Vision 2020 Grant Application (AY1)

Project Title: WGS Peer Mentoring Program

Team:
Jessica Birch, Ph.D., Women’s and Gender Studies Governing Board Member, jeekaise@iusb.edu
Christina Gerken, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Women’s and Gender Studies Program (contact person), cgerken@iusb.edu
K. Andrea Rusnock, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Art History, Women’s and Gender Studies Program, krusnock@iusb.edu
Nicole Micolichek, Residence Coordinator, nmicolic@iusb.edu

Abstract:
Peer mentorship is a high-impact practice that benefits both mentors and mentees, establishing a learning community and social engagement. Mentees are able to take advantage of mentors’ knowledge and familiarity with the university, as well as their guidance on time management and study strategies; mentors are able to act as role models while learning facilitation skills that will help them in their future careers.

Receiving this grant will allow us to help our students create mutually beneficial mentoring relationships, promote the development of social responsibility in our students, and further our campus mission to create “engaged citizens prepared to build strong communities.”

Narrative:
We seek a VISION 2020 grant to pilot the WGS Peer Mentoring Program, a formal mentorship program in the Women’s and Gender Studies Program. This program will build on our already-existing programs directed toward incoming freshmen and students from underrepresented populations, including part-time students, first-generation college students, students who are parents and other nontraditional college students, and racial/ethnic minorities. These are our most at-risk populations in terms of retention, graduation, and GPA.

Retention is a priority for every academic institution, and is a major focus for IU. As indicated in the Blueprint for Student Attainment, “Indiana is placing a strong emphasis on student attainment and graduation.” Strategic Initiative 2.2, Pedagogies of Engagement, requires us to “connect students’ education to their communities” with initiatives that “promote civic engagement and community service” (2.2.5), as well as create “programs that require students to become more engaged over time in out-of-classroom academic and social activities” (2.2.7).

While some initiatives already exist or are planned on campus that include or incorporate peer mentoring, such as the Relay Program and the U100 peer mentors, we lack a peer-to-peer one-on-one individual mentoring program. According to Zevallos and Washburn, as well as a number of other studies, “mentoring has a powerful positive impact”; many students “attribute their abilities to overcome academic and personal challenges…to having had a mentor” (25). Creating this mentoring program will provide myriad benefits that are not currently available in a formalized program for our students.

This program will be focused on WGS students, in large part because data on mentoring success suggests that similarities between mentor and mentee make mentoring more effective (Thayer; Crisp & Cruz; Schramm), the methodology we will use and our data should be portable and adaptable such that they can be used by other departments and programs at the university. In the future, we hope to present at UCET on the findings from this program and our methodology to other programs/departments to encourage them to create similar peer mentoring programs among their students, and community members have expressed interest in participating in mentoring relationships with our upper-level students, who will be better prepared for such relationships after their own experiences as mentees and mentors.

What are your goals?
Our goals are:

1. To increase retention and GPA for beginning college students by building their knowledge and skills with regard to self-efficacy, access to institutional resources, time management, and academic work. In studies of mentorship programs’ effectiveness, “statistically significant evidence provided evidence that the mentoring program increased the students’ overall GPA and their major GPA,” and “Mentored students
failed fewer courses in the first semester and their academic status was dramatically better than that of students enrolled in the University 101 transition course who proved to have an advantage over comparable students not enrolled in formal intervention programs” (Salinitri 868);

2. To create a sense of community and a feeling of belonging among both mentors and mentees. The mentor and mentee create “a trusting relationship that enables the mentee to move forward in a particular setting” (Elliott, Beltman, & Lynch 2), and multiple studies indicate that a sense of belonging is critical in student retention, particularly for nontraditional and/or underrepresented students; and

3. To provide students practice in networking and building relationships that will serve them in their future careers, allowing them to enter into workplace and community mentoring relationships with confidence and experience.

How will you assess whether you reach your goals?
We will use multiple assessment measures to determine the success of the program, including:

1. Tracking the GPA and retention rates of both mentors and mentees in the program, compared to WGS students who have not participated in the mentoring program and their university cohorts at large;

2. Having students complete Likert-scale questionnaires before and after their mentoring participation; and

3. Requesting intermediate, qualitative feedback from both mentors and mentees to evaluate the functionality of mentoring pairs and their success in adhering to the guidelines, based on evaluations in previous studies of mentoring (Ishiyama; Lopatto)

What will you do to reach those goals?
To achieve these goals, we will:

1. Create a “planned mentoring” process with “clear objectives, where mentors and mentees are matched using formal processes” (Miller 23); these guidelines regarding the mentoring process that delineate expectations for both mentors and mentees will help avoid the pitfalls of mentoring that can result from informal or unclear mentoring situations (Hayes & Koro-Ljungberg);

2. Provide training for peer mentors based on successful programs in other institutions, including discussion of potential academic and personal challenges, as well as active listening skills and (Zevallos & Washburn);

3. Require commitment from peer mentors to attend training and both mentor/mentee group gatherings; reach out via email or other agreed-upon means to check in with their mentees at least once a month; meet with mentees for one-on-one interactions at least twice during the course of the semester; and engage in assessment activities;

4. Require commitment from mentees to attend the initial meeting and both mentor/mentee group gatherings; respond to their mentors’ contacts; meet with mentors for one-on-one interactions at least twice during the course of the semester; and engage in assessment activities;

5. Have meetings with all mentor pairs to create a larger, supportive mentoring community that will continue to include former mentoring pairs as the program progresses;

6. Provide mentor pairs with opportunities to schedule meetings and contacts themselves so that they must engage in active, deliberate participation on multiple occasions, allowing them to build “social skills” and “motivation” (Crisp & Cruz 537);

7. Include meeting over meals as part of the mentoring process to emphasize the “nurturing and insightful” (Ibid. 535) aspects of mentoring, helping students identify the relationship as one that includes “a personal connection” (Ibid. 536) as well as academic interactions and support; this is particularly crucial because “first generation students are likely to perceive less support from their families for attending college” (Thayer 4), making them less likely to persist; and

8. Institute pre- and post-mentorship assessment activities, as well as regular check-ins with the mentoring program director.
### Budget:

**AY1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer Salary (Identify participants; construct guidelines, training protocols, and assessments; direct meetings/trainings) (Birch – salary)</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Meeting/Training (coffee, juice, &amp; muffins for approximately 15 people @ $7.50 each)</td>
<td>$120.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentee Meeting (coffee, juice, &amp; muffins for approximately 15 people @ $7.50 each)</td>
<td>$120.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor/Mentee Start of Year Meeting (Pizza/Soft Drinks; 16 inch pizza - 8 slices - with a 2 liter beverage is $10. Each student eats 2 slices of pizza.)</td>
<td>$75.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor/Mentee One-on-One Meetings (2X each semester) – Dining Cards from Sodexo*</td>
<td>$900.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(15/meeting, 15 mentoring pairs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor/Mentee End of Year Meeting (Pizza/Soft Drinks)</td>
<td>$75.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing &amp; Copying</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cost</strong></td>
<td>$3390.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AY2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer Salary (Evaluate assessment data; identify participants and revise assessments/guidelines/training protocols accordingly)</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Meeting/Training (coffee, juice, &amp; muffins for approximately 15 people @ $7.50 each)</td>
<td>$120.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentee Meeting (coffee, juice, &amp; muffins for approximately 15 people @ $7.50 each)</td>
<td>$120.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor/Mentee Start of Year Meeting (Pizza/Soft Drinks; 16 inch pizza - 8 slices - with a 2 liter beverage is $10. Each student eats 2 slices of pizza.)</td>
<td>$75.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor/Mentee One-on-One Meetings (2X each semester) – Dining Cards from Sodexo*</td>
<td>$900.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(15/meeting, 15 mentoring pairs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor/Mentee End of Year Meeting (Pizza/Soft Drinks)</td>
<td>$75.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing &amp; Copying</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cost</strong></td>
<td>$3390.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Fiscal Sustainability:

Once this program has proven success, perhaps a version of it—or our trained mentors—could be integrated with the U100 course and the Chancellor’s fund dedicated to the First Year Experience could provide some funding.

### Timeline:

**May, 2015**

- Identify appropriate mentor students
  - Declared WGS majors or minors in the second half of their undergraduate career (juniors/seniors) who have maintained a 3.0 GPA (students will be pre-identified due to our new Triota honors society)
- Contact potential mentors to assess interest and commitment

**June/July/August, 2015**

- Create explicit mentor/mentee guidelines and agreements based upon evaluation of mentorship best practices data
- Identify appropriate mentee students
  - incoming first-year students with an interest in WGS
  - recently-declared WGS majors or minors in the first half of their undergraduate career
- Contact potential mentees to assess interest and commitment
- Have peer mentor meeting for training to establish guidelines and requirements/finalize commitments/address any questions or concerns

---

* Per suggestion from Accounting, we will do this under University Hospitality policy, purchasing dining cards from Sodexo, with the amounts charged to our grant account, and providing them to students when they advise us that their meetings are scheduled.
- Have mentee meeting to establish guidelines and requirements/finalize commitments/address any questions or concerns

**August, 2015**
- Bring together mentors/mentees at a social event for informal and formal introduction activities
  - Speed-dating mentorship game
  - Do pre-assessment of student goals and concerns

**September, 2015**
- Formally pair up mentors/mentees
- Provide guidelines regarding contact and meeting during the semester

**November, 2015**
- Contact mentor/mentee pairs to check in and establish functionality

**December, 2015**
- Have mentor/mentee pairs fill out a questionnaire regarding their experiences to date with the program
- If necessary, revise/recreate mentoring partnerships

**January, 2016**
- Contact mentor/mentee pairs to remind them of their obligations regarding contact and assessment

**March, 2016**
- Contact mentor/mentee pairs to check in and establish functionality

**April, 2016**
- Bring together mentors/mentees at a social event for discussion and evaluation activities
  - Do post-assessment of student goals and concerns

**References:**

Elliott, Jim, Susan Beltman, and Ebonee Lynch. “‘If You Make a Difference, You Have Changed Someone’s Life’: Outcomes from a University Student Mentor Program.” First Year in Higher Education Conference held in Fremantle. 2011.


**Routing Sheet:**