The Role Mentoring Plays in Helping Students SOAR Toward College
What is Mentoring?

- A formalized relationship between two or more individuals in which the mentee receives behavioral, educational, and/or emotional support from his or her mentor.
- Mentoring can be formal (organized & paired) or informal (affinity-based, role model), and may be general in nature or targeting a specific area for growth.
Benefits of Mentoring

Mentee

- Enhanced outcomes for GPA.\(^1\)
- Persistence, graduation, and pursuit of post-baccalaureate education when compared to non-mentored control group\(^2\)
- Involvement on campus can play an important role in students’ decision to remain at the university (or in school in general)\(^3\)
- Can lead to an increase in communication and organizational skills, greater opportunities for social networking, and personal reflection\(^4\)

\(^1\) Campbell & Campbell, 2007; \(^2\) Gloria & Kurpius, 2001; Guillorey & Wolverton, 2008; Tinto 1985; \(^3\) Ferrari, 2004; \(^4\) Shrestha et al., 2009
Benefits of Mentoring

Mentor

- Experience personal growth and benefits from the experience (i.e. emotional satisfaction, realization of own skills, feeling rejuvenated and encouraged and motivated by the program)\(^1\)
- Provides opportunity to get to know students/peers on a personal level\(^2\)
- Opportunity for civic engagement

\(^1\) Bergerson & Petersen, 2009; \(^2\) Campbell & Campbell, 2000
Mentoring Impacts on Academic Goal Setting & College Access

- Studies show that mentors can play a role in increasing students’ educational aspirations\(^1\)
- Exposure to new ideas, a sense of purpose, acceptance & connection, and encouragement from mentors & peers

\(^1\) Bergerson & Petersen, 2009; Peterson, 2007
Mentoring Best Practices

- One of the best predictors for a successful mentoring program is the frequency of student-mentor contact. Frequency of contact positively impacts students’...¹
  - GPA
  - Satisfaction with the mentoring program
  - Personal & career development

- Set clear expectations for formal & informal interactions²

- Early validation of students’ academic & social worth has been shown to be a key force in student persistence.³

- Mentoring across ethnic & gender lines has been shown to be successful provided that the mentor “possesses sufficient empathy, cultural sensitivity & a sincere desire to understand their mentee’s experiences.”⁴

Mentoring Best Practices

- Structured settings with an onsite coordinator work best.
- It is easiest for mentoring pairs to be made when all parties are at the same school site.
- Be aware of the time involved—mentoring programs involve extensive recruiting, screening, matching, training, & monitoring.
- Provide mentor training before matches are made to prepare mentors; give mentors guidance regarding their role.
- Mentoring is at its best when it lasts throughout a year, and when the mentoring pair meets frequently.
- Enthusiastic leaders are needed for mentor recruitment & program longevity.

1 Gandara & Mejorado, 2004
What is Project SOAR?

- Service-learning course for college students

The program consists of two parts:

- **Service**: Students mentor in under-resourced schools in the Tucson area.

- **Learning**: Students are enrolled in a college course that examines issues of access to higher education. They use their experiences in Tucson middle schools to complement what they’re learning in the classroom.

- The hyphen interlocking the terms service and learning represents the reflection component of SL which bridges the learning in the classroom & at the site.
What is Project SOAR?

- 4 sections of the course, including Native SOAR and College of Science SOAR
- Enrolls approximately 100 undergraduate students per semester
- Serve six Tucson-area middle schools
- Variety of mentoring scenarios:
  - one-on-one
  - small group mentoring
  - AVID
  - mentoring & math tutoring
  - small group work within exploratory courses
Benefits of Project SOAR

- Over 1,760 Tucson middle school students have benefited from Project SOAR mentors since 2005.

- Over 17,000 mentoring hours have been logged by students in Project SOAR since 2005.
Benefits from the Program: Mentee Survey

1. **Focus on College Access:** A majority of mentees discussed college, classes/homework, & high school weekly or almost weekly with their mentors. Slightly more than 50% (53%) of the mentees also noted that they discussed future careers with their mentors weekly or almost weekly.

2. **Mentors as Positive Role Models:** 74% of the students believed they had a mentor who motivated them to do well in school, believed they could be a success (71%), and had increased their motivation to get good grades (70%).
3. **Increased Motivation to Attend College:** 70% agreed that their mentors had increased their interest in going to college. Similarly, mentors were credited for increasing their knowledge about getting into college (67%) & future careers (64%).

4. **A Population in Need of Support:** Only 51% of the sample said they were very sure that they will graduate from high school, while 40% believe they will “probably graduate,” and 6% either believe they probably won’t graduate or are sure they won’t graduate. Additionally, while 13% of participants believe they will not encounter obstacles in attending college, 87% believe they will encounter 1 or more obstacles in the future.
SOAR Mentor Perspectives

- **LeAndra Begay**, junior Elementary Ed. major, Master Mentor at Roskruge M.S.
- **Michelle Cohen**, senior Physiology major, 2nd Semester Mentor at Chaparral M.S.
- **Jesus Orduño**, senior Spanish major, 2nd Semester Mentor at Hohokam M.S.
- **Ryan Shore**, senior Sociology & pre-Law major, Master Mentor at Mansfeld M. S.
Mentoring Action Plan

- Does your school have a mentoring program? If so, what are its strengths?
- If not, do you have the flexibility at your site to put together a mentoring program?
- What would be the focus of your school’s mentoring program? (ie. College prep, self-esteem, behavioral improvement, academics, etc.)
- Could your more senior students serve as mentors to your younger students? Could you collaborate with a neighboring school? Alumni?
- Are there mentoring programs in the area with which you could collaborate?
- Who might be a good candidate for the onsite coordinator, and why?
Thank you!

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