



Program for Leadership and University Success – A Real “PLUS”

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1. Overview of Presentation

- Topics Covered:
- **Context** in which the program exists
- **Structure** and **goals** of the program
- **Student Success Mentors** – Who are they and what roles do they assume?
- hiring, training, supervision
- **Impact** of program on Mentors
- Program **evaluation**/user feedback

2. The Context: Concordia University

- **Large, urban/commuter** university with **two campuses**
- Approximately **40,000 students** (undergraduate, graduate programs)
- Education accessible to **non-traditional** students
- Very **diverse** student body
- **3 terms**: summer, fall and winter
- **Day and evening** classes

3. The Challenge

- To **provide support** to a large, diverse student body spread over two campuses
- To reach as **many students** as possible with a relatively **small number of peer mentors**
- To do this **without** the benefit of a **First Year Seminar/University 101** course

4. Meeting the Challenge: Program for Leadership and University Success “PLUS”

- **Goals of PLUS** are to provide:
- **leadership development** for students
- **positive role models and peer support** to *new* students during their first year transition to university
- **ongoing peer support** to *all* students throughout their time at university
- **opportunities and encouragement** for students to **become actively involved** in the university community and the community at large, thereby enhancing their educational and university experience

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5. How are the goals of “PLUS” achieved?

- Leadership Workshop Series & Certificate
- Student Success Mentor Program

6. Leadership Workshop Series & Certificate

- **Open** to all students
- Foundation for **leadership development**
- **6 workshops** / 19 hours
- What is a Leader?
- What is your Leadership Style?
- Communications Skills
- Embracing Diversity
- Conflict Management Skills
- Effective Group Dynamics
- **Certificate** awarded to students who complete all 19 hours

7. Meeting the Challenge: Counselling and Development

- One of several **Student Services** departments
- Includes the following service areas:
- **Services for New Students**
- **Student Success Program Centre**
- **Counselling and Psychological services**
- **Student Learning Services**
- **Career Services**

8. Meeting the Challenge – Extending our Reach

- Mentors engage in a **wide variety of activities** – if we don’t reach new students through one avenue, we’ll get them through another
- Mentors are part of a **larger team of peer assistants** working in the department; these other peers **complement what the mentors do**, providing additional contact and support
- Mentors provide a **valuable link and network to students** who might not normally reach out to professional services (word of mouth)

9. Creating a Win-Win-Win Situation

- **Benefits to students** – support and guidance from experienced students; access to a student perspective to complement professional advice available; connection to campus life/networking
- **Benefits to mentors** – employment and work experience; personal development and mentoring from supervisory staff; enhanced university experience
- **Benefits to department** – connection to students and assistance in promoting services; student insight (keeping it real); cost effective support; professional and personal satisfaction

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10. Student Success Mentor Program - Main Components

- **Peer Mentoring** for New Students
- Student **Success Program Centre**
- Student Success on the Road **Outreach**
- Student Experience **Seminars**
- Mentor Personal/Leadership **Development**

11. Student Success Mentors - Creating a balanced and representative team

Key qualities of Mentors:

- GPA
- knowledge of and experience at Concordia
- extra-curricular activities/student engagement
- diversity
- leadership ability/potential
- goal oriented
- Languages and communications skills
- self-awareness
- personal management skills
- learning strategies

Mentors hired through **application** process (C.V., university record, letter of intent) and **individual** and **group** interviews

- Group Interviews – mentor candidates work on activities in teams so that interpersonal skills and team composition can be assessed

12. Student Success Mentors – Who are they?

- Team of approximately 15 **upper year students**
- **Experienced** students: 24+ credits (8 one-term courses) / 2 semesters
- **Successful** students: GPA of 3.0+ (B)
- **Active** students: involved in student/campus life; volunteerism
- **Representative** of student body: undergraduate, graduate, all faculties, diverse backgrounds (language, residency, age, etc.)
- **Paid** (work study program) approximately 12 hours per week

13. What do the Mentors do? Orientation Programs for New Students

- (5 different orientation programs offered; mentors play a role in all)
- **Welcome/interact** with students at events
- Lead **icebreaker** activities
- **Perform in skit** about student success/resources
- **Poster presentations** on strategies for university success and student life
- Conduct interactive **tours**
- **Answer questions** and **provide information** on what it is like to be a student at Concordia

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14. What do the Mentors do? Mentor Groups for New Students

- New students (**Mentees**) assigned to a Mentor in the same Faculty/similar program
- **Personalized** service
- **Regular Communication** by email, phone or in-person
- **Responsive** to Mentee’s individual needs
- Bi-weekly “**Mentor Announcements**”
- **Phone campaign** “How’s it going?”
- Invitations to attend **seminars and outreach** events in which Mentors play an active role,
- **Office hours** in the Student Success Program Centre

15. What do the Mentors do? Student Success Program Centre - Staffing

- **Two drop-in centres** – one on each campus, relaxed, non-threatening, welcoming environment; open to ALL students
- **General Assistance** navigating university environment, policies, procedures, forms, etc.
- **Active listening** and **Referral**
- **Strategies** for academic and personal success, from a student perspective
- **Subject-specific one-on-one Tutoring**

16. What kinds of information do Mentees commonly seek?

- **University services** (what services are available, where to find them)
- **University regulations** (deadlines, policies, forms, etc.)
- **Peer-support programs** (writing, math, ESL, subject-specific tutoring, etc.)
- **Counselling and Development** services (counselling, learning support, workshops, etc.)
- **Student life** (clubs, associations, getting involved, student government, etc.)
- **Career** planning/job-search
- **Academic referral** (where to go for help with issues related to programs and courses)
- **Personal issues** (needed to talk about things like stress, roommates, housing, etc.)
- **Academic help** (direct assistance with a course-related task, subject-specific tutoring)
- **Educational Counselling** and Referral
- **Course selection/registration** information (which/how many courses, scheduling, professors, etc.)

17. What do the Mentors do? Outreach and Seminars

- **Student Success on the Road** (Outreach kiosks/information booths)
- **Fairs:** Depression Screening, Volunteer and Leadership Fair, Re-Discover Concordia Student Services Fair, Career Fairs, University Open House
- **Student Experience and First Year Experience Seminars:** Strategies and information of interest to students, from a student perspective
- **Liaison** with **student associations** and other **services** on campus
- **Promotion-** display boards and racks, posters, flyers

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18. Mentor Training: Pre-service

Includes:

- Team building
- Orientation to sector and department (services, people, organizational framework)
- Administrative and office procedures
- Confidentiality – what is it, why is it important and what is expected of you?
- Mentor Roles and tasks
- Communication (between team members, with supervisors, and with students)
- Mentees- who are they, how they get assigned, how/when you communicate with them

19. Mentor Supervision

- Supervisory **staff** (scheduling, daily tasks, trouble shooting, etc.)
- **Weekly meetings** (planning, team building, event reports, case studies, training, etc.)
- **Handbook** and reference binder
- Communication **blog** and email
- Liaison with **Counselling staff**

20. Mentor Training – Guidelines

- **Initiate contact** with students; maintain contact throughout the semester.
- **Be service-oriented** – non-verbal cues
- **Follow up** in a timely manner
- **Respect** and maintain privacy and **confidentiality**
- Be **friendly** and **supportive** (non judgmental)
- Be **flexible, empathetic** and **encouraging**
- **Listen** (actively), **validate** and **refer**
- Speak from a **personal perspective**; **share** you own strategies: “This is what I do when faced with a similar situation.” **Avoid “should”** statements.
- Be **helpful** and **resourceful**; keep **informed** and build knowledge from experience
- Stay within your **comfort zone**
- Ask for **support from supervisors** when needed.

21. Mentor Personal/Leadership Development

- Testing: Myers Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI), Strong Interest Inventory
- Professional Behaviour/Service Mentality
- Communications Skills: Active Listening, Reading Non-verbal Communication Cues, ESL Communication
- Dealing with issues of diversity and cultural differences
- Setting and Respecting Personal Boundaries
- Crisis Management and Referral
- Effective tutoring Strategy
- Career Planning, Creating an Effective C.V., Using the Career Resource Centre
- Critical and Analytical Thinking - Case Studies
- Presentation Skills (Preparing, Promoting and Presenting)
- Assuming Responsibility/Being Accountable

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22. MENTOR Evaluation/Feedback - Mid-year Self Evaluation

Objectives:

- to help mentors **identify** areas of **strength** to build on, and areas of **challenge** that require continued attention and further development;
- to provide mentors and supervisors a **basis for discussion** at a personal interview conducted later in the term.

Sample Items from Mid-year Evaluation Form:

- I'm knowledgeable about university resources, rules and policies.
- I can be counted on to complete tasks on time.
- I demonstrate initiative.
- I consult with my supervisors when I am not sure if/how/when to do something.
- I am solution oriented – I try to find ways to correct problems and/or suggest improvements.
- When I am responsible for an outreach table, seminar, or special event, I am well-prepared.
- I acknowledge emails and reply to them promptly (whether from fellow mentors, mentees, supervisors or others).
- I am aware of the study skills/learning strategies that I use and I am able to/do share these with other students
- I keep up with what's going on in the university. I am a good networker.
- I respect confidentiality.
- I employ active listening skills.
- I am punctual.
- I lead by example. I am a good role model for others.
- I try to see things from different points of view, not only my own.

23. MENTOR Evaluation / Feedback Year-end Report

Written feedback about mentoring experience in relation to personal, career and general skills development

- Job Expectations vs. actual experience
- Training and supervision
- Relations with other workers (mentors, supervisors, department staff)
- Interaction with mentees/students
- Personal Development
- Educational and Career Development

Contributing to Mentor growth and development:

- “I grew a lot because of this job. I am now much more confident in my abilities because the work environment at the SSPC is very supportive and I was given many opportunities to go beyond what I thought I could do. I became less shy than I used to be. I am a better listener as well and I have improved my ability to help others identify their problems. I use my experiences from the centre in my daily life because, for example, I have learned how to better deal with difficult people or people who are going through difficulties.” J.D. (Mentor)

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24. MENTEE Feedback – Year-end Online Survey

- Solicits information on:
- Participation in events
- How student learned of service
- Use of services; types of assistance sought
- Relationship with Mentor; impact of Mentor experience
- Methods of communication with Mentor

Sample Feedback from MENTEES

(Percentage of student respondents who agreed or agreed strongly)

- The Student Success Mentor made my first year experience more positive. 86%
- It was easy to reach my Student Success Mentor when I needed to. 88%
- I felt comfortable communicating with my Student Success Mentor. 88%
- The Student Success Mentor was able to answer most of my questions. 88%
- The Student Success Mentor gave me good advice. 92%
- I appreciated the regular email announcements I received from my Student Success Mentor. 90%
- I appreciated the phone calls I received from my Student Success Mentor. 69%
- I would recommend the Mentor Groups (Student Success Mentors) to new students. 91%

25. Feedback from Mentees

- I liked the tour of the school and getting to know about different services offered.
- My mentor (and all the other mentors) were always friendly, helpful, and welcoming. I felt comfortable going to my mentor for help with school and personal issues, and I enjoyed talking with her.
- It was nice to just know I could talk to someone... anyone really. I moved here to go to school and knew nobody. It was good to be able to just sit and have a conversation about how it was going. He told me about moving here from China and was feeling the same way the first year, i.e., spending Friday nights in the library. He said joining a sports team helped him and I agreed that I felt much better since joining a squash club. I knew he was there if I wanted to talk further and that helped a lot.
- I really enjoyed receiving the monthly e-mails from my mentor because it kept me aware of events happening around school. Furthermore, I sincerely appreciated the check-up phone call I got from my mentor because it showed she cared about my well-being and that she wanted to help.

26. Conclusion - Student Success Mentor Program

- Employs a small number of carefully chosen, trained and supervised students
- Reaches out to large, diverse student body by engaging mentors in wide range of activities
- Responsive to students' needs
- Provides students with peer support and perspective
- Connects students to information, resources, and professionals
- Benefits student users, mentors and department
- Provides a positive impact on university education and experience