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2011-2012 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 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, 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.

For the 2011-2012 academic year, a pilot with graduate students that had been at the University for at least one year was conducted. The mentees who had graduate student mentors had strong relationships and made quick connections with their mentor. Personalized matching was used during the 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

164 students participated and completed the program during the 2010-2011 school year.

- Over 60% of the students were first-year students, the rest ranged from sophomores to seniors.
- 122 Male mentees/42 Female mentees
- 2.67 Average UI Spring GPA
- 2.76 Average Cumulative GPA
- 25 of the Critical MASS students enrolled in spring 2012 have not registered for fall 2012 courses as of 6/27/12.

Types of Violations

- 140 involved alcohol violations (~85%)
- 21 involved drugs violations (~13%)
- 3 involved drugs & alcohol violations (~2%)
- 141 Students received criminal citations (~85%)
- Location of the violations:
 - 91 were off campus (~55%),
 - 74 were on University property (~45%)

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

During the reporting period, 39 students had another alcohol or drug incident after assignment to the Critical MASS program and meeting with their mentor at least one time. A 23.7% recidivism rate was calculated for 2011-2012. During the 2010-2011 academic year, 34 students repeated their behavior for a 25.5% recidivism rate.

Mentors and Meetings

- Mentors met with mentees 638 times across the program for an average of four meetings per pairing, lasting an average of 48 minutes each.
- 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.
- 141 mentors were utilized, with 23 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 65% female and 35% male.
- 11 years is the average length of UI employment for mentors.
- Mentors had the following employment status at Iowa:
 - P&S- 77%, Merit-1%, Faculty-10%, Graduate Students-11%
- 71 mentors are returning from the 2010-2011 academic year. (72% return rate for mentors)
- 122 new mentors volunteered, which included 17 Graduate Assistants as part of a pilot group.
- Approximately 250-300 mentors will be needed for 2012-2013 based on the expansion of the program and some mentors taking a semester away from the program.

Mentor Experience and Critical MASS Mentor Survey

The Critical MASS Mentor Experience Survey administered between May 18, 2012 and June 6, 2012 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. With a 62% 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.

Mentors reflected on what they gained or learned from Critical MASS: more about campus resources, new perspectives on first-year students and their transition challenges, mentors learned more about themselves through mentoring, mentors valued making a difference in the life of a student.

- “It was a great experience to mentor a student and help them come to their own realization (via motivational interviewing techniques and sharing of resources) how their behaviors were affecting their goals in college, career, family, relationships, etc., and that they wanted to make changes for a brighter future. It was a huge reward to see the student mature through the course of the mentoring sessions and making wise choices. The student I had went from skipping class to regularly attending classes, going to tutoring sessions, and doing his best to stay healthy to prevent getting sick and missing class. It was awesome to see the leaps and bounds he made!”
- “I also improved my own communication techniques. It's not always easy to have difficult conversations, but my experiences with CMASS have certainly improved my ability to listen, empathize, and advise.”

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 100% response rate. The following statistics combine agree/strongly agree responses.

- 91% of the students are less likely to engage in future violations of the Code of Student Life
- 91% of the students understand the consequences of their violations related to their career goals
- 87% of the students learned more about campus resources
- 85% 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)
- 91% of the students value the relationship they have with their mentor
- 91% of the students benefited from an objective listener who gave me a new viewpoint on my situation
- 91% of the students will contact their mentor in the future if they need advice or someone to listen
- 85% of the students stated they planned to stay in contact with their mentor in the fall 2012 semester
- 85% of the students were satisfied/highly satisfied with the Critical MASS program
- 159 of the 164 students stated they planned on returning to the University of Iowa for fall 2011 semester. Reasons provided for not returning:
 - Money issues
 - Personal issues
 - Transferring to another institution or community college due to cost (2)
 - Transferring due to change in major

The IOWA Challenge:

- For 2011-2012 Mentors were trained to utilize the IOWA Challenge during their meetings with mentees.
- 86% of students stated they talked with their mentor about the pillars of The IOWA Challenge (141).
- The most common pillars discussed were Excel, Choose, and Engage.

Revisions for 2012-2013 Academic Year based on mentor/mentee feedback:

- Reformat registration for mentors to make more intentional matches between mentor/mentee.
- Clarify what mentees can expect through the program through written communication.
- Invite all graduate students that have been with the University for one year to be mentors.
- Expand Critical MASS to residence halls as a sanction.

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 (69% used it at every meeting), reflective listening (86% used it at every meeting), and open-ended questions (91% 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 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 during the 2012-2013 academic year with the support of the Office of the Dean of Students. Reformatted matching forms should continue to 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 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."