

Best of both worlds
The highlights of two mentoring programs and approaches, at the
University of South Australia

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This session will focus on two student mentoring programs at the University of South Australia – *10:1 Mentor program pilot* in the Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences (EASS) and *Business Mates program* in the Division of Business. The programs, and their evaluation findings will be outlined. The programs provide a useful framework to elicit discussion about the various ways to design a mentor program within different contexts and for different purposes, what worked and what didn't in these two programs, and the benefits of the programs for the mentors and mentees. The audience will be asked to provide feedback on the design of the two programs and examples of what has worked and what hasn't worked in mentoring programs at other Universities. The presenters will jointly explore the elements of the programs.

This nuts and bolts session will explore:

- Critical issues and questions in the design of mentoring programs
- Implementation issues and considerations
- Conditions that support experimentation and innovation
- Strategies for evaluating benefits for the different groups involved

The presenters will draw on the two evaluated programs as well as the experiences of the audience.

10:1 Mentor program pilot

Overview

The pilot of the 10:1 program in the Division of EASS began at the beginning of 2007. Some 157 mentors were matched with approximately 1,500 commencing undergraduate students at Magill Campus. They assisted in orientating new students to University life and the University of South Australia.

Objectives:

- Provide a framework for positive interaction between new students, mentors and staff within EASS.
- Orientate new students to the University culture, together with the services and programs available to them.
- Enable new students to understand the challenges and opportunities of University.
- Encourage mentors in the development of leadership and interpersonal skills.

- Encourage a culture of collegiality and increase social aspects of university life for mentors and mentees.
- Impact positively on the attrition rates of first year EASS students.
- Have continual evaluation integrated into the program thereby continually improving the 10:1 mentor program.

Recruiting

The 10:1 program was exposed to students at the end of 2006 in lectures, through emails and through word of mouth. No compensation was offered to prospective mentors, and students were aware that there would be a selection process even after volunteering. Hoping for approximately 150 continuing students, the Division of EASS received over 350 student expressions of interest.

Training

Training in the 10:1 program was offered face-to-face in a full day of training. Alternatively prospective mentors could undertake training online to an equivalent level. Approximately 140 students chose to undertake mentor training on campus, face-to-face during the 2006 summer teaching break.

Mentoring

After selection to enter the program, new mentors were assigned approximately 10 mentees from within their school/discipline (most before o-day, Feb 19th 2007). Mentors contacted their mentees via email and waited for mentees to respond. Mentors sent out emails, often weekly, to their mentees in addition to any individual arrangement made with commencing students to offer help. Commencing students could engage with the 10:1 program in three ways; they could contact their assigned mentor via email or make a time to meet their assigned mentor for assistance, secondly the *mentor centre* was open for drop-ins by commencing students and was staffed exclusively by mentors and finally an online discussion board was accessible at any time and every day to post questions. The discussion board was checked by mentors many times a day including weekends.

Evaluation

Evaluation of the 10:1 program in the Division of EASS included data and responses from commencing students, mentors, as well as academic and professional staff. Evaluation was qualitative and quantitative and assessed the impact of the 2007 pilot program.

Business Mates program

Overview

The Business Mates program was initiated in 2007 for all commencing undergraduate students in the Division of Business (1,500), with a focus on international students (400). The program was designed to assist students from a range of educational and cultural backgrounds with the transition to the University of South Australia.

Objectives:

- Assist students with the transition to social and academic culture of the University.

- Facilitate interaction between students through social and learning networks.
- Encourage interaction between international and domestic students in particular.
- Provide a reliable and accessible support network for commencing students.
- Improve the quality of the first year experience for mentees.
- Increase retention rates in first year for Division of Business students.
- Provide continuing students with the opportunity to develop leadership, communication, organisation and team work skills.
- Develop the international perspectives of both mentors and mentees.

Recruiting/Training

54 Business Mates who were continuing undergraduate/postgraduate and international/domestic students voluntarily participated in the program, and assisted commencing students in pairs with a matching of 2:20. The Business Mates were provided with book vouchers at the commencement and completion of the program to acknowledge participation. All attended training in relation to mentoring and intercultural awareness.

Mentoring

International students were automatically assigned to a Business Mates group, and all students could request to have Business Mates. The mentoring was focused on facilitating social interaction between students, that is, social mentoring rather than academic mentoring. In experimenting how to facilitate this interaction the Division of Business funded up to \$200 per Business Mates group for a social event. The social events were decided on by the Business Mates in consultation with their mentees.

Evaluation

Evaluation of the Business Mates program in the Division of Business included data and responses from the mentees and mentors, and was both quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (focus groups).