



"I have really enjoyed working with undergraduates and supporting them in reaching their goals. I think Critical MASS may be the impetus they need to take their schoolwork seriously and take responsibility for their actions. This program really works."

2012-2013 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 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.

Personalized matching was once again used during the 2012-2013 academic year. Mentors and mentees completed interest forms and were matched based on personal, academic, or professional interests. Intentional matching allowed for 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 recidivism rate.

Student Demographics

170 students participated and completed the program during the 2012-2013 school year.

- Over 60% of the students were first-year students, the rest ranged from sophomores to seniors.
- 132 Male mentees/42 Female mentees
- 2.65 Average UI Spring GPA
- 2.66 Average Cumulative GPA
- 28 of the Critical MASS students enrolled in spring 2013 have not registered for fall 2013 courses as of 08.06.13

Types of Violations

- 134 involved alcohol violations (~78%)
- 28 involved drugs violations (~16%)

- 1 involved drugs & alcohol violations (~0.6%)
- 141 Students received criminal citations (~83%)
- Location of the violations:
 - 79 were off campus (~46%),
 - 89 were on University property (~54%)

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

During the reporting period, 26 students had another alcohol or drug incident after assignment to the Critical MASS program and meeting with their mentor at least one time. *A 22% recidivism rate was calculated for 2012-2013.* During the 2011-2012 academic year, 39 students repeated their behavior for a 23.7% recidivism rate.

Mentors and Meetings

- Mentors met with mentees 692 times across the program for an average of four meetings per pairing.
- 193 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.
- 168 mentors were utilized with 7 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 63% female and 36% male.
- 18 years is the average length of UI employment for mentors.
- 80 mentors are returning from the 2010-2011 academic year. (72% return rate for mentors)
- 134 new mentors volunteered.
- Approximately 250 mentors will be needed for 2013-2014 academic year based on the expansion of the program and some mentors taking a semester away from the program.

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 65% response rate for the 2012-2013 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.

- “I was reminded just how difficult it is for students to make the transition from high school, living at home with their parents, to college, where they are often on their own for the first time. I think that this is a really valuable program, in that it provides a much needed outlet for students who are transitioning to talk about things that they may be struggling with but not feel comfortable talking to their peers about. I think that it really makes a difference to these kids to know that there are people out there that will help them if they just tell them how they can do so.”
- “I've gained more experience in motivational interviewing and have also become more intentional in trying to relate to a student's situation. It's also been a wonderful way to stay connected with staff from different departments and keep up to date on the great programming offered by other divisions of student life (for all students, not just my mentee).”

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 98% response rate. The following statistics combine agree/strongly agree responses.

- 92% of the students are less likely to engage in future violations of the Code of Student Life
- 90% of the students understand the consequences of their violations related to their career goals
- 84% of the students learned more about campus resources
- 79% of the students learned one or more strategies to reduce underage alcohol consumption
- 98% of the students stated they had at least one thing in common with their mentor (based on the matching form they completed)
- 90% of the students value the relationship they have with their mentor
- 90% of the students benefited from an objective listener who gave me a new viewpoint on my situation
- 83% of the students will contact their mentor in the future if they need advice or someone to listen
- 83% of the students stated they planned to stay in contact with their mentor in the fall 2012 semester
- 84% of the students were satisfied/highly satisfied with the Critical MASS program
- 157 of the 167 students stated they planned on returning to the University of Iowa for fall 2013 semester.
Reasons provided for not returning:
 - Money issues
 - Personal issues
 - Transferring to another institution or community college
 - Transferring due to change in major
 - Academic challenges

The IOWA Challenge:

- 92% 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 (63% used it at every meeting), reflective listening (77% used it at every meeting), and open-ended questions (81% used it at every meeting). 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 and Wellness, 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 during the 2013-2014 academic year with the support of the Office of the Dean of Students. 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 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."