



“Student success is the top key priority of this university. By understanding them [students] more, it helps to align our daily tasks to the bigger goal.” 2010-2011 Critical MASS Mentor

Program Design

The Office of the Dean of Students’ [Critical Mentoring and Support for Students](#) program (Critical MASS) strives to increase student success at The University of Iowa by connecting first-year students found responsible for violating the Code of Student Life (alcohol or drug violations) with a supportive staff or faculty member. These trained staff and faculty members use Motivational Interviewing principles, program expectations, campus resources, and referral process to aid their students. The Motivational Interviewing theoretical framework encourages the student to change their behavior and engage in positive opportunities for growth and development.

The Critical MASS program’s four goals are to:

- Provide a connection between referred students and a knowledgeable, caring faculty or staff member.
- Create a “check-in” system to increase accountability for personal behavior on the student’s part.
- Implement an early intervention system to facilitate referrals for academic and other support services.
- Reduce recidivism rates for alcohol or drug violations.

In order to meet those goals, a student (mentee) is paired with a staff or faculty member (mentor), whom they meet with an average of four times over a semester. During the one-on-one meetings, the mentee and mentor develop a relationship which focuses on: student engagement, healthy choices, academic success, examination of social situations from different perspectives, and student success at Iowa.

Assessment for the program is based on a mentee and mentor survey, meeting updates from the mentors, and calculation of recidivism rate. The Office of the Dean of Students will calculate a first-to-second year retention rate in September, 2011.

Student Demographics

133 students participated during the 2010-2011 school year. 132 students completed the program as recommended.

- Over 95% of the students were first-year students.
- 93 Male mentees/40 Female mentees
- 2.63 Average UI Spring GPA
- 2.77 Average Cumulative GPA
- 20 of the Critical MASS students enrolled in spring 2011 have not registered for fall 2011 courses as of 6/29/11.

Types of Violations

- 111 Incidents involved alcohol violations (~83%)
- 21 Incidents involved drugs violations (~16%)
- 1 Incidents involved Assault or Harassment (~1%)
- 96 Students received criminal citations (~72%)
- Location of the violations: 51 violations were off campus (~38%), 82 violations were on University property (~62%).

Recidivism (One goal of the Critical MASS program is to reduce repeat offenses of alcohol or drug violations.)

During the reporting period, 34 students had another alcohol or drug incident after assignment to the program and meeting with their mentor at least one time. Two of these 34 were suspended for repeat behavior. A 25.5% recidivism rate was calculated. *However, there is no benchmark in which to compare the rate due to two factors: expanded jurisdiction of the Code of Student Life to include off-campus jurisdiction and no pre-identified control group. A comparable recidivism rate will not be available until June 2012.* Two incidents involving two students will not be resolved until September, 2011, which may alter the final rate.

Mentors and Meetings

- Mentors met with mentees 500 times across the program for an average of four meetings per pairing, lasting an average of 42 minutes.
- 107 mentors volunteered from across campus, including but not limited to: UI Hospitals and Clinics, various academic colleges, graduate and undergraduate faculty members, UI research laboratories, Human Resources, Information Technology Services, Academic Affairs, and Student Life.
- 26 mentors volunteered to mentor a second student for the spring 2011 semester.
- Mentors were 64% female and 36% male.
- 12.24 years is the average length of UI employment for mentors.
- 50% of the mentors had daily or weekly contact with first-year students prior to Critical MASS. However, 30% of the mentors had no contact with first-year students.
- 77 mentors are returning for 2011-2012 academic year. (72% return rate for mentors)
- 67 new mentors have signed up for 2011-2012 academic year.
- Approximately 200 mentors will be needed for 2011-2012 based on the increased student enrollment for 2011-2012, and the number of faculty and staff members that are able to commit to only one semester.

Mentor Experience and Critical MASS Mentor Survey

The Critical MASS Mentor Experience Survey administered between April 26, 2011 and May 11, 2011 provided data for analysis. This survey aimed to better understand the mentor experience and assess what mentors learned from working with the Critical MASS program. Eighty-six of the 107 mentors completed the survey with an 80% response rate. The data demonstrated the need to slightly revise the training for new Critical MASS mentors and alter some of the structure in the program.

The following themes appeared as the mentors reflected on what they gained or learned from Critical MASS.

- Mentors reported learning more about campus resources:
 - "I learned more about the resources available to our students as well as more about the activities occurring on campus."
 - "I've learned more about the 'student services' side of student life at the UI."
- Mentors gained a new perspective on first-year students and their transition challenges:
 - "Appreciation of how strikingly different undergraduate life is here now from my own experience."
 - "I learned about how student think, their struggles, their growth, and the support they need to be successful."
- Mentors learned more about themselves through the mentoring process:
 - "I learned how to be patient with my mentee and listen and try to think of campus resources that would assist in the goals that she has for herself."

- Mentors valued making a difference in the life of a student:
 - “Able to give back and try to help someone learn from my experience. It was rewarding to get to know a young person and see his thought process change over the semester.”
- Mentors also reflected on what they learned from Critical MASS and how it would impact their daily work:
 - “Slow down, listen and act like a mentor to the many student employees who work in my Dept.”
 - “It could well have some effect on my teaching, as I think about what their lives are actually like.”
 - “It’ll inform how my colleagues and I communicate with students and help me feel more connected to the University’s education mission.”
 - “Critical MASS offers a model we could use in our college, on a smaller scale, as well as making sure upper level faculty understand more about new student transitions and resources to help.”

Mentee Experience and Critical MASS Mentee Questionnaire

The Critical Mentoring and Support for Students Questionnaire administered between March 22, 2011 and May 6, 2011 provided additional data for analysis. This questionnaire assessed what the mentees learned from the program and how the program could be improved. One hundred mentees completed the questionnaire after they completed the Critical MASS program, a 75.7% (100/132) response rate. The following statistics combine agree/strongly agree responses.

- **70% of the students learned one or more strategies to reduce underage alcohol consumption:**
 - “I learned about the importance of being involved on campus and having alternative activities to do on the weekend.”
 - “I learned different things about the negative effects of alcohol in people’s lives and that you don’t have to drink to have fun.”
- **73% of the students are less likely to engage in future violations of the Code of Student Life:**
 - “It’s not worth getting in all the trouble. There are too many consequences to your actions that you make.”
- **70% of the students understand the consequences of their violations related to their career goals:**
 - “We talked about this [career goals] a lot actually, and because we have similar interests he was able to give me much needed advice and direction on how to approach college and the career I am seeking.”
- **83% of the students learned more about campus resources:**
 - “I learned of people and places I can go to if I ever need help or have questions with anything.”
- **83% of the students value the relationship they have with their mentor:**
 - “My mentor treated me like an actual person and not just some kid that got in trouble. She taught me the importance of having a mentor and someone you can look up to and talk to.”
- **76% of the students will contact their mentor in the future if they need advice or someone to listen:**
 - The most important thing I learned from the mentoring relationship, “That there are great people here at the University of Iowa that I can go to if I need help.”
- **72% of the students were satisfied/highly satisfied with the Critical MASS program:**
 - [My mentor] was someone to talk to about what was going on and this helped me out a lot.”
 - We “planned to continue meeting even after the program.”
 - “Developing a good relationship with my mentor really made things easy and I can now contact her whenever I need guidance or someone to talk to.”
- **92 of the 100 students stated they planned on returning to the University of Iowa for fall 2011 semester.**
Reasons provided for not returning:
 - can’t afford out of state tuition
 - pregnancy
 - transferring to another institution or community college due to cost
 - academic dismissal
 - criminal probation
 - Iowa wasn’t a good fit

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- One mentee shared this about her mentor, “I was telling my roommate about my advisor [Mentor] and she was telling how she wished she had an advisor and she hasn’t ever been in trouble! Said she wished she had one due to how helpful and friendly and wonderful my advisor is!”

Revisions for 2011-2012 Academic Year based on mentor/mentee feedback:

- More intentional matching of mentees and mentors. Mentors and Mentees will complete a simple form to collect information about interests, hobbies, educational aspirations, etc.
- Provide mentees with a clear description of the program and program expectations, to better promote the benefits of the mentoring relationship.
- Provide more mentor support, including structured bi-weekly newsletters, Brown Bag Lunches, and access/knowledge of campus resources.
- Make the Critical MASS Mentee Questionnaire for the 2011-2012 required.
- Pilot group of mentors with second-year Masters and PhD students in Higher Education and Student Affairs.
- Pilot group of mentees that are upper-class students with alcohol or drug violations.
- Students who meet certain criteria (based on their incident and demonstrated commitment to [The IOWA Challenge](#)) will participate in fewer mentoring meetings in order to allow students with greater need access to mentors.

Conclusion

The Critical Mentoring and Student Support program demonstrated the positive connections between students and knowledgeable, caring faculty or staff members on campus. These connections developed as a result of dedicated mentors who feel strongly that “having a trusted mentor on campus can drastically change the experience of our students,” (2010-2011 Critical MASS Mentor). The mentors took the time to support the students through a check-in system that created accountability for personal behavior. The mentors utilized all aspects of Motivational Interviewing, with particular emphasis on expressing empathy (67% used it at every meeting), reflective listening (76% used it at every meeting), and clarifying discrepancies. The mentors were willing to build their own professional skills by investing in practicing and using Motivational Interviewing.

Mentor updates allowed the Office of the Dean of Students to respond to mentor needs by sharing additional campus resources, consultation, and ideas for supporting behavior change. The updates also helped to educate other mentors on potential conversation topics and ways to address peer pressure, legal concerns, and transition issues. The most frequent referrals as summarized in the meeting updates included: Academic Advising Center, Financial Aid, Student Health Service, Student Legal Services, and faculty members or teaching assistants. Critical MASS mentors were able to assist their mentees in navigating a complex university system in order to connect the students in meaningful ways to appropriate resources. The referrals served as an early intervention network for students that were typically experiencing crisis.

The Critical Mentoring and Student Support Program will continue 2011-2012 with the support of the Office of the Dean of Students. Intentional matching of mentors and mentees should produce stronger mentoring relationships and may facilitate faster positive student behavior change. Additional training for the mentors on Motivational Interviewing techniques, campus resources, and on-going discussions with mentors should enhance the support network for mentors and mentees. This quotation from a mentee summarizes many of the comments from the students, “I wish I could have met my advisor before I got my ticket.” These volunteer mentors have made a difference in the lives of their mentees, in ways that are not always measurable and help to create a stronger connection to The University of Iowa for participants in the program.