

A Helping Hand? Undergraduate Peer Mentors and First Year Courses

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Plan for the session

- Background Information
- Mission and Goals
- Staffing
- Planning Process



Background of Wittenberg Program

- Started in 2003 with a pilot program for first-year seminars
 - 6/8 sections
- Implemented comprehensively in the first-year seminars in 2004
 - Range: 18/32 sections (2004) to 27/30 sections (2008)



Introduction:

What is a peer mentor?

- Wittenberg's First-Year Experience and Peer Mentoring: A Brief Overview
- National program models using undergraduate mentors and supplemental instructors
- Mission & responsibilities (handout)



Discussion Question #1

If you had unlimited resources, how would you propose using undergraduate peer mentors at your institution? What courses would you target?



Comparing Wittenberg's Program

Wittenberg

- Funded by the university
- Offered in most First-Year Seminars (Peer Helpers Program, Connectors Program, Supplemental Instruction)
- Mentors are paid
- Mentors are students: sophomores, juniors and/or seniors
- Faculty select their mentors
- Mentors attend all class sessions
- Mentors assist in a class of no more than 18

Others

- Soft dollars (grant funded)
- Offered only to specific populations, (first-generation, African-American...)
- Mentors are volunteers
- Mentors could include staff, (Residence Hall assistants or Area Coordinators)
- Program selects mentors
- Mentors don't attend class
- Mentors work individually



Wittenberg's 2007-09 Assessment

- Assessment Tools & Methods
 - Quantitative measures, clicker surveys, entry & exit surveys, journaling, focus groups
- Strengths and weaknesses of program
- Issues still to be assessed
- Planned changes
- Continuing challenges



2007 cohort

<u>Witt Sem Peer Mentors</u>	All Data	Non- Leavers	Leavers
No Peer Mentor Count	228	166	62
Peer Mentor Count	322	236	86
No Peer Mentor Percentage	0.41	0.41	0.42
Peer Mentor Percentage	0.59	0.59	0.58



Predicted Modeling

		Peer mentor	
		<u>no</u>	<u>yes</u>
GPA octile	1	1.64	1.66
GPA octile	2	2.07	2.06
GPA octile	3	2.36	2.36
GPA octile	4	2.59	2.60
GPA octile	5	2.79	2.81
GPA octile	6	3.06	3.03
GPA octile	7	3.29	3.28
GPA octile	8	3.62	3.64



Having a peer mentor is a positive aspect of my WittSem.

Question 5 Count Percent

A	144	36.55
B	170	43.15
C	19	4.82
D	10	2.54
E	51	12.94
N=	394	
*=	4	

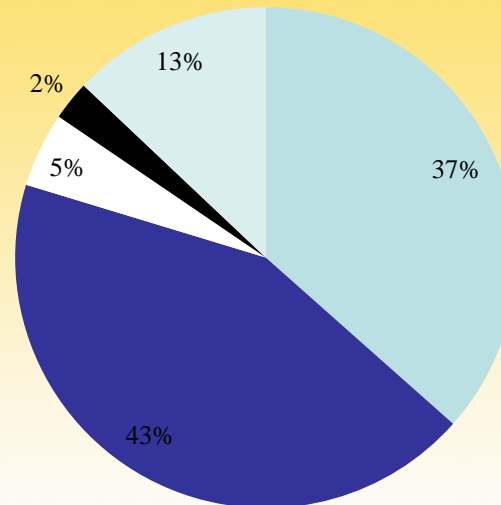
A. Strongly Agree

B. Agree

C. Disagree

D. Strongly Disagree

E. Not Applicable



■ A. Strongly Agree
■ B. Agree
■ C. Disagree
■ D. Strongly Disagree
■ E. Not Applicable

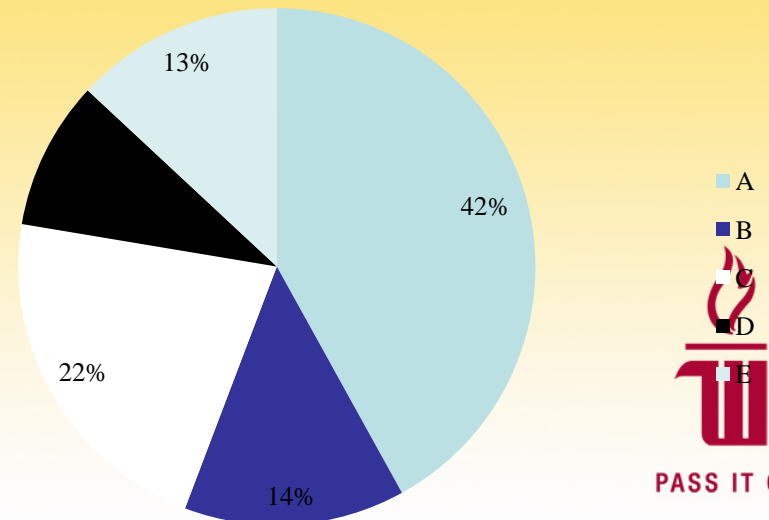


The best part of my WittSem has been

- A. the academic content covered by the professor
- B. my field experience/out-of-class activities with the professor
- C. the class time spent addressing transitional issues
- D. my interaction with the peer mentor
- E. the regular contact with my advisor

Question

	Count	Percent
A	167	41.96
B	55	13.82
C	87	21.86
D	37	9.30
E	52	13.07
N=	398	



Discussion Question #2

What motivates faculty at your institution to innovate? How would you recruit faculty to an undergraduate peer mentor program, and how would you foster buy-in to the program? Would you offer incentives?



Recruitment and Evaluation of Peer Mentors

- Choice of peer mentors – what criteria?
Who chooses?
- Rewards or incentives for peer mentors
- Costs of program
- Evaluation of program



Faculty Considerations from Assessment

- Time
- Faculty-peer mentor dynamic
- Motivations for using peer mentors
- Challenges of having a peer mentor in a classroom
- Peer mentors as bridges between student/faculty
- Peer mentors as resources in special circumstances



Faculty and Peer Mentor Interaction Group Exercise

You will be assigned a scenario. You are responsible for discussing the scenario and developing a “role-play.” Some groups will have peer mentors and some won’t in this exercise.



Broad Conclusions

- Program does not have to be expensive, but it does require some resources be allocated
- Ongoing assessment of program components essential for adjusting its effectiveness
- Models will vary according to size of institution, first-year experience program, faculty interest and student interest



Questions and Discussion

Resources for learning more:

- Reading list (handout)
- <http://www4.wittenberg.edu/academics/fye/>

