

# ADVOCACY, MENTORING, AND THE NEXT GENERATION

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## Method

### Participants

Since 1989, the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and students in transition has conferred each year the “Outstanding First-Year Student Advocate Award” upon 10 to 13 college and university personnel who have developed programs to improve the educational experience of the first-year students. These award recipients’ accomplishments encompass a wide range of post-secondary institutional types: public and private, large and small, two-year and four-year colleges and research universities. The first-year experience programs vary in scope and scale of operation and include orientation and extended orientation programs, advising and career counseling, faculty and/or peer mentoring, residence life and academically based seminars. What all these efforts shared in common was a record of outstanding leadership and effective institutional change.

Building on the earlier research of Anttonen and Chaskes (2002) the present study sought to examine mentoring which was the number one process highlighted by past advocates in the learning of advocacy skills. Advocate characteristics such as sex, years of higher education experience, educational background, degree attainment, and types of institutions were investigated. Also, and perhaps more importantly, the research sought to gather data via a web based survey instrument concerning each advocate’s perception of their learning of mentoring skills and their attempts at mentoring the next generation of advocates. In addition, the study attempted to explore whether the Chaskes and Anttonen advocate skill set (2005) was being passed on to their protégés and whether being a “change agent” was an important component in this process.

### Design

In the summer of 2004, the investigators in conjunction with Dr. John Gardner of the Policy Center on the First-Year of College located in Brevard, North Carolina and

Stuart Hunter, Director of the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience developed an open-ended questionnaire based upon the earlier survey of Anttonen and Chaskes (2002). After much professional dialogue the questionnaire was finalized at the end of August 2004 and centered on a variety of questions about mentoring. The survey asked the advocator to reflect on their personal mentoring experiences and their present attempts at mentoring their colleague(s).

Upon completion of the survey instrument, a list of names and school affiliations for all First-Year Student Advocate award recipients from 1990-2004 was generated by the National Resource Center for the First Year-Experience and students in transition. The list included 161 educators from a variety of institutional settings, both public and private, ranging from small two colleges to large universities.

In the fall of 2004, the student research assistants at Millersville University began the arduous task of updating the addresses and e-mail accounts of all 161 First-Year Advocates. The decision was made by the investigators to utilize a web-based survey and a system was established to use an external website service for the mailing and return of the questionnaire. The option was also made available for hard copy questionnaires to be mailed out for those who did not feel comfortable with or could not complete the web-based survey. With supporting letters from Dr. John Gardner and Stuart Hunter the web based survey was mailed to all located advocates in early October of 2004. After one month a reminder to complete the survey was sent in early November and another reminder in early December. Individuals who requested hard copy of the questionnaire were mailed the instruments as soon as the request was received. By mid January 2005, 64 respondents had completed the survey.

It should be noted that twenty-two of the advocators could not be located or did not have valid e-mail addresses, four were deceased, and one stated that they could not complete the survey. In total 64 out of 134 individuals (48.5%) in the final sample pool completed the questionnaire.

## Procedure

When the survey response time ended questionnaires were returned, the quantitative data was compiled and under the leadership of one of the principal investigators a research assist read and categorized the open-ended responses into agreed upon categories. The results of this analysis are presented in the following section.

## Results

### Demographic Data:

As previously stated, 64 award recipients returned the survey. Of the total sample (N = 64), 37 were females (57.8%) and 27 were males (42.4%). Table 1 presents the institutional characteristics for these advocates. Table 1 shows 47 (73.4%) of the advocates were employed in public institutions; 17 (26.6%) in private schools; 17 (26.6%) in two-year schools, and 47 (73.4%) were in four-year institutions of higher education. With regard to institutional size, 15 (23.4%) of the advocates were from institutions with less than 2,000 students, 6 (9.4%) from schools with 2,000 to 3,999 students 7 (10.9%) from schools with 4,000 to 7,999 students, 9 (14.1%) from schools with 8,000 to 11,999 students, and 27 (42.2%) from schools with more than 12,000 students.

Table 2 showcases the breakdown of the age categories separated by sex of the respondent. As Table 2 shows the largest percentage of the respondents 53 (82.8%) were 50 years of age or older. A greater percentage of men (40.7%) than women (21.6%) were from the 60 or over age group.

Table 3 presents for men and women the mean for both the total years in higher education and the years at the institution when the award was given. Data from this table indicate the respondents had been in higher education on the average for 25.3 years with men having the higher average of 29.7 years compared with women who had an average of 22.3 years. When the advocate award was conferred the respondents had been at the institution for a mean of 14.9 years with men having the higher average (16.2 years) when compared to women (14.0 years).

Concerning degree earned 24 / 27 men (88.9%) and 24 / 37 women (64.9%) had earned a doctorate along with the 3 remaining men (11.1%) and the 13 remaining women (35.1%) having a masters.

Advocators of both sexes reported earning advanced degrees in education, social science, humanities, and sciences, with the highest numbers coming from the area of education. Given the wide range of disciplines present in the sample, the investigators could not categorize advocates by degree type.

### Analysis of Mentoring Questions

Table 4 presents the responses separated by sex as to whether the advocate had a mentor. As Table 4 showcases, 16 (59.3%) of the male advocates and 29 (78.4%) of the female advocates stated that they had a mentor. In order to pursue this answer in greater depth, the response of both sexes were compiled for questions as to the skills, insights, and survival strategies that the advocates learned from their mentor. In order to categorize those responses, overriding themes were developed by the researchers and research assistant to tally and summarize the written responses. These categories were Personal, Communication, Organizational/Political, and Academic/Research. Tables 5 and 6 present the results of this analysis. As Tables 5 and 6 reveal, Personal and Organizational/Political skills were the most often mentioned for skills, insights and survival tactics that the mentee learned from their mentor. This held most true for women. For men there was an emphasis on the Academic / Research category for skills learned from the mentor. This, however, did not emerge for the insight and survival question where men stressed, like women, the Personal and Organizational / Political categories.

Table 7 represents the responses separated by sex for the question “Do you see yourself as a mentor today?” As Table 7 shows, 20 (74.1%) of the men and 35 (94.9%) of the women answered yes to this question. In order to pursue this answer in greater depth, the responses of both sexes were compiled for “what activities do you engage in as a mentor?” Again the four categories of Personal, Communication Skills, Organizational / Political, and Academic / Research were employed in the analysis. Table 8 presents the results of this analysis. As Table 8 reveals the Organizational / Political category was

seen as the most often mentioned by both men and women with Communication being the second. This is different from the analysis of learned skills, and insights / survival strategies highlighted in Tables 5 and 6 where Personal Skills emerged as an often mentioned category.

Table 9 represents the responses for the question “Have you received any training to be a mentor?” Only 5 (18.5%) males and 9 (24.3%) females answered yes to this item. These individuals were then asked to describe the training. Of the 5 males, 3 responded that they modeled others, 1 had attended a workshop and 1 had been a part of a campus mentoring program. Of the 9 females, 3 mentioned modeling others, 2 had attended a workshop, 1 had formal training through a “women’s mentoring program,” 1 had received training during her pre-college experience in secondary education, and 2 did not respond.

Table 10 presents the responses to the questions “Are you involved in passing the Anttonen and Chaskes 2005 skill set to your protégé?” As table 10 shows, 19 (95%) of the males and 33 (94.3%) of the females answered yes to the item. These respondents were then asked to list which traits they emphasized. Table 11 represents the analysis of this data. As Table 11 shows, there is a consistency for males and females for the skills sets involving “Passion and Caring,” “Patient but Persistent” and “Sense of Humor.” “Listening” and “Risk Taking” are mentioned more often by males and “Creativity and Flexibility” more often by females.

Table 12 presents the responses to the question “Do you agree” that advocates are “change agents?” As Table 12 reveals, 100% of both sexes agreed that they saw themselves as fulfilling this role.

Table 13 presents the responses to the question “have you incorporated the strategies of being a change agent into discussions with your protégé?” As Table 13 shows, 19 (95%) of the males and 31 (88.6%) of the females responded that they had. Table 14 gives a breakdown by sex and category of responses grouped into three major areas: Campus Politics, Program Building, and Aspects of Anttonen and Chaskes Skill Set. Table 14 reveals that the skill set was the most often mentioned group followed by Campus Politics, and then by Program Building.

Respondent's Institutions (N=64)

Category	Institutional Characteristic	Number	%
Type	Public	47	73.4
	Private	17	26.6
	Two Year	17	26.6
	Four Year	47	73.4
Number of Students	< 2,000	15	23.4
	2,000 – 3,999	6	9.4
	4,000 – 7,999	7	10.9
	8,000 – 11,999	9	14.1
	> 12,000	27	42.2

TABLE 2:

Age of Respondents (N=64)

	Male (N=27)		Female (N=37)		Total (N=64)	
Age	N	% of Sex	N	% of Sex	N	% of Total
30-39	0	0.0	4	10.8	4	6.3
40-49	2	7.4	5	13.5	7	10.9
50-59	14	51.9	20	54.1	34	53.1
60+	11	40.7	8	21.6	19	29.7
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100.0</b>

TABLE 3:

Average Years in Higher Education and Years of Service When Receiving the Award

Category	Male (N=27)	Female (N=37)	Total (N=64)
Years in Higher Education	29.7	22.3	25.3
Years at School When Awarded Advocacy	16.2	14.0	14.9

## Having a Mentor

	Male (N=27)		Female (N=37)		Total (N=64)	
Response	Number	% of Males	Number	% of Females	Number	% of Total
Yes	16	59.3	29	78.4	45	70.3
No	11	40.7	8	21.6	19	29.7

TABLE: 5

## Skills Learned from Mentor

	Male (N=16)	Female (N=29)	Total (N=45)
Personal	4	23	27
Skills Communication	5	9	14
Organizational / Political	7	28	35
Academic / Research	9	3	12

TABLE: 6

## Insights and Survival Strategies learned from Mentor

	Male (N=16)	Female (N=29)	Total (N=45)
Personal	7	25	32
Communication Skills	1	6	7
Organizational / Political	7	14	21
Academic / Research	1	1	2

### Being a Mentor Today

Responses	Male (N=27)		Female (N=37)		Total (N=64)	
	Number	% of Males	Number	% of Females	Number	% of Total
Yes	20	74.1	35	94.6	55	85.9
No	7	25.9	2	5.4	9	14.1

TABLE: 8

### Activities You Engage In

	Male (N=20)	Female (N=35)	Total (N=55)
Personal	0	2	2
Communication Skills	6	13	19
Organizational / Political	17	22	39
Academic / Research	3	2	5

TABLE: 9

### Mentor Training

Responses	Male (N=27)		Female (N=37)		Total (N=64)	
	Number	% of Males	Number	% of Females	Number	% of Total
Yes	5	18.5	9	24.3	14	21.9
No	16	59.3	27	73.0	43	67.2
No Response	6	22.2	1	2.7	7	10.9

Anttonen/Chaskes Skill Set

Responses	Male (N=20)		Female (N=35)		Total (N=55)	
	Number	% of Males	Number	% of Females	Number	% of Total
Yes	19	95	33	94.3	52	92.9
No	1	5	2	5.7	4	7.1

TABLE: 11

Emphasized Skill Set to Protégés

	Male (N=19)		Female (N=33)		Total (N=52)	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Passion	15	78.9	25	75.8	40	76.9
Listening	10	52.6	13	39.4	23	44.2
Creativity & Flexibility	11	57.9	25	75.8	36	69.2
Risk Taking	11	57.9	14	42.4	25	48.1
Sense of Humor	9	47.4	17	51.5	26	50.0
Patient but Persistent	12	63.2	20	60.6	32	61.5

TABLE: 12

Are Advocates Change Agents?

Responses	Male (N=20)		Female (N=31)		Total (N=51)	
	Number	% of Males	Number	% of Females	Number	% of Total
Yes	20	100.0	31	100	51	100
No	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

## Change Agents Discussion with Protégé

	Male (N=20)		Female (N=35)		Total (N=55)	
Responses	Number	% of Males	Number	% of Females	Number	% of Total
Yes	19	95	31	88.6	50	90.9
No	1	5	4	11.4	5	9.1

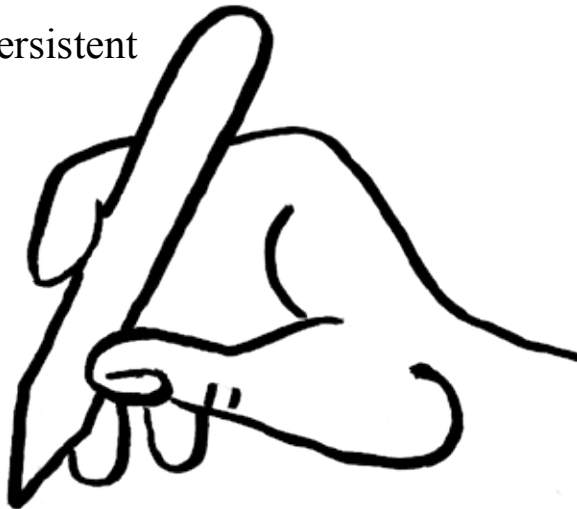
TABLE: 14

## Elements of a Change Agent

	Male (N=19)	Female (N=31)	Total (N=50)
Campus Politics	6	13	19
Program Building	6	7	13
Aspects of Skill Set	7	18	25

### *Anttonen & Chaskes Skill Set*

- ✓ Having a passion and caring for first-year students and programs
- ✓ Being an active listener
- ✓ Being creative and flexible
- ✓ Being a risk taker
- ✓ Having a good sense of humor
- ✓ Being patient but persistent



\*From Chaskes, J. & Anttonen R., in *Challenging & Supporting the First-Year Student: A Handbook for Improving the First Year of College*, Jossey-Bass, 2005, pp. 191-203

\*Anttonen R. & Chaskes J. (2002) *Advocating for first-year students: A study of the micropolitics of leadership and organizational change*. *Journal of the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition*, 14(1) 81-96.