



*"I love to hear perspectives from students in all different areas. The more I deal with students on a day-to-day basis the more I understand how I can best serve them through my career development program. I also know what it is like to not have a mentor as a student and I am happy that I could provide guidance to someone in a mentor capacity."*

2013-2014 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 students found responsible for violating the Code of Student Life (alcohol or drug violations) with a supportive staff, faculty member, or graduate student. These trained staff and faculty members use Motivational Interviewing principles, program expectations, campus resources, and a 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 the program goals, a student (mentee) is paired with a staff, faculty member, or graduate student (mentor), whom they meet with an average of four times during a semester. During the one-on-one meetings, the mentee and mentor develop a relationship that focuses on: student engagement, healthy choices, academic success, examination of social situations from different perspectives, and student success at Iowa.

Personalized matching is used to pair mentors and mentees. Mentors and mentees completed interest and preference forms and were matched based on personal, academic, or professional interests. Intentional matching enabled the mentor and mentee to have something in common when they met for the first time.

Assessment for the program is based on a mentee and mentor survey, meeting updates from the mentors, and calculation of the recidivism rate.

## Student Demographics

121 students were assigned to Critical MASS and 108 students completed the program during the 2013-2014 year.

- Over 66% of the students were first-year students, the rest ranged from sophomores to seniors.
- 73 Male mentees/35 Female mentees
- 2.79 Average UI Fall 2013 GPA
- 2.29 Average UI Spring 2014 GPA
- 2.73 Average Cumulative GPA
- 15 of the Critical MASS students enrolled in spring 2014 have not registered for fall 2014 courses as of 07.17.14

## Types of Violations

- 96 involved alcohol violations (~89%)
- 8 involved drugs violations (~7%)
- 1 involved drugs & alcohol violations (~1%)
- 75 Students received criminal citations (~69%)
- Locations of the violations:
  - 55 were off campus (~51%),
  - 53 were on University property (~49%)

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

During the reporting period, 15 students had another alcohol or drug incident after assignment to the Critical MASS program and meeting with their mentor at least one time. *A 14% recidivism rate was calculated for 2013-2014.* During the 2012-2013 academic year, 26 students repeated their behavior for a 22% recidivism rate.

### **Mentors and Meetings**

- Mentors met with mentees 446 times across the program for an average of four meetings per pairing.
- 168 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.
- 113 mentors were utilized with 19 mentors matched with a second mentee in the spring semester (based on personalized matching).
- Some mentors were not utilized based on personalized matching with students.
- Mentors were approximately 68% female and 32% male.
- 7 years is the average length of UI employment for mentors.
- 55 new mentors volunteered.

### **Mentor Experience and Critical MASS Mentor Questionnaire**

The Critical MASS mentor evaluation aimed to better understand the mentor experience and assess what mentors learned from working with the Critical MASS program. There was a 94% response rate for the 2013-2014 academic year.

Mentors reflected on what they gained or learned from Critical MASS: new perspectives on first-year students and their transition challenges, more about campus resources, the value of listening, and an appreciation for mentoring and the role of Motivational Interviewing.

Mentors reported that as a result of their participation in the program, the most important things they gained in their mentor relationship were:

- Reconnecting with students (28%)
- Motivational Interviewing Skills (23%)
- An understanding of student development (19.5%)
- Contributions to their own professional development (16%)
- A greater understanding of the environment surrounding alcohol and drug use among college students (8.5%)
- Other (5%): insight into the range of student problems and needs that, but for this program, might go overlooked; satisfaction of helping someone

Below are a few comments mentors shared regarding their experience in Critical MASS:

- “Each student you encounter is different. Some are, due to their particular violation, are already well underway in counseling or other interventions. This will, on one hand, make things easier in that you are less likely to encounter resistance but it will be harder in that you won't always know how much help a student needs, or how well-versed they are at playing the game. In those instances, it's probably better to learn what they've already been through and just support that continued growth and instead find ways in which you, as the individual mentor, can assist them in continuing that path.”
- “Enjoy the 'aha' moments with your students.”
- “You won't necessarily know at the time whether or how you may have helped your mentee and that's OK.”

### **Mentee Experience and Critical MASS Mentee Questionnaire**

The Critical Mentoring and Support for Students Questionnaire administered after the student completed the required number of meetings provided additional data for analysis. This questionnaire assessed what the mentees learned from the program and how the program could be improved. There was a 96% response rate.

The following statistics combine agree/strongly agree responses regarding students' experiences as a result of their Critical MASS participation:

- 94% of the students are less likely to engage in future violations of the Code of Student Life
- 80% of the students are more likely to continue their education at the University of Iowa
- 96% of the students understand the consequences of their violations related to their career goals
- 91% of the students learned more about campus resources
- 86% of the students learned strategies to reduce underage alcohol consumption and/or substance abuse
- 84% of the students learned one or more strategies to deflect peer pressure to use alcohol or drugs

The following demonstrates the benefits students gained from having a mentor in the Critical MASS Program:

- 96% of the students benefited from having a mentor that had their best interests in mind
- 97% of the students benefited from having a mentor that they could be honest with about their experience
- 98% of the students benefited from having a mentor that they could trust
- 95% of the students benefited from having a mentor that was non-judgmental

93 of the 95 students responding stated they planned on returning to the University of Iowa. Reasons provided for not returning:

- Personal issues
- Transferring to another institution or community college

#### **The IOWA Challenge:**

- 89% of students stated they talked with their mentor about the pillars of The IOWA Challenge.
- The most common pillars discussed were Excel, Choose, and Engage.

#### **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 about student success. 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, reflective listening, and open-ended questions. 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 common referrals reported by mentors were to student organizations or activities, Academic Advising Center, Pomerantz Career Center, and University Counseling Service. 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 during the 2014-2015 academic year with the support of the Office of the Dean of Students. Additional training on Motivational Interviewing techniques, campus resources, and judicial procedures were requested by mentors and will enhance the support network for mentors and mentees. This quotation from a mentee summarizes many of the comments from the students, "I learned that we will not always know where we will end up, but that with the help of others and the resources around us, we can get to where we are meant to be."