



“Take the time to get to know your student during the first and second meetings. Building rapport takes awhile, but if you show your student that you truly are someone who is just there to be a resource and person for them to talk to, you’ll get a lot further with them.”

2015-2016 Critical MASS Mentor

Program Design

The Office of the Dean of Students [Critical Mentoring and Student Support](#) 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

19 students were assigned to Critical MASS and 19 students completed the program during the 2015-2016 year.

- Over 79% of the students were first-year students, the rest ranged from sophomores to juniors.
- 14 Male mentees/5 Female mentees
- 2.53 Average UI Fall 2015 GPA
- 2.52 Average UI Spring 2016 GPA
- 2.50 Average Cumulative GPA
- 0 of the Critical MASS students enrolled in spring 2016 have not registered for fall 2016 courses

Types of Violations

- 11 involved alcohol violations (58%)
- 0 involved drugs violations (0%)
- 0 involved drugs & alcohol violations (0%)
- 8 Students received criminal citations (42%)
- Location of the violations:

- 5 were off campus (26%),
- 14 were on University property (74%)

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

During the reporting period, 5 students had another alcohol or drug incident after assignment to the Critical MASS program and meeting with their mentor at least one time. *A 26% recidivism rate was calculated for 2015-2016.* During the 2014-2015 academic year, 10 students repeated their behavior for a 21% recidivism rate.

Mentors and Meetings

- Mentors met with mentees 76 times across the program for an average of four meetings per pairing.
- 92 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.
- 20 mentors were utilized with 1 mentor matched with a second mentee in the spring semester (based on personalized matching).
- Some mentors were not utilized based on personalized matching with students.
- 7 years is the average length of UI employment for mentors.
- 40 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 84% response rate for the 2015-2016 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 (11%)
- Motivational Interviewing Skills (21%)
- An understanding of student development (42%)
- Contributions to their own professional development (10%)
- A greater understanding of the environment surrounding alcohol and drug use among college students (0%)

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

- “It's never about judging a student. It is always about developing a student's definition of herself/himself in relation to the communities they want to belong to.”
- “Enjoy working with these students as they have a lot of potential knowledge to offer us! Although they are young and learning, we have the pleasure of helping them develop into successful students at Iowa and adults!”
- “Have fun getting to know a younger student and realize that you actually can have a positive impact on them.”

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 95% response rate.

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

- 95% of the students are less likely to engage in future violations of the Code of Student Life
- 79% of the students are more likely to continue their education at the University of Iowa
- 95% of the students understand the consequences of their violations related to their career goals
- 85% of the students learned more about campus resources
- 95% of the students learned strategies to reduce underage alcohol consumption and/or substance abuse
- 89% 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:

- 95% of the students benefited from having a mentor that had their best interests in mind
- 89% of the students benefited from having a mentor that they could be honest with about their experience
- 89% 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

All students responded stating they planned on returning to the University of Iowa.

The IOWA Challenge:

- 95% 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, TutorIowa, and Pomerantz Career Center. 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 challenges.

The Critical Mentoring and Student Support Program will continue during the 2016-2017 academic year with the support of the Office of the Dean of Students. Additional training on Motivational Interviewing techniques, campus resources, and judicial procedures with mentors 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."

Note: In Fall 2014, the method and resources available for issuing PAULA citations, the primary violation students were referred to Critical MASS, were changed, affecting the number of students sanctioned to Critical MASS. Critical MASS will be revised for the 2016-2017 academic year in an effort to reach more students.