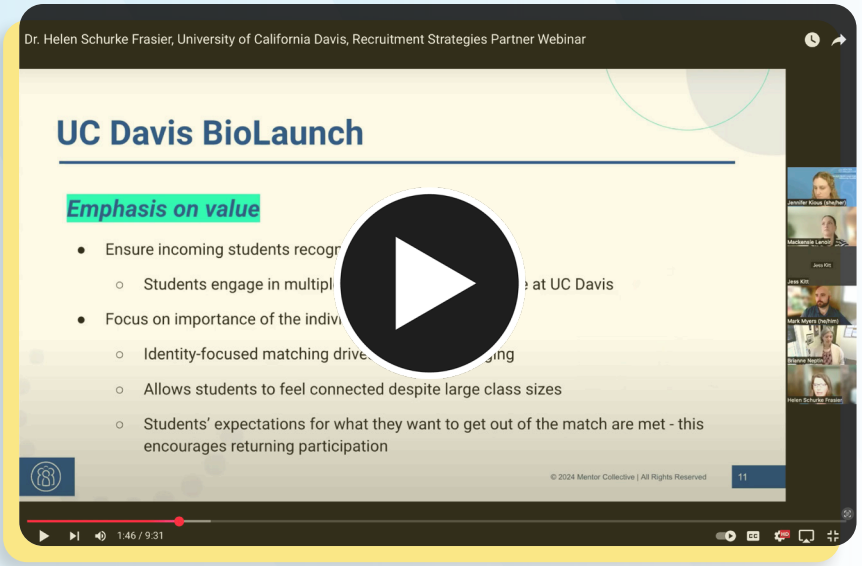
The first step is to identify specific goals for your mentorship program. Are you looking to drive help-seeking behavior? A sense of belonging? Increase academic achievement? Clearly articulating your goals for program outcomes will create a natural connection between these specific goals and the goals of your student success strategy.

With goals identified, an effective onboarding initiative can be devised to support them. Research has shown that a mentor training program that communicates program goals and expectations supports aligned mentor-mentee relationships (Treasure A.M., Hall S.M., Lesko I., Moore D., Sharan M., van Zaanen M., et al., 2022). Mentors and mentees are more likely to engage positively when they are aligned on the purpose of participating in your program.

Connection to Broader Student Success Strategy

Be intentional about creating a mentorship program and how it fits with other aspects of your institution's student success strategy. Creating a map of where mentorship intersects with other programs is a good start. Mentor champions who want to take this one step further can proactively contact other offices to see how the various programs can support one another. Centralize this information in one map, communicate with all stakeholders to get on the same page, and be purposeful in building mentorship across your institution. At the **University of California, Davis, they connected mentorship to student success** by ensuring their student population was aware of the value-added mentorship can be for their student experience.

"We really try to emphasize the value and the culture of mentoring at UC Davis. We want to ensure that all of our incoming students recognize what mentorship is. We also really work to emphasize that mentorship starts as an incoming student, that mentorship continues throughout their first year, that mentorship continues as they transition from being a mentee to being a mentor, and that mentorship continues when they engage with faculty, upper-division students, graduate students, post-docs, and research scientists at the University."



- Dr. Helen Schurke Frasier, Assistant Dean for Student Success Initiatives, University of California, Davis, College of Biological Sciences

Mentorship as Part of Strategic Plans

Integrating mentorship into institutional strategic goals is essential for ensuring that students receive comprehensive support throughout their academic journey. By aligning mentorship efforts with broader objectives, institutions can create a more cohesive and supportive environment for student success.

For example, University of North Carolina Greensboro ties mentorship into their accreditation process. Including mentorship as part of their quality enhancement plan links mentorship to their overall student success strategy and ensures institutional support for funding and resources.

Napa Valley College built an institutional strategic goal to engage students and assist in their progress towards educational and job training goals.

INITIATIVES	ACCOMPLISHMENTS
Enhance academic support programs and student support services to meet student needs and increase student success	• Implemented Mentor Collective Peer Coaching model to support first-year students and increase engagement • Implemented Kasaysayan Learning Community for Filipinx students • Contracted with TimelyMD-Telehealth to expand mental health support services for students by providing access to a 24/7 talk line • Distributed bi-monthly Transfer News

Appendix A: Napa Valley Strategic Plan 2021-2022 Progress Report. (November 2022).

2030

Goal 3

Inclusion, Wellness, and Student Support

Foster a diverse and inclusive student community that stimulates a strong sense of belonging and well-being.

Objective & Mentor Collective Alignment

- Early alert for academic success.
- Mentors can submit a flag if they think a student could benefit from additional support from the institution directly.
- Support framework that includes components in academic, health, well-being and student-life.
- Mentorship enables help-seeking behavior. Peer mentors are trained to alleviate mentee roadblocks by directing mentees to critical resources on campus.
- Peer mentoring programs for all first-year students at IUB.
- Through this expanded partnership, IUB will deliver on scalable, technology-enabled mentorship for all first-year students.

Metrics

6% first to second year retention difference for URM scholarship recipients for those who engaged with Mentor Collective than those who didn't.

Appendix B: Excerpt from the Indiana University & Mentor Collective webinar presentation (April 2024)

Well-Versed Leaders

A key component of effective mentorship is that leaders of the mentorship initiative strongly understand the institution's student success outcomes, such as retention and persistence, and the existing opportunity gaps. To enhance your knowledge, consider reviewing your institution's student success metrics through dashboards, participating in educational sessions, or engaging in discussions with your institutional effectiveness colleagues. This understanding will help ensure that your mentorship programs are tailored to meet the needs of your institution's targeted student populations.

MENTOR COLLECTIVE

Participant-Centered

Empowering Participants Through Personalized Support

A participant-centered approach entails making personalized support the cornerstone of the mentorship program. Mentorship can foster deeper connections and more meaningful relationships by focusing on each individual's unique experiences and needs. When participants receive support that resonates with their journey, they are more likely to thrive.

Identity-Consciousness & Belonging

Successful mentorship programs are both identity-conscious and inclusive. Research has found that matching mentors and mentees based on their identities, affinities, or personal experiences can significantly enhance the mentoring relationship's effectiveness (Atkins, K., Dougan, B.M., Dromgold-Sermen, M.S. et al, 2020; Human Resource Management International Digest, 2022).

Allowing participants to self-identify their preferences, hobbies, and demographics enhances their chances of being matched with an ideal partner, leading to a more meaningful relationship.

Language, messaging, and ongoing support are all part of a successful participant-centered approach. One example of this intentionality can be seen at Lehigh University. Their matching process takes into account multiple holistic elements that reflect participants in a comprehensive way, beyond just one facet of their identity like major choice. This provides their program coordinators with the opportunity to learn about the experiences of all participants in their program, ensuring they can properly support the individual needs and goals of both mentees and mentors. Additionally, they survey participants throughout the academic year to better understand changing needs and elevate appropriate resources.

Accessibility

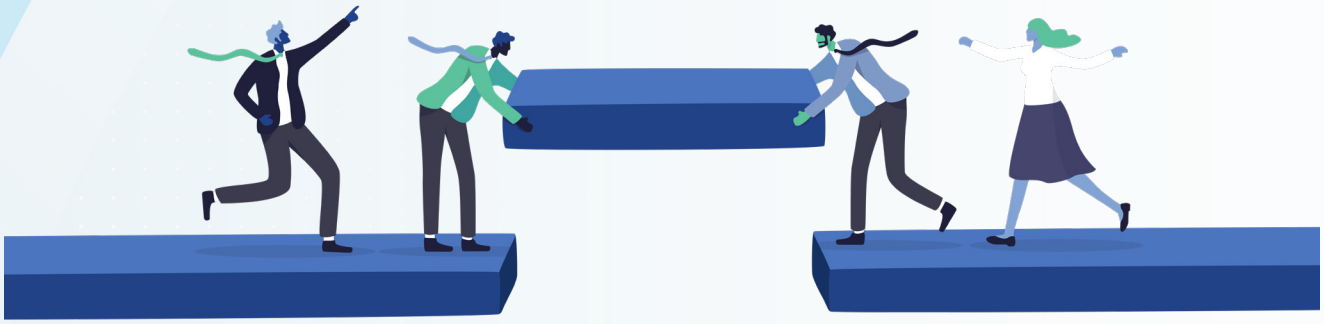
Mentorship should be accessible to participants regardless of means; you should never charge a participation fee. Programs should offer multiple methods of engagement, such as text, in-person, or group events, to accommodate ALL students' needs. It also involves meeting students where they are. For instance, if you aim to engage commuter students, consider setting up recruitment tables in the parking lot or leverage text-based messaging for adult learners.

Goal-Oriented Mentorship

Ensure participants' intentions are goal-based in their mentorship. You should ask mentees what they want from mentorship: Social connection? Help to navigate campus? Info about career options? By knowing and articulating the benefits of mentorship to all participating groups, you can ensure that their most pressing needs are met and the most significant barriers to their success are removed.

Effective goal setting allows mentees to develop skills, build confidence, and gain a sense of self-efficacy. Goal-based relationships also allow mentors to pass on their knowledge and experience while gaining new perspectives and personal satisfaction from contributing to their mentees' successes (Hill, S.E.M., Ward, W.L., Seay, A. et al., 2022). Research indicates that clear goal-setting within mentorship programs can significantly improve both the effectiveness of the mentorship and the satisfaction of mentors and mentees alike (American Psychological Association, 2012).

Participants should have access to resources such as discussion guides, conversation starters, briefings on essential information, and reflection exercises. These resources should include basic information about common topics such as financial literacy, professional skills, and health and wellness. For example, Lehigh University's Graduate Student Senate and Graduate Life Office host a Mentor Cocktail Hour to honor mentors who have gone above and beyond in supporting their mentees.



Mutually Beneficial

When mentees meet their goals and mentors are celebrated for their involvement, all participants benefit from the mentorship experience. This is crucial for fostering a culture of mentorship at your institution, ensuring that every participant feels they gained something valuable from the process.

Advertisements for your program should appeal to participants by highlighting the benefits of mentorship. One idea is to consider leveraging peers (other participants) to talk to potential participants at **events** in ways that relate well to their unique needs.

For example, host an in-person or virtual workshop about skill development (e.g., resume writing) and invite mentors to speak at the event. Highlight their voices on social media, celebrate their expertise, and thank them for sharing their knowledge and time. Invite mentees to attend the event, promoting the opportunity as a learning experience for a skill mentees have communicated is important for them to develop.

Visible

Integrating Mentorship into Every Aspect of Student Life

A culture of mentorship needs to be a visible and integrated aspect of the student experience. Students need to know about your mentorship initiative!

Branding

Integrate your mentorship branding into campus branding, vocabulary, and cultural elements. Ensure your phrasing, **program landing page**, logo, colors, promotional videos, and other marketing materials reflect your institution and appeal to your students. For example, University of California, Davis students are called "Aggies" and they've branded their mentorship program as the "First Year Aggies Connect" program, which is familiar to students.

Consider if your marketing is accessible to all students. Ensure the language used to market your program allows participants to feel like they belong. City University of New York, York College ensures their Spanish-speaking students receive promotional materials in Spanish, encourages peer-to-peer recruitment to build community, and collaborates with faculty and staff across their institution to ensure all participating students are well-supported.

Integration Into the Student Experience

In designing and promoting your mentorship program, you want to connect with students by seamlessly integrating your program into spaces (virtual or physical) where students are already paying attention. This approach allows your mentorship program to be a natural extension of the student experience rather than an isolated initiative. In addition, you can also better differentiate your mentorship program from other offerings at the institution.

Consider what events, organizations, courses, personnel, and institutional programming align with the mission of your mentorship program. This is where you can find opportunities for seamless

integration such as **promoting your program at Orientation**, adding a mentorship landing page on the school website, or incorporating sign-up links in the campus newsletter. By embedding your mentorship program within existing spaces and structures at your institution, you enhance the overall visibility of the program both for students and other campus stakeholders.

Integration Into Existing Programming

University of California, Davis College of Biological Sciences and the UC Davis Internship and Career Center partnered to create **BioLaunch**, which includes a variety of programming to support their life sciences students. The BioLaunch Mentor Collective program is seamlessly integrated with all other BioLaunch programming and promotion, ensuring students are aware of the program and its benefits.

Integration Into Onboarding & Orientation

Some institutions include mentorship as a program requirement - either as part of enrollment or as a way to complete community service. At University of North Carolina Greensboro, mentor training is included as a co-curricular course on students' transcripts. Another way to include mentorship in the student experience is to ensure all faculty and staff speak to the value of mentorship in their student interactions. At Clark Atlanta University, they run a faculty awareness campaign where details on the benefits of their mentorship program are sent out to all faculty, and faculty is encouraged to speak with students about the program.

Orientation is also a powerful way to ensure mentorship is a visible aspect of your institution's culture. At University of Rhode Island, deans from across the University speak with parents at orientation about the benefits of mentorship. They also take a personal approach where deans walk with parents and families to and from orientation sessions, chatting 1:1 about the importance of mentorship.

Augusta University's Jags4Jags program is part of the orientation curriculum. They add a mentorship opt-in to the enrollment checklist for all new students, host several events during orientation to drive program excitement, and run social media campaigns during orientation to engage students who are both on and off campus. Additionally, they turned their mentorship initiatives into a student-led club. The club advertises alongside every other student activity during orientation, empowering club members to promote, recruit, and engage participants.

Student Voice

Mentorship championed in the student's voice increases visibility. Peer-to-peer recruitment opportunities may include student-led marketing efforts, like live streaming and social media campaigns. Research has shown that student-generated content on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube can effectively capture other students' attention in higher education (Kemp, S., 2020).

Promotion in the Students' Voice

"We have orientation student coordinators go out and do a mini-mic series and ask people who are mentors or mentees what their experience is and why [others] should get involved. We're starting a Jags4Jags student organization as well, which will have a club structure to help this really be driven by students for students…I have a lot of really creative ideas but when I give them to my students, they're able to take them to the next level."

- Mark Myers, M.Ed., Director, New Student & Family Transitions, Augusta University

Resourced

Empowering Participants with the Right Resources

A resourced mentorship initiative is one where mentorship activities are adequately supported and funded and not siloed in a corner of the institution. Resources come in various forms, including training, funding, and staffing.

Trained & Supported Mentors

Support comes in many forms, such as mentor training, discussion guides and conversation starters, and administrative assistance for participants if needed. Effective mentor training should include elements on the foundation of mentorship, communication skills, and any specific expectations relevant to your program (Eby, L. T., Allen, T. D., Evans, S. C., Ng, T. W. H., & DuBois, D. L., 2008).

Thoroughly trained mentors can significantly impact your mentorship initiative, which is why the learning objectives for mentor training should encompass both foundational skills and more advanced techniques. This includes understanding program expectations and developing challenging skills such as setting healthy boundaries and actively listening to build trust. Mentors should be encouraged throughout their training to consider their mentees' lived experiences, collaboratively set tangible goals, and grow together as the mentorship relationship evolves.

In response to Mentor Collective's mentor training, participants spoke of how training impacted their mentorship:

"I feel much more confident in my ability to provide support to a mentee as a result of this training. It was very thorough and gave insights into how to foster a positive relationship with a mentee and share resources with them. I most appreciated how explicit this course was on setting boundaries and expectations with a mentee."

- Desiree F., Mentor, Lehman College, CUNY

"I really appreciated the information that was given during this course because I had no idea how much value mentors hold and I understand why people choose this path for wanting a mentor."

- Nevaeh W., Mentee, San Francisco State University

Research suggests that trained mentors have enhanced confidence in their mentoring abilities, leading to more effective and engaged mentoring relationships and a more positive experience for mentees (Lankau, M. J., & Scandura, T. A., 2022). A well-resourced mentorship initiative prioritizes quality training programs to ensure their initiative's success and sustainability.

You might also **pay your mentors** for their participation. **Leveraging paid student employees** as part of your mentorship initiative leads to improved mentor recruitment and higher mentorship expectations, as well as providing participants with career readiness opportunities (Reid, A., & Johnson, C., 2005; McClellan, G. S., Creager, K. L., & Savoca, M., 2018). Paid mentors gain the core and transferable skills necessary for professional success, as identified by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (2020). Mentors gain the skills outlined on the **Mentor Competency Rubric**, including professionalism, communication, leadership, teamwork, equity and inclusion, and technology.

One effective strategy to foster a culture of mentorship is to compensate students for spending time in high-traffic areas where potential participants gather. This ensures there are always students representing your mentorship initiative in that area, encouraging engagement and awareness of the mentorship opportunities provided at your institution.

Consistent Assistance

There should be regular check-ins with all participants, and participants actively seeking help must be promptly assisted. Offering encouragement, sharing reminders and resources, and celebrating wins based on seasonality ensures all participants feel consistently supported. A well-resourced mentorship initiative also means that the program has access to the necessary talent, technology, and resources. Well-supported mentors lead to successful mentorships and program confidence, encouraging mentees to sign up as mentors the following year.

"By having a framework that supports mentees and mentors throughout the entire year, we're able to create multiple touchpoints for our students and encourage our students to come back and offer the same benefits to future UC Davis students…we're really invested in the culture of mentoring and the culture of support and the culture of reciprocal support for future students."

- Dr. Helen Schurke Frasier, Assistant Dean for Student Success Initiatives, University of California, Davis, College of Biological Sciences

Sustainable Funding & Staffing

The program must be sustainable, with consistent funding models and staffing that allow for continuity beyond an individual champion, no matter how passionate that champion may be. During City University of New York's Lehman College's regular program management meetings, five institutional staff members, including data analysts, directors of advising, and instructional support, regularly collaborate on their mentorship initiative. These discussions, and those like them at institutions with mentorship programs nationwide, drive action, such as recruitment plans and new opportunities to engage with participants.

For a successful mentorship program, it's essential to define key roles essential for sustainability. These roles, illustrated in the accompanying graphic, highlight how each contributes to a well-functioning mentorship initiative. By clearly delineating responsibilities, organizations can foster collaboration across departments and enhance the overall effectiveness of mentorship efforts, leading to improved student outcomes.

KEY ROLES IN A SUCCESSFUL MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

	RESPONSIBILITIES	QUALIFICATIONS
Senior Sponsor	Sets goals/strategy, reviews metrics, alleviates obstacles, celebrates success.	Authority in resource allocations; able to articulate goals and assign resources.
Program Manager(s)	Makes program design decisions, manages any technology or event requirements, project manages to monitor timeline.	Understands program goals, has authority to make decisions for the institution, has time each week to monitor progress, proficient with technology.
Data Provider	Provides participant data lists (e.g., invitation lists, demographic files), integrates data sets.	Has access to source system for student data.
Participant Engagement Expert	Identifies ways to advertise and encourage recruitment and participation for program launch, consult/support efforts to increase recruitment or engagement.	Student-facing (or peer student) role with authority to send invitations, schedule events, etc. Can strategize on techniques for motivating students and has some skills related to social media, student programming, or marketing techniques.
Student Interventionist	Receives and responds to flags, monitors and acts on early assessment results.	Ability to interpret and escalate student issues; knows how to navigate institutional environment to find resources.
Data Enthusiast	Reviews and analyzes assessment results, conducts analyses for outcomes such as retention or academic progress.	Analysis skills, understanding of/access to other data sets for integrations.
Technical Contact	Sets up any technology systems or integrations.	Technical/systems knowledge and access.

Appendix C: Mentor Collective. (2025). Key roles in a successful mentorship program.

During City University of New York's Lehman College's regular program management meetings, five institutional staff members, including data analysts, directors of advising, and instructional support, regularly collaborate on their mentorship initiative. These conversations, and those like them at institutions with mentorship programs nationwide, drive action, such as recruitment plans and opportunities to engage with participants in new ways.

Breaking Down Institutional Silos

The central program coordinator at San Francisco State University enjoys very high levels of involvement from associate deans and other administrators at every college at the university. This cross-functional leadership allows for increased opportunities for students to engage in mentorship, allowing SF State to see high levels of success with recruitment and engagement.

"Our program is excellent at institutionalizing ourselves in terms of building intentional collaborations with campus partners that we know will support us in the long term. Those partnerships agree with the program's mission and are aligned with our values, which allows for increasing campus collaboration. [One] campus partner that we collaborated with has been the Institutional Research Department. They help us look at the data and reports to assess this year's impact compared to our first year. Under our Department of Academic Support and Learning Services, we partner with RAMP, a Reading, Advising, and Mentorship Program that services low-income, first-generation, and disabled students."

- Nonzenzele Aldonza Assistant Coordinator - First Generation Programs, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

Data-Informed

Turning Student Insights into Actionable Strategies

Data-informed mentorship means using and producing readily available, shared, and incorporated data at your institution that informs and supports the other five elements of the framework. It is critical to ensure your mentorship program thrives in the long run.

Get a Strong Start

Begin by consulting campus data to inform program design, strategy, and expectations. This will help determine who you invite when the program is offered and which supplemental resources and activities will have the most impact. Historical persistence data can make it easy to identify the participants who will benefit most from mentorship.

Retention and completion data can determine the most beneficial timing of your program. For example, first-year students may start strong but lose their excitement at the end of the year. Peer support during the summer after their first year is what those students need to stay motivated and return for a second year. Because effective mentorship is part of the broader student success ecosystem, consider reviewing data about using campus offices and participation in academic clubs or student organizations. If your goal is to maintain or increase these types of engagement, a mentor's encouragement and shared resources as part of a well-designed mentorship program can influence it.

Turning Insights Into Action

A mentorship strategy with an impact-first mindset means action will occur when the data suggests it should. Participants generate mentorship data. It isn't extracted or assumed; the students directly report it through their behaviors, survey responses, and conversations with their mentors or mentees. In an authentic culture of mentorship, when a participant takes the time to share actionable information, it is respected with a response.

For example, mentorship can be an excellent source of insight into students' sense of belonging. It isn't enough to simply tell students they belong; they must be shown that they belong. The simple fact that a mentorship program exists is an excellent start by showing them they are not alone.

They will know there is a space to hear their peers' experiences and share their own (Gopolan, 2023). Perceptions of belonging and other success factors, like academic self-efficacy, can change over time, so paying attention and reacting when the data becomes available is essential.

"Being able to track trends in participation, engagement, conversation topics, and flags during the year helps us understand the issues our students are facing and provide support as necessary to the mentors and the mentees. The real time tracking allows us to make shifts throughout the year to adapt the mentoring experience to the realities of the student experience."

- Rebecca Goldstein, Director of Student Affairs Assessment & Research, Florida Atlantic University

Action should be a team effort. Key stakeholders must be informed about and responsive to participants' needs and goals. These stakeholders may include colleagues from support offices such as financial aid, career services, or the wellness resource center. They possess the knowledge and resources to address student issues or enhance engagement opportunities by understanding the student experience.

The University of North Carolina Greensboro set a goal to reach an 85% first-to-second-year retention rate through various initiatives, including mentorship. By tracking progress within the mentorship program, they could iterate in real-time, ultimately leading to their success. Acting on data is beneficial for students (participant-centered). Still, it can also boost the visibility and potential for resources, leading to a virtuous cycle: As more students use these services, the departments offering them can make a compelling argument for more funding, allowing them to reach more students.

Impactful Storytelling

Data helps program coordinators understand their programs, monitor aggregate trends, respond to participant needs, and make necessary iterations. However, some of the best data isn't in numbers; individual stories, such as narratives or testimonials from mentors and mentees, communicate the profound impact of their participation on the overall student experience.

Florida Atlantic University launched a mentorship program aimed at improving persistence rates among specific populations, such as commuters and male-identifying students. In its first year, over 1,400 first-year and transfer students were matched with peer mentors, leading to higher retention rates for participants compared to their peers who did not engage in the program.

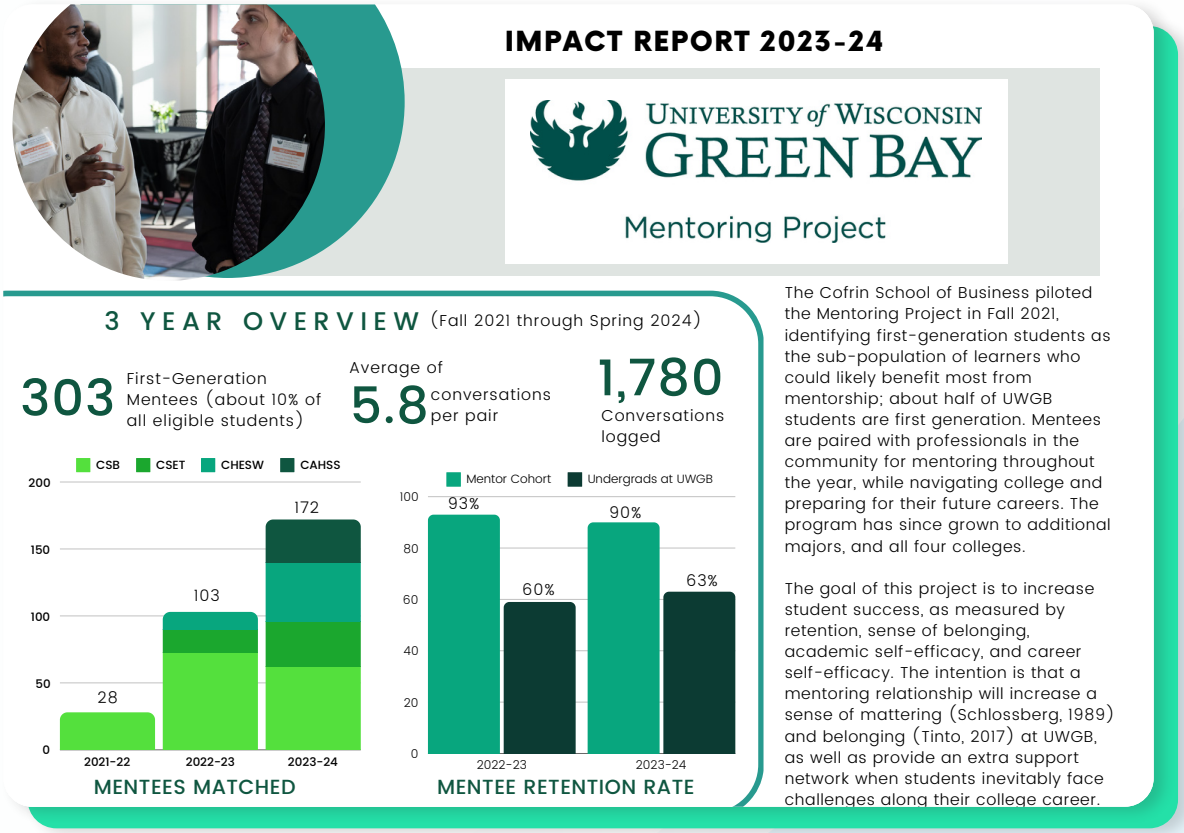
Reflecting on their experiences, an FAU mentor shared, "My biggest challenge in my first year of college was feeling like I was in a new world, and there were many times when I wished I had someone to just shoot a text to. I would love to be that person for someone else." Similarly, a mentee expressed, "As a first-generation student, I had numerous questions about the dos and don'ts. So having a mentor

guide me through my first semester is phenomenal. My mentor has been instrumental in me learning important details of campus life… I'm starting to feel well-equipped for my new school environment."

The University of Wisconsin-Green Bay's mentorship program redefines success for first-generation students by focusing on career readiness. In 2023-2024, 90% of students in the mentor cohort reenrolled, surpassing the 63% retention rate of undergraduates at the university. The data highlights the transformative impact of mentorship, but the true essence of this success story comes from the participants themselves. One mentee shared, "It is really nice to be able to have casual conversations with someone who went through the same program and is currently in the education field.

These personal accounts highlight the critical role of peer mentorship in fostering a supportive academic environment. Peer mentorship in college is especially effective because peers are often "the primary sources of support and assistance" in students' lives (Durante, 1995). This connection fosters supportive accountability and builds the social capital essential for student success. Sharing quotes from former mentees allows new students to identify commonalities in their experiences and find solutions from trusted sources, reinforcing a culture of community and support.

While most mentorship research focuses on the benefits for mentees, mentors also have much to gain from participation. They are supported by one another, build a sense of connection to the institution, and develop their leadership and listening skills (Gallo & Cownie, 2019).



Appendix C: UW-GB Mentoring Project Summer 2024 Impact Report.

Celebrated

Celebrating the Contributions of Mentors and Mentees

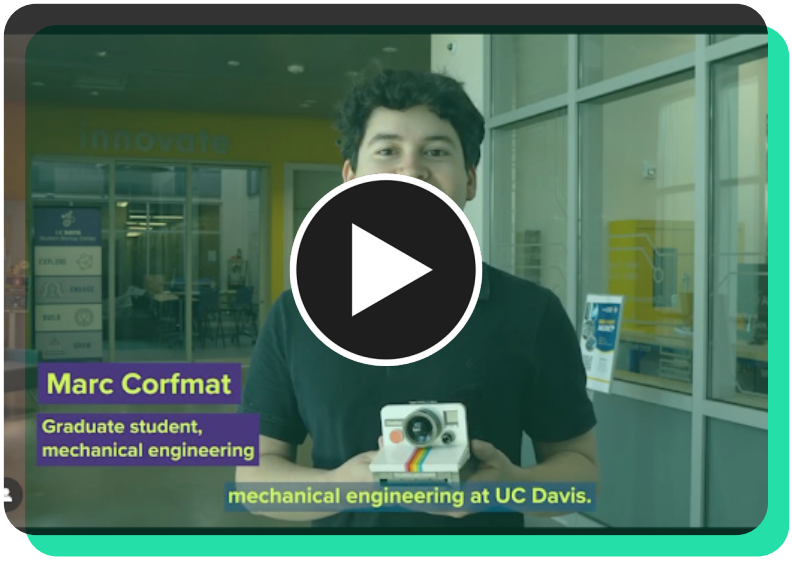
Celebrating mentorship is one of the most important parts of the six essentials. A successful initiative celebrates mentorship and champions it at all levels and across silos at the institution.

Engaged Leadership & Champions

Senior leaders must be aware of the mentorship opportunities and invested in the program. Ensure leaders at your institution engage in regular promotional activities, such as posting on social media, nominating students for awards and recognition, or adding agenda items to staff meetings. UC Davis Chancellor Gary S. May celebrated an outstanding graduate student on social media.

This kind of recognition fosters a culture of mentorship and demonstrates how engaged leadership champions student success.

Make sure that your provost office understands that they also need to elevate mentorship.



"Our Chancellor makes videos to celebrate mentorship. He asks students to talk about their mentorship experience - in particular, how mentorship helped them reach academic self-efficacy. This recognition has really promoted mentorship, encouraging students to understand the value of mentorship."

- Regina McCoy, Associate Vice Provost for Retention & Student Success University of North Carolina Greensboro.

FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

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MONDAY, MAR 11, 2024

I am delighted to share that Florida Atlantic's First Year Connections Mentoring Program has been selected as a 2024 Excellence Award honoree by NASPA, the national organization for Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education. The award honors student affairs practitioners who develop transformative, innovative and data-driven programs at the institutional level.

The First Year Connections Mentoring Program takes a proactive approach to student success by matching first-year and transfer students with peer, faculty or staff mentors at the start of their academic journey at Florida Atlantic. The program was recognized as a silver honoree for its achievements in the Commuter, Off-Campus, Military-Connected, Non-traditional and related category.

It is an honor to receive this award, which speaks to Florida Atlantic's collaborative and quantitative strategies to ensure student success. We are proud to be recognized by NASPA as a leader in student affairs and higher education. Thank you to our dedicated faculty and staff who contribute to the University's ongoing pursuit of excellence while empowering students to reach their full potential.

Recognition

Recognition of the efforts and successes of those involved with mentorship programs is an effective tool for rewarding and encouraging those who make these programs possible. This recognition could include professional development events, presentations at national conferences, submissions to external awards programs, or internal awards.

Appendix F: [Florida Atlantic University's President issues a letter celebrating the Division of Student Affairs being recognized by NASPA for their mentorship program].

Nina (Nee-Nah) Lyon-Bennett, PhD · 2nd

Student-Centered Higher Education Leader | 2023 HBCU Execu...

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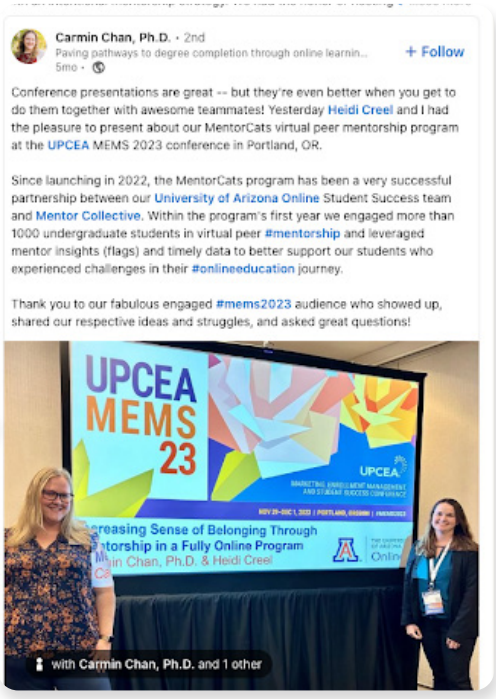
It was an honor & privilege to facilitate the panel discussion, "Making a Case for Peer-to-Peer Mentoring: A Strategy for Recruitment, Retention & Increased Graduation Rates at HBCUs" with my colleagues Dawn M. Nail, Ed.D. , Charmaine Troy, Ph.D. , and Karl Binns Jr., CNE and opening remarks from Jackson Boyar, co-founder & CEO of Mentor Collective at the 2023 Symposium for the Center of Excellence on Student Success & Workforce Development. Thank you colleagues for sharing your expertise & Virginia State University for hosting this year's conference. S. Janine Parker Woods, PhD, YOU ROCK!!!!

The 1890 Center for Excellence in Workforce Development & Student Success hosts a symposium each year, inviting thought leaders in mentorship to speak and recognize the accomplishments of their mentorship program (*Appendix G*).


Carmin Chan, Ph.D. · 2nd

Paving pathways to degree completion through online learnin...

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Conference presentations are great -- but they're even better when you get to do them together with awesome teammates! Yesterday Heidi Creel and I had the pleasure to present about our MentorCats virtual peer mentorship program at the UPCEA MEMS 2023 conference in Portland, OR.

Since launching in 2022, the MentorCats program has been a very successful partnership between our University of Arizona Online Student Success team and Mentor Collective. Within the program's first year we engaged more than 1000 undergraduate students in virtual peer #mentorship and leveraged mentor insights (flags) and timely data to better support our students who experienced challenges in their #onlineeducation journey.

Thank you to our fabulous engaged #mems2023 audience who showed up, shared our respective ideas and struggles, and asked great questions!

with Carmin Chan, Ph.D. and 1 other

The University of Arizona Online presents at the UPCEA annual conference about their mentorship model and outcomes. (*Appendix H*)

Mentor Recognition

It's important to celebrate and recognize mentors for their contributions. Here are several tailored strategies to achieve this, considering each institution's unique environment:

- Publicly appreciate and recognize the work of your mentors
- Allow mentees to express their gratitude and praise their mentors
- Host end-of-year events specifically designed to honor mentors' efforts
- Thank mentors for their time and dedication, inviting them to participate again
- Develop awards for year-end recognition ceremonies
- Provide networking opportunities with key campus leadership
- Award graduation cords to acknowledge mentors who consistently participated

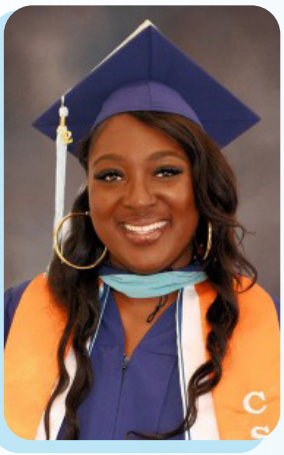
When mentors feel valued, they are more likely to continue their involvement, contributing to the stability and continuity of the mentorship program.

Encouraging mentor participation helps foster a positive and supportive program culture at your institution. When mentors are actively involved, it sets a precedent for a collaborative and enthusiastic community within your mentorship program.

Examples: Mentor Recognition

Brianne Neptin
Experiential Education Coordinator (Arts & Sciences), Center for Career & Experiential Education, University of Rhode Island

"For mentor engagement, we created merch bags for the mentors to ensure they understand they are appreciated. We know that they are taking on this extra responsibility on top of their day-to-day activities. We are leveraging our resources to ensure they know we see them. Also, I try to give feedback to the mentors when they send up a Flag. I make sure that I reach back out to them. Sometimes it's something simple like "Thanks for letting us know; we appreciate you as a mentor." But often, it's just the reinforcement that they're doing a good job."



Nonzenzele Aldonza
Assistant Coordinator - First Generation Programs, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

"To show our appreciation and support, we hosted a Mentor Recognition Celebration - we wanted to tell them, "Hey, we see you, we value you, and you're Appreciated." We were very intentional about the celebration. We had the Vice President come out and personally thank the students for their service in the program. Having a higher-level administrator, especially the VP, is a huge deal for many students. Many of them were excited, like, "Woah," and you know, "oo, ahh." We had about 50 students attend. Also, our mentors now have the opportunity to put their time as Broncos Navigator mentor on their co-curricular transcripts, which they can download at the end of the year.

The second way we uplifted our students was through our Mentor Appreciation newsletter. Mentors sometimes forget to take time for themselves and remember that they're students, too. It's easy for them to get wrapped up in dishing out information to their mentee and forget that they can also take it in: they're just as eligible for these programs and resources as their mentees."

Fostering a culture of mentorship is essential for driving student success and achieving organizational goals. The six key elements—strategic, participant-centered, visible, data-informed, resourced, and celebrated—form the foundation for this transformative culture. Mentorship enhances student retention, fosters a sense of belonging, and prepares graduates to be both career-ready and future-ready. By embracing these elements, institutions can empower individuals, build meaningful connections, and create a collaborative environment that ensures every learner excels in education and employment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mentor Collective would like to acknowledge the 'collective'—the many inspired (and inspiring) members of our Partner Community as well as the higher education community of scholars and practitioners at large. These individuals seek to serve their students better each day and are generous in their collaboration. This publication would not be possible without this thoughtful discourse and sharing of experiences and ideas.

A special thanks to these Mentor Collective partners, whose work is featured throughout this publication:

1890 Center for Excellence in Workforce Development & Student Success
Augusta University
Bay Path University
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
CUNY Lehman College
Georgia Institute of Technology
Florida Atlantic University
Indiana University
Napa Valley College
Pickens Technical College
San Francisco State University
University of Arizona, Online
University of California, Davis
University of North Carolina, Greensboro
University of Rhode Island
University of Wisconsin, Green Bay
University of Wisconsin, Superior

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Annemieke Rice, M.S., has spent her career in higher education, guiding institutions in their journey to use data and technology more effectively. In doing so, she has consulted with hundreds of institutions seeking to accelerate their practice of student success, learning assessment, and institutional effectiveness. She currently serves as the Vice President of Partner Success at Mentor Collective. During her career in higher education, Annemieke worked in academic advising, strategic enrollment management, accreditation, and assessment leadership. She has authored publications on the topics of equity-centered assessment and served as a speaker and consultant for the Center for First-generation Student Success. Annemieke holds a Masters in Applied Educational Psychology from Northeastern University and a Bachelors in Neuroscience & Journalism from Lehigh University.

Shannon LaCount, Ed.D., has 20 years of experience promoting academic and student development success in higher education as an Assistant Professor, Director of Learning Assessment, institutional effectiveness professional, and Vice President of Strategic Initiatives at the University of Minnesota Duluth, Anthology and Mentor Collective. Shannon earned an Ed.D. from the University of Minnesota and holds MA and BA degrees in Communication Sciences and Disorders from the State University of New York at Buffalo.

Jennifer Kious, Ed.M., has fifteen years of experience building innovative educational opportunities for all students. Her work has centered around developing greater equity in education, including creating K-16 course content, training educators, advocating for students at the state and national levels, developing community partnerships with schools in underserved communities, and building extracurricular opportunities based in whole student learning methodologies. Most recently, Jennifer designed Mentor Collective's e-learning curriculum, and now collaborates with partners to provide product education. Jennifer holds a Masters in Curriculum Design and Teaching from Boston University, and a Bachelors in Communication Sciences and English from University of Connecticut.

ABOUT THE COMPANY

About Mentor Collective
Mentor Collective is the premier mentorship provider across education and the workforce, backed by the most extensive dataset on mentorship impact. Our mission is to mobilize students into the workforce by harnessing the transformative power of mentorship—a solution for belonging, retention, and economic mobility—while addressing the gaps left by traditional policies, systems, and funding. With over 10 years of experience, Mentor Collective is uniquely equipped to dismantle institutional silos and align academia with corporate needs, ensuring that learners are not only 'career ready' but 'future ready.'

Our flexible mentorship infrastructure bridges the gap between student aspirations, employee goals, and organizational expectations, as demonstrated by our partnerships. We have established 180 partnerships across higher education, Fortune 100 companies, nonprofits, and professional associations. We've delivered over 1,400 unique mentorship programs and formed half a million mentoring relationships, with that number growing daily. Our scalable models integrate seamlessly into work-based learning, career services, and student success teams preparing students for real-world success through mentorship that promotes confidence, belonging, and access to opportunities.

We invite you to collaborate with us in this mission. Together, we can empower learners, strengthen talent pipelines, and create lasting impact across all industry sectors.

To learn more about how peer mentorship can level up your student success strategy, visit www.mentorcollective.org

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Napa Valley Strategic Plan 2021-2022 Progress Report. (November 2022).

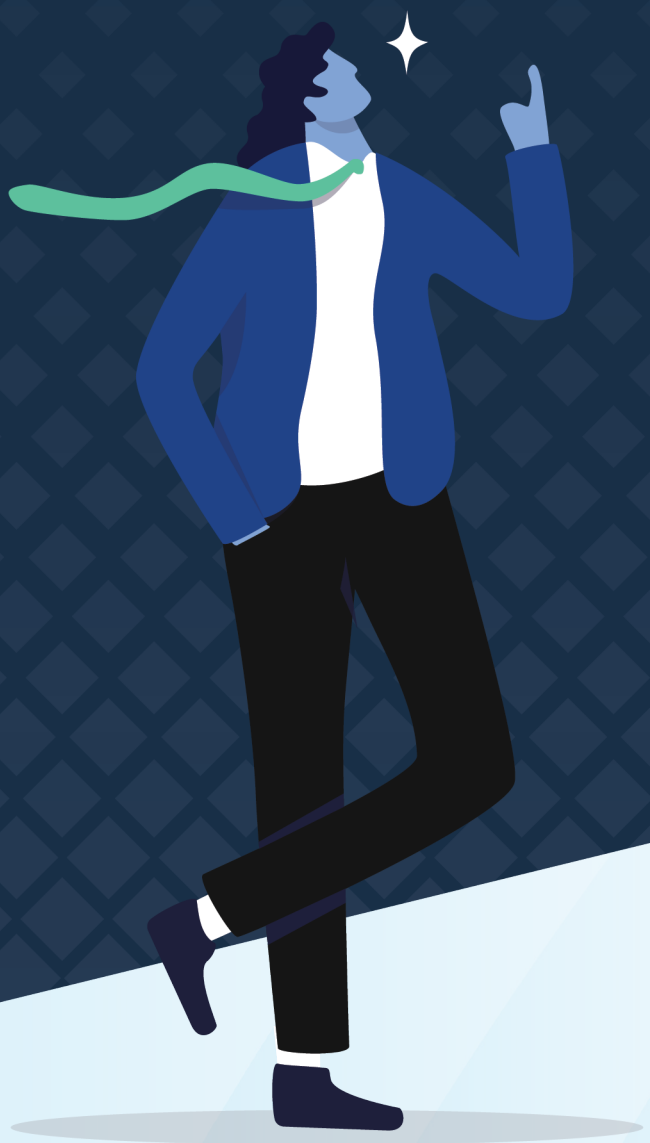
Appendix B: Excerpt from the Indiana University & Mentor Collective webinar presentation (April 2024).

Appendix C: Mentor Collective. (2025). Key roles in a successful mentorship program.

Appendix D: UW-GB Mentoring Project Summer 2024 Impact Report.

Appendix F: Florida Atlantic University's President issues a letter celebrating the Division of Student Affairs being recognized by NASPA for their mentorship program.

Appendix G: The 1890 Center for Excellence in Workforce Development & Student Success hosts a symposium each year, inviting thought leaders in mentorship to speak and recognize the accomplishments of their mentorship program.

Appendix H: The University of Arizona Online presents at the UPCEA annual conference about their mentorship model and outcomes.

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