

Peer mentoring: Models and outcomes at QUT

Organiser: Ann Heirdsfield

Chair: Karen Nelson

Discussant: Bruce Tills

Presenters: Timothy Cheeseman,
Kate Derrington,
Ann Heirdsfield,
Sue Walker,
Kerryann Walsh.

Affiliation: Queensland University of Technology

**Presented at AARE 2008 International
Education Conference Brisbane**

30th November - 4th December, 2008

Peer mentoring: Models and outcomes at QUT

Organiser: Ann Heirdsfield
Chair: Karen Nelson
Discussant: Bruce Tills
Presenters: Timothy Cheeseman,
Kate Derrington,
Ann Heirdsfield,
Sue Walker,
Kerryann Walsh.

Affiliation: Queensland University of Technology

Symposium abstract

Students entering university study often experience feelings of isolation and disconnection, both academically and socially. At Queensland University of Technology, like many universities, there is a commitment to the student experience, in relation to welfare, satisfaction, retention, and success. The first year experience is a priority for many universities. Kift and Nelson (2005) described the unique needs of students-in-transition: social, academic, and administrative support. Efforts to facilitate the transition to university for first-year students include transition programs targeted for specific faculties' requirements (McInnis et al., 2000); academically oriented peer support programs (McInnis et al., 2000); reciprocal peer tutoring (Rittschof & Griffin, 2001); online support (O'Reagan et al., 2004); and mentoring programs (Drew et al., 2000).

Peer mentors may be a valuable resource for institutions to use in increasing persistence rates and enhancing the first year experience (Kahn & Nauta, 2001). Some of the benefits for first-year students include preventing the negative effects of stress (Jacobi, 1991, cited in Glaser et al., 2006); enhancing the sense of belonging and identity with the university, school or faculty (Evans & Peel, 1999, cited in Glaser et al., 2006); early access to information about resources on campus (Clark & Crome, 2004, cited in Glaser et al., 2006); academic success (Rodger & Tremblay, 2003, cited in Glaser et al., 2006); social connections (Pope & Van Dyke, 1999, cited in Glaser et al., 2006); skill development (Treston, 1999, cited in Glaser et al., 2006); and improved retention (Jacobi, 1991, cited in Glaser et al., 2006).

In implementing a mentoring program, research indicates several factors critical to the success of the mentoring relationship including: organisational support; clarifying goals and roles; matching mentor and mentees; training mentors; sufficient resources; and monitoring and evaluation (Lloyd & Bristol, 2006). The structure of mentoring programs may vary depending on the target faculty or discipline. Key characteristics associated with effective programs, correspond with characteristics that are critical to the success of mentoring programs. These include: the characteristics of the mentor; the size of the mentoring group; the sustainability of the program; the presence of a coordinator; ongoing monitoring and evaluation; and a multidimensional approach (Rolfe-Flett, 2000).

In this symposium, we describe the variety of models of peer mentoring at QUT, in particular, two faculty-based programs and a university-wide program. We outline the individual program models (all distinct from each other), purposes, and outcomes both for the mentees and for the mentors.