Pairing Peers: Sophomore to Freshmen Academic Mentorship in Practice

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Today’s Agenda

- University overview
- Background
- Group conversation
- Introduction to the Paul Peck Scholars Program
- Program objectives
- UNIV E101 and ENGR 295 class overview and deliverables
- Group activity
- Program outcomes
- Program adaptation
- Discussion
Drexel University at a Glance

- Located in Philadelphia, PA
- Total Enrollment: approx. 26,000
  - Undergraduate: approx. 15,000
  - College of Engineering: approx. 3,400 (UG), 1,300 (GR)
Co-Op Program

• Cooperative Education
  – One of the oldest and most renowned coop programs in the country
  – Over 1600 employers in 33 states and 48 international sites
  – Average coop salary is $16,000
Need for Student Mentorship and Engagement

- Limited space in engineering curriculum - focus on technical skills
- Workforce demands technical skills as well as strong communication skills, problem solving, and teamwork
- Prominent Drexel alum Paul Peck wanted to equip engineers with marketable skills and leadership experience
- Faculty caseloads are expanding leaving little room for faculty mentorship
- Retention
- New role of peer mentorship in fostering supportive relationships
- Research shows positive outcomes from peer mentor programs
Group Discussion

• Do you have a mentor? In what area? Home? Work? Education?
• Informal or informal?
• Were you ever a mentor? Positive aspects and challenges?
History of Paul Peck Scholars Program

- **2009**: Started with 22 peer mentors who supported UNIV E101 freshman seminar classes.
- **2011**: Program refined and mentors paired with smaller groups of freshman students.
- **2012**: Mentorship fused with existing leadership program.
- **2014**: Expansion of program to include fourth year of Paul Peck coursework, including a course in Engineering Education.
Introduction to the Program

What is the Paul Peck Program?
Peer mentor program for freshmen, leadership development program for upperclassmen.

What is a Peck Scholar?
Application and interview based program starting at the sophomore year, where students participate in specialized critical thinking programs which are designed to provide them with a competitive edge in the global economy.
Peck Scholars participate in:

- Peer mentorship (within UNIV101 class)
- Specialized courses
- Supplemental curriculum
- Seminars
- Specialized co-op opportunities
- Customized civic engagement opportunities (eg. Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day & EPICS Projects)
- Social activities and field trips (eg. conferences, workshops, etc.)
# Requirements of a Peck Scholar (Mentor)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Freshman (Mentee)</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Winter</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>UNIV E101: Mentor relationship</em></td>
<td><em>CIVC 101: Mentor relationship</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sophomore (Peck Scholar Mentor)</td>
<td>ENGR 295 (used to be ENGR 180): Mentorship (1)</td>
<td>ENGR 296 (used to be ENGR 180): Leadership (1)</td>
<td>Specialized co-op</td>
<td>Specialized co-op</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Junior (Peck Scholar)</td>
<td>EGMT 380: Survey of Engineering Management (2)</td>
<td>BUSN 491: Survey of Organizational Behavior (2)</td>
<td>Specialized co-op</td>
<td>Specialized co-op</td>
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<tr>
<td>Junior (Peck Scholar)</td>
<td>ENGR 180 (formal name coming soon): Engineering Education (1)</td>
<td>ENGR 380 (used to be ENGR 180: Peck Scholars Capstone (2)</td>
<td>Specialized co-op</td>
<td>Specialized co-op</td>
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Objectives of the Peck Program

Primary

• Engage mentors in leadership development through active mentorship
• Increase engagement and retention of freshman students through positive mentoring relationships

Secondary

• Self-reflection
• Communication skills
• Involvement with civic engagement
UNIV E101- Freshman Class

University Requirements
• Alcohol Education
• Haven Sexual Assault Prevention
• Academic Integrity & Course Registration Modules

Class Additions
• Discussions (class registration, research opportunities, community involvement)
• Scavenger hunt assignment
• Cultural arts presentation
• Sophomore peer mentor
Why Students Choose Mentorship

• Pay it forward- many of our mentors benefited from positive mentorship experience in the past
• International student transition- is it different?
• Interested in helping freshmen adapt to college life
• Outgoing and looking for new ways to get involved
• Looking for something extra (curricular + fun)
• Leadership skill development
Why Pair Sophomores with Freshmen?

• Freshman to sophomore retention is crucial
• Sophomores can relate to freshman experience
• Because of Drexel’s co-op program, sophomores are ideal
• Many have benefitted from positive experience with a mentor when they were freshmen
• What would you do at your institution?
Peer Mentorship in Action

• Sophomore Peck Scholars paired with freshmen in UNIV E101 seminar class
• Assist with in and out of class assignments
• Connect pre-matriculation and continue relationship through freshman year
• Goals
  – Next generation of leaders
  – Build supportive network for new students
  – Foster leadership skills in Peck Scholars
  – Academic and social acclimation to Drexel and to the Philadelphia community
Sample Application Questions (Mentors)

1. Please define mentorship and what qualities you think would make you a good mentor for next year’s freshman class.

2. Can you elaborate on any leadership experience you may have, and what experiences were the most valuable to you?

3. Paul Peck Scholars can organize activities for their freshman mentees. What sort of activities would you like to organize and/or would be beneficial to new students at Drexel?

4. How would you encourage your mentees to take full advantage of Drexel and their college experience?
Sample Application Questions (continued)

5. Give me an example of a time when you were asked a question at work and didn't know the answer to it. How did you handle that? What did you do?

6. How would you address a mentee who was not engaged with the mentorship program or with classwork and unresponsive to your e-mails/communication?
ENGR 295- Sophomore Class

- Participation in mentee events in UNIV E101 class
  - UNIV E101 and ENGR 295 happen during the same academic term
- On and off campus group events
- Readings on peer mentorship
- Discussion on differences/similarities between mentor and leader
- Written assignment- who is your mentor?
- Active listening and communication exercise
- Class discussion on progression of mentor-mentee relationships especially how to address challenges
- Final video assignment – advice for new students
ENGR 295- Sophomore Class
Group Activity

• Instructions (for groups of 2):
  – In your pair, designate a person A, who will close their eyes and stand on one side of the “minefield.” Person B will stand on the opposite side of the field, and provide verbal guidance to Person A with the ultimate goal being to get Person A across the field safely without stepping on any of the “mines.” If Person A steps on any of the mines, they must restart the exercise. Once Person A gets across safely, roles reverse and Person B must complete the journey with Person A’s guidance.

• What did you notice?
• What was hard?
• Trust building, communication, task driven, relationship building
Program Outcomes

• Assessment tools include: Surveys, focus groups, GPA/retention, and course evaluations
• Attracts diverse student population
  – Women, international students, minorities
• On scaled survey, freshmen and sophomores both reported high improvements in their ability to:
  – Engage in critical and valid self assessment
  – Value how team diversity leads to diverse ways of thinking
  – Take initiative of problem solving and project work
  – Communicate effectively with others
Student Population Breakdown

Student Major Divisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Majors</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AE</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSE</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDECIDED</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE</td>
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<td>ENGR</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>MECH</td>
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Number of Students
By Spring 2014, nearly 125 students were associated with the Peck Scholars program, either as first-year mentees, sophomore Scholars/mentors, or third-year Scholars in advanced leadership courses. At the request of students, the program grew to a 4th year in the 2014-2015 academic year.
Program Outcomes (Continued)

GPA & Retention

• Looking at students who have taken at least one course in the Peck Program, 92.4% remain at Drexel and 82% remain in the College of Engineering

• Average GPA of student who have taken at least one class in Peck Program is 3.07, compared to COE students overall who had an average GPA of 2.77 (2013-2014 AY data)
“The mentorship is really helping me build interpersonal skills as well. It's like a two way process, where you teach people as well improve yourself as you move forward. I really think that talking to my mentees each week helped them open up about their aspirations.”

- Current Peck Scholar (Sophomore)

“The program is a great way to get involved and to meet exceptional and driven new people, especially across disciplines.”

- Current Peck Scholar (Senior)
Adaptation

• Start small
• Recruit student volunteers to serve as mentors
• Provide food, t-shirts and verbal recognition to attract and retain mentors
• Provide both academic *and* social opportunities
• Ask for student feedback
• Leverage existing resources- look for classes that compliment each other, free museum days, guest speakers
Discussion Questions

• Is there a need for leadership development and peer mentorship at your school? If so, among which student populations?

• For those who currently work with peer mentorship programs, what have been some successful initiatives? What are some things that you’d like to change?

• For those who are creating or enhancing a peer mentor program, what are some challenges that you anticipate?

• Is there a best practice for pairing mentors and mentees?
Thank You!

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