

Higher Education Access & Development Services (HEADS)

Success for tomorrow



Group mentoring as a Living and Learning Community

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University
South Africa

23rd First-year experience conference
Hawaii

Port Elizabeth, South Africa



South Africa

- Population - about 50 million in 2009
- 80% African, divided in 8 major indigenous groups with Xhosa and Zulu the largest
- 10% White
- 9 Provinces
- 11 Official languages – only 17% English home language
- Capital Pretoria + Parliament in Cape Town
- First Democratic election in 1994; ANC; President Nelson Mandela; Jacob Zuma

South African Higher Education

- 39 Universities and Technikons before 1994
- Historically divided on racial grounds
- Access to all opened after 1994
- Unequal schooling system with learners from township and rural schools unprepared for Higher Education studies
- Reduced through mergers in 2004/5 to 23 universities, divided in 3 categories (political rather than educational reasons):
 - Traditional universities offering general formative and professional degrees up to Doctoral level
 - Universities of Technologies offering diplomas and certificates with a strong vocational focus
 - Comprehensive universities offering both degrees and diplomas

Port Elizabeth, South Africa



Port Elizabeth

- Port Elizabeth the largest city in Eastern Cape
- About R1.2m people
- Major automotive industry
- Part of larger Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan area
- Known as “Die Baai – The Bay”, “The Windy City” or “The Friendly City”
- Only one university in the Metropolitan area, the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (**NMMU**)
- Eastern Cape lowest school pass rates in SA

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

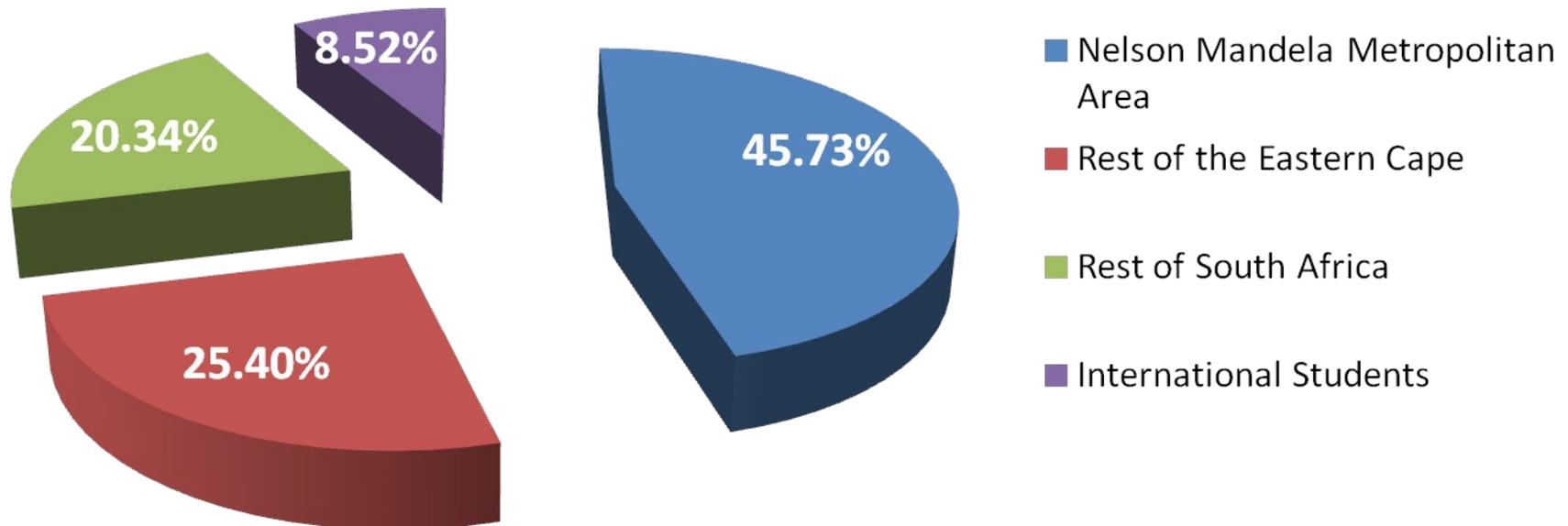


Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

- Comprehensive university formed in 2005 through the merger of:
 - University of Port Elizabeth
 - Port Elizabeth Technikon (University of Technology)
 - Port Elizabeth campus of Vista University
- 22 000 students – 56% Black, 27% White, 52% Female
- 5 campuses in Port Elizabeth and 1 in George
- English used as Language of Teaching & Learning
- About 26% with English as home language – 40% Xhosa; 15% Afrikaans – more than 30 diff ones
- Eastern Cape worst school performance of all provinces

GEOGRAPHIC SPREAD OF ALL 2009 NMMU ENROLLED STUDENTS

Origin of NMMU Students



- 7 Faculties (Colleges or Schools):

Sciences, Health Sciences, Arts, Business & Economic Sciences, Law and Engineering, the Built Environment and Information Technology

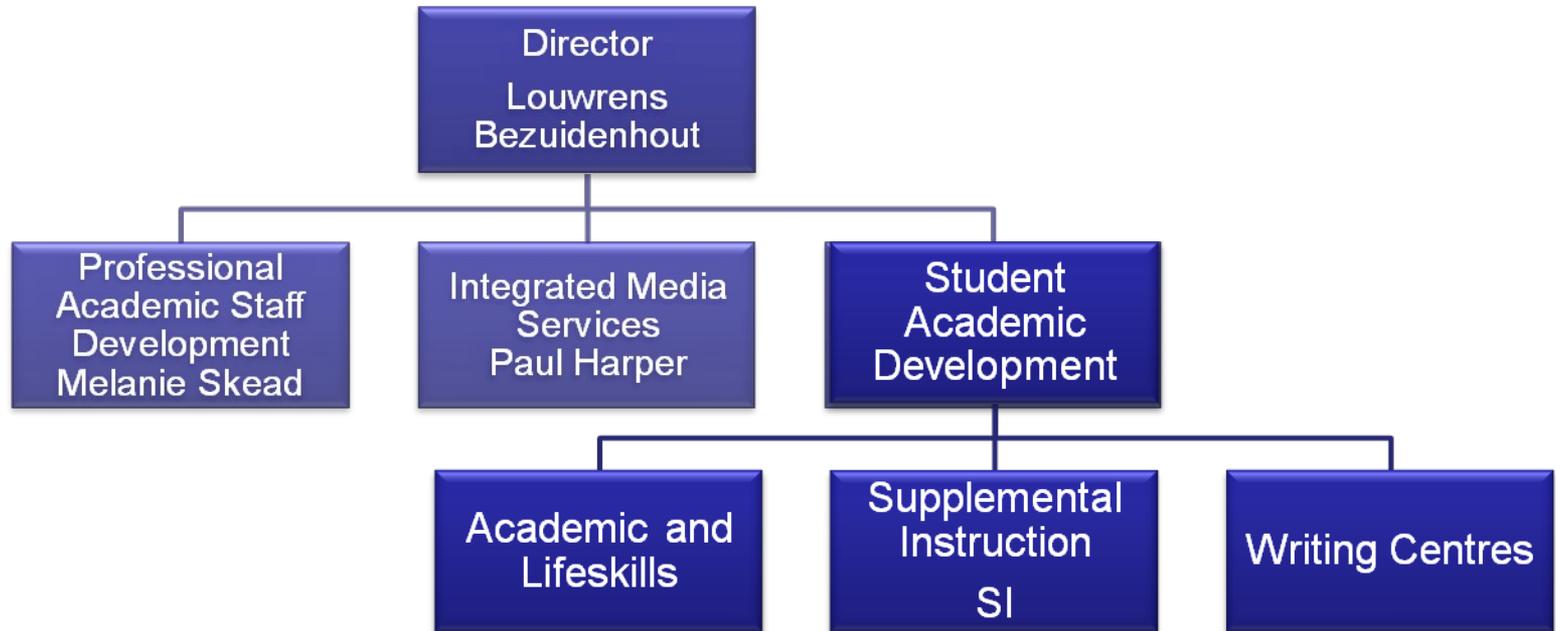
- Higher Education Access and Development Services (HEADS)

- Centre for Extended Studies (CES)
- Student Counselling
- Centre for Admission Assessment and Research
- **Centre for Teaching, Learning and Media**

Centre for Teaching Learning and Media staff



Centre for Teaching Learning and Media (CTLM)





South African universities are challenged to support students in their strive to cope with the demands of tertiary studies

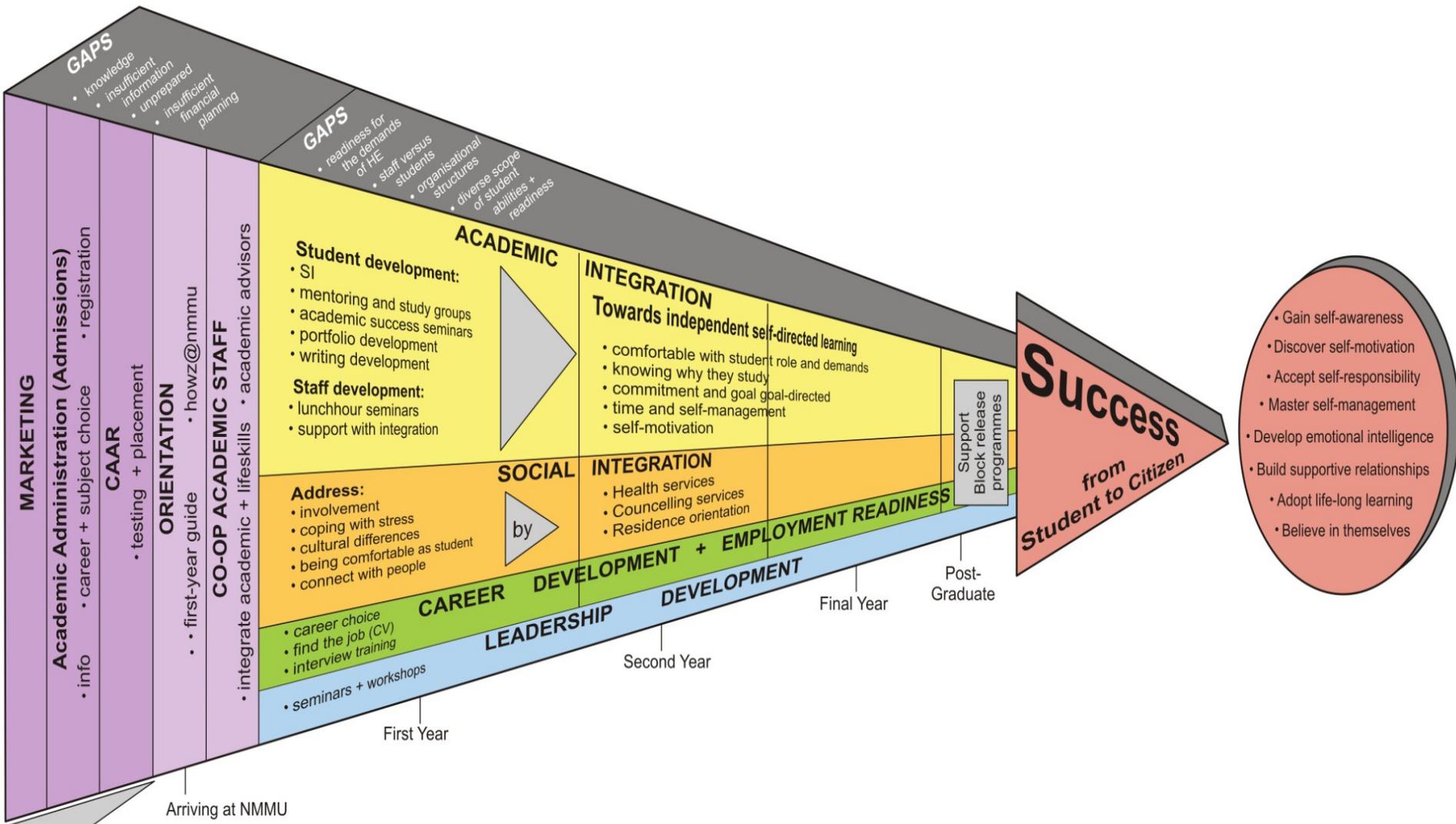
Sunday Times, 21 Oct. 2007

Why do we have Living and Learning Communities at NMMU?

Many SA students not prepared for demands of tertiary studies - this may impact on students' performance and success, some gaps:

- Knowledge, and important academic and life skills – 2007 intake 4840 first-years, 3653 (75%) medium or high risk - 50.3% not used Writing Centre, 25.9% not aware of SI.
- Achievement gap - lack of values and attitudes needed to succeed. 44.9% (2007) do not belong to any student society
- Language needs often linked to difficulties students experience with writing and not knowing how to reference
- Lack of global awareness
- Cultural diversity

Ways in which NMMU provide support and development opportunities



From entering, to cope with demands towards becoming an employable graduate

What is Living and learning Communities?

What is a LLC?

- A setting or group – which forms a community
- That facilitate relationships between students, and staff
- Offer support and a variety of activities
- Mainly focus on first-years – however learning communities are for senior students and staff



The aim of LLC is to enhance student's learning and their lives!

Living and Learning Communities ...



- Offer students opportunities to “build networks with peers - provides both academic and social support” (Tinto, Love and Russo (1993) in Krause, n.d, 302).
- Students share common theme / academic / professional / personal interest.
- Encourage connections between students and staff (academic, HEADS and Student Affairs), and amongst staff.
- Provide a smaller community within the larger university community
- Students can connect more deeply in learning and constructing meaning, develop more personal and interpersonal relationships, and become part of a friendly, supportive, collaborative and challenging group/community.
- Contribute to academic success, personal and social development, integration of academic and social experiences, the overall student experience and the wide range of competencies gained Zhao and Kuh (n.d., p. 16).

Living and Learning Communities

Studies indicated positive correlation between social integration variables and academic success, added to that institutional commitment, retention, and career success (Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993, p. 131; Carroll, 1988; Pascarella, 1985; Maxwell, Pascarella & Chapman, 1983; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

Social integration is one of the most influential factors (Tinto (1993, p. 56)

Living and Learning communities contribute to students social integration. Mentoring as a LLC offers intentional development opportunities - 1st year experience is normalized (they do not feel alone), they have a set of frameworks to think about tertiary studies and they can understand the problem they face better. (Hunter, MacCalla-Wiggins & White, 2007:16)

Mentoring as a LLC

Factors that define a sense of community:

- “membership,
- influence,
- fulfilment of individuals needs and
- shared events and emotional connections”. (McMillan and Chavis, 1986)

Mentoring enhance the first-year experience, it

- Offer students support to adapt** to each other (especially in terms of **diversity**)
- Build new **relationships, living together**
- Enables coping with lectures and lecturers (coping in the lectures, **taking notes**, understanding them, managing the different academic disciplines)
- Support them in **managing their time** and the **workload**, knowing their **goals** and how to set action plans to achieve them, **knowing themselves, study strategies, managing stress and financial management**).

Mentoring is

What is mentoring?

- Process of guiding and facilitating a less experienced person to achieve growth.
- About helping the new students to learn from their experiences.
- Supportive, friendly, caring and structured relationship - focuses on the needs of the mentored student - is based on encouragement, constructive comments, openness, mutual trust, respect, and a willingness to learn and share.

Goal of mentoring?

Goal of mentoring is to:

provide students with the support and skills they may need to cope with demands of studying at the NMMU

by assisting them in becoming engaged with the university community

and promoting life-long learning through critical thinking and social awareness

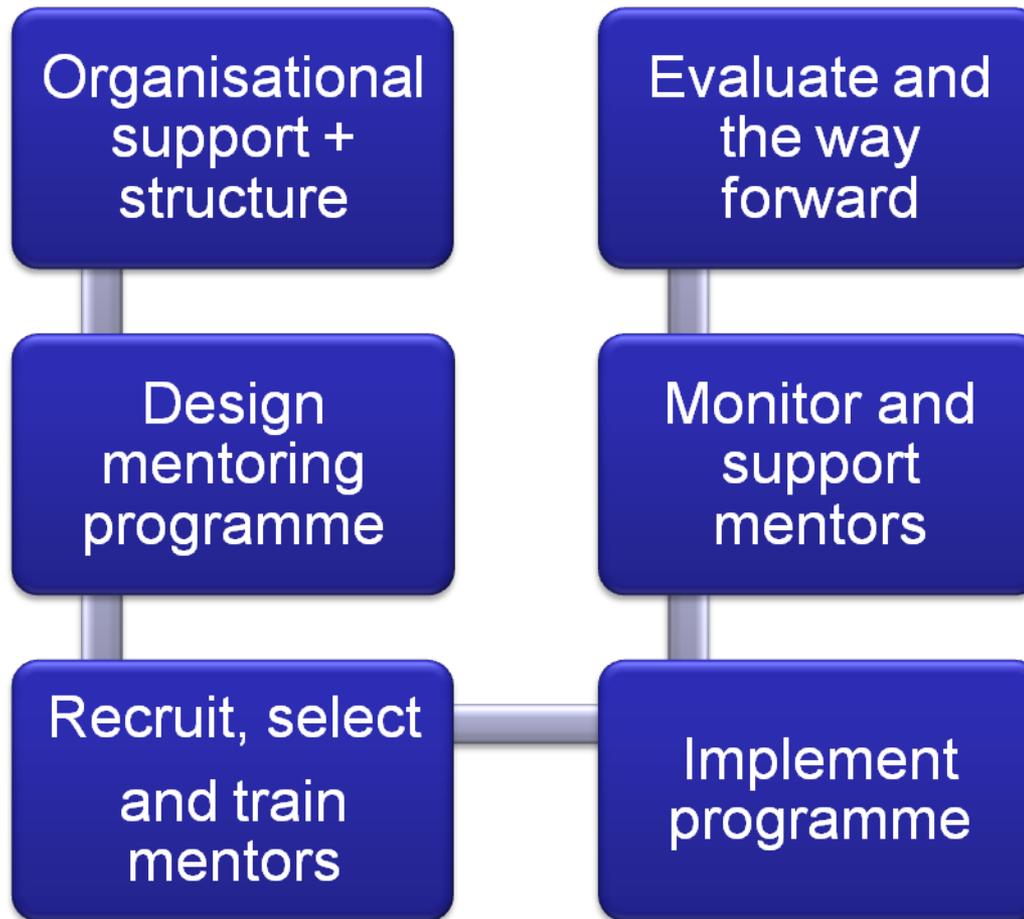
Benefits of mentoring



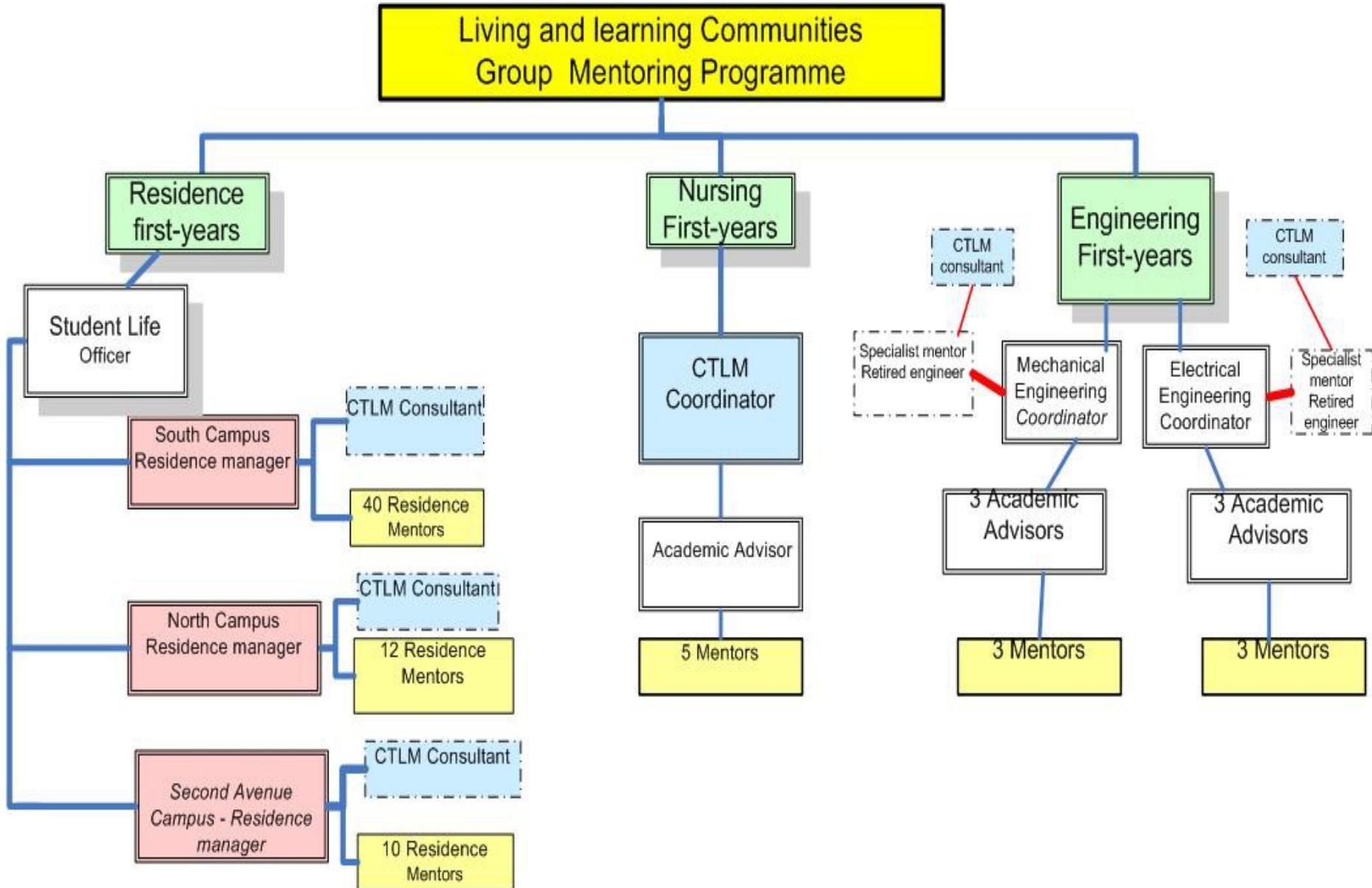
First Year	Residence	Mentor	NMMU
Academic support	Contributes to interaction between students	Valuable learning experience	Contributes to student life at the university
Promotes personal success		Promotes personal success	Sends students out that have improved leadership and interpersonal skills
Improve university-student relationship	Promotes student relationships	Improve university-student relationship	Improve university-student relationship
Improve retention and pass rates		Develop facilitation skills	Improve retention and pass rates
Develop leadership + interpersonal skills		Develop leadership and interpersonal skills	Students that they send out are more employable
Encourage lifelong learning	Contributes to living and learning communities	Encourage lifelong learning	
Developing self management		Become more employable	
		Self-development	

Process of implementing the residence mentoring programme

Similar to what Hopkins-Thomson (2006, 31) describes as denominators for a successful mentoring programme, the process NMMU utilised entailed:



Structure of Group mentoring at NMMU



Residence mentors



Recruit and select



Residence mentors - recruitment via email and posters, paper application, Res manager interview

Nursing mentors – Social Work department select them on prior knowledge

Engineering mentors – Selected by Academic Staff - they are all post grad students

The selection criteria (residence mentors):

- Must be registered and staying in residence
- A caring and resourceful type of person
- Enjoy working in groups
- Academic competence
- Interest in facilitating the adjustment of 1st Years to academic + campus life
- Agree to do training and follow up training and attend meetings

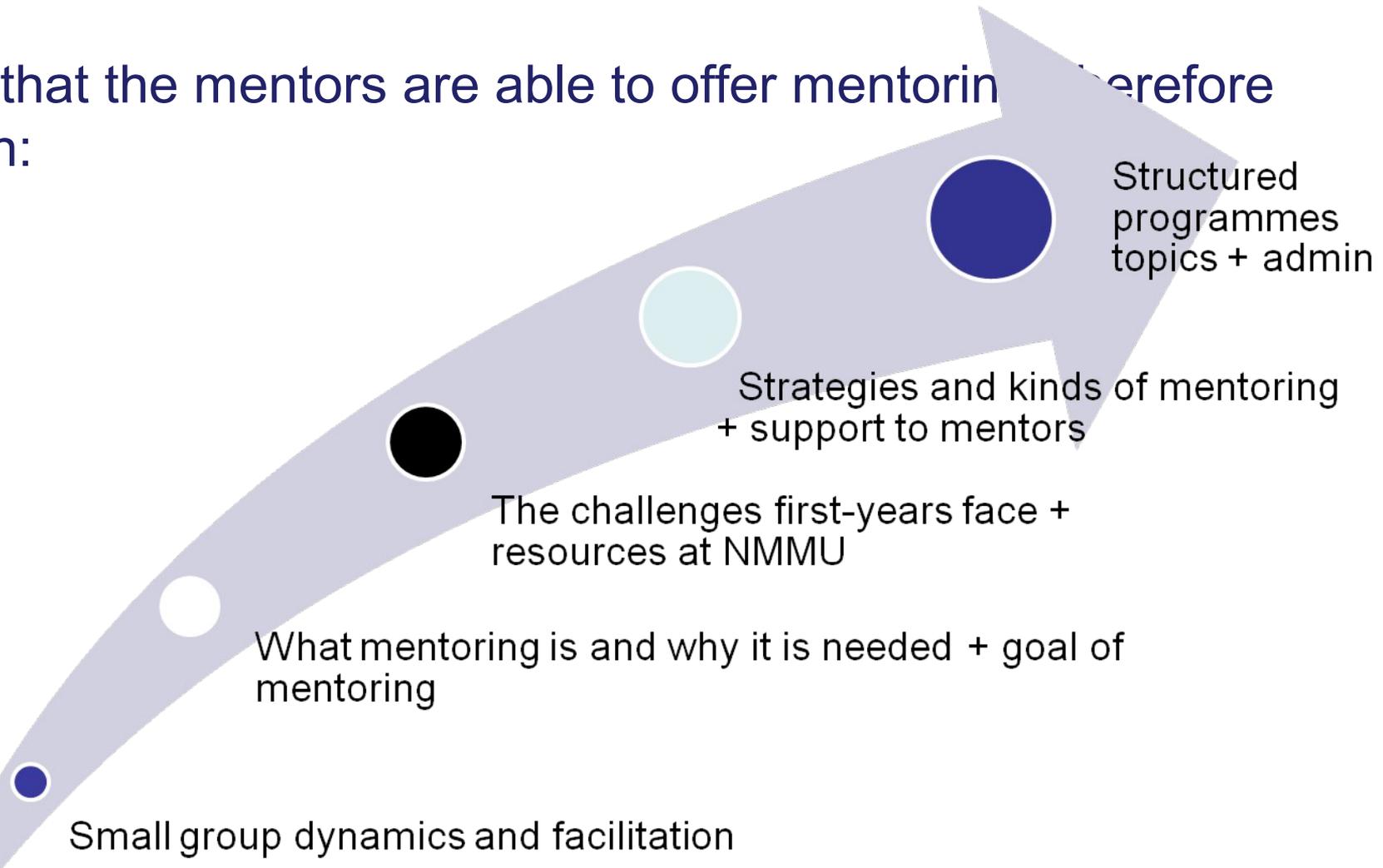
Interview is an opportunity

- to assess applicant's suitability and commitment
- allows the applicant to clarify issues
- to share the expectations of being a mentor (Grove and Huon, 2003, 7)



Content of mentor training

Ensure that the mentors are able to offer mentoring. Therefore focus on:



Implementation phase examples

Nursing mentoring

- Offered since 2008
- Implemented with the department
- Department carry all budget costs

Residence mentoring

- Implemented in 2008
- Supported by senior staff, must get residence managers (who's job-descriptions have changed) to understand their role and to support it further.

Engineering mentoring

- New programme – only implemented this year, 2010
- Departmental buy-in a challenge – however the Dean and Director of school is very keen

Support



Support built the mentors confidence and trust in their ability of being a mentor.

Support were offered in different ways:

- **Online support** via email – encourage them, to offer open line of communication. Easy and effective, used to share information, reading material and sending reminders re administrative tasks
- **Regular meetings** with an open agenda point - could raise and discuss anything and the opportunity to learn form each other.
- **Follow up training** once per semester
- **Feedback** from mentor said *“the occasional meetings that were held seemed to help because we got a chance to state any problems that were having”*.
- Residence staff was close by and available to support mentors. They kept resources (stationary + reading material for mentors to collect for their groups).
- Mentors need **recognition** – received training certificate, as well as a certificate at residence end of year function and small financial honorarium.

Evaluation

All 3 programmes offered the following feedback:

- First-year students (mentees) complete evaluation forms at the end of the first and second semester
- Mentors submit semester and year reports sharing their experiences and offer suggestions towards the improvement of the programme.
- Mentors are also encouraged to develop a Portfolio

Attendance and how often? (2008 Residence mentoring)



CAMPUS Attended more than 9 times

CAMPUS	First semester	Second semester
Second avenue	62%	28%
North Campus	9%	10%
South campus	11%	15%

How often should the mentoring groups meet?	First semester group mentoring: sessions per campus		
	Second N=29	North N=50	South N=115
Once a week	56%	42%	39%
Once every two weeks	16%	35%	38%
Once a month	24%	18%	22%
Once a term	4%	5%	0

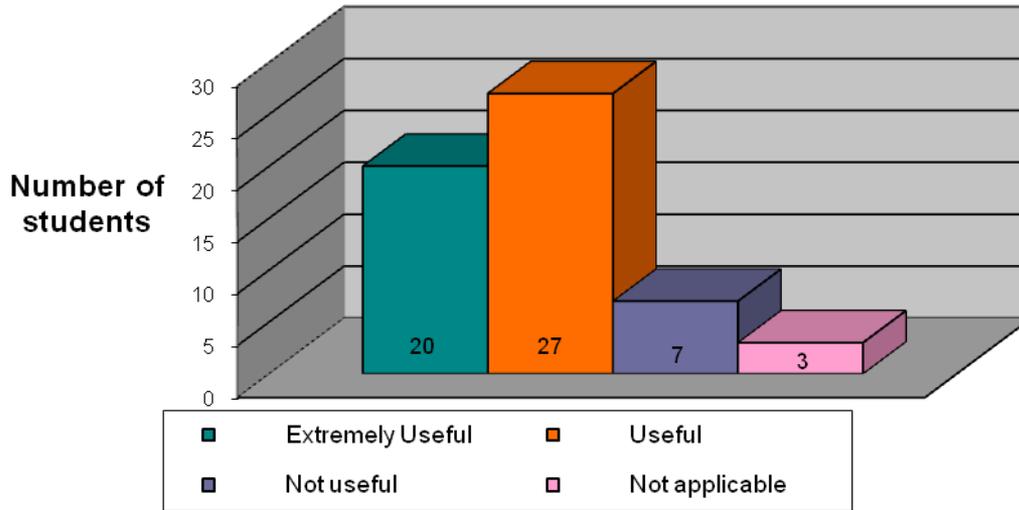
Usefulness

Feedback from first-year Nursing students 2009	Extremely useful	Useful	Not useful	Not Applicable
Relevancy to my needs	39%	58%	3%	0
Topics discussed	42%	58%	0	0
Well facilitated by mentor	64%	36%	0	0
Met my expectations	39%	53%	6%	3%

Feedback first-year diploma students - North Campus residences

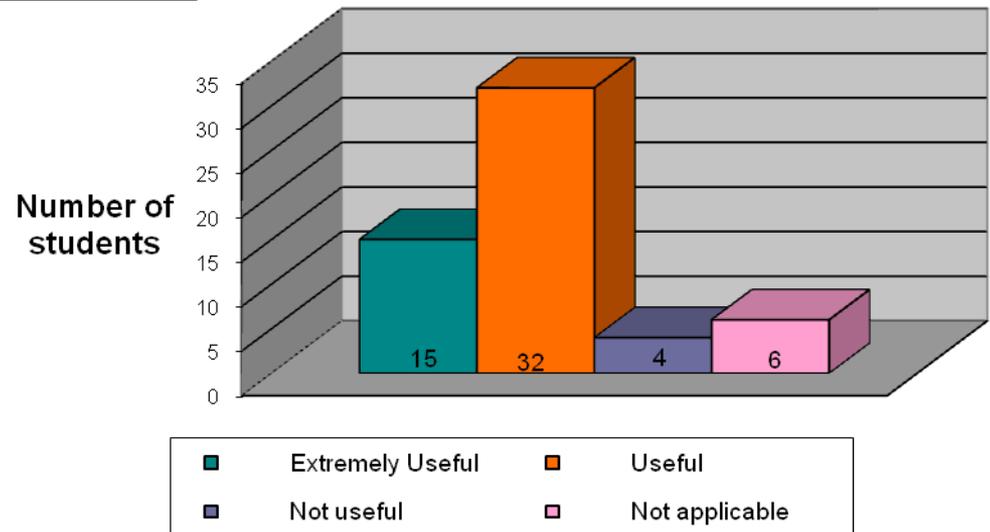


Relevancy to needs



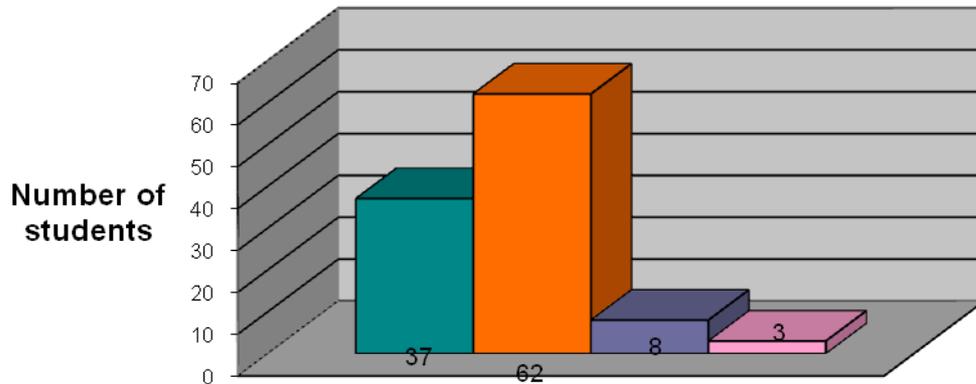
n=60 (number of respondents)

Met my expectations



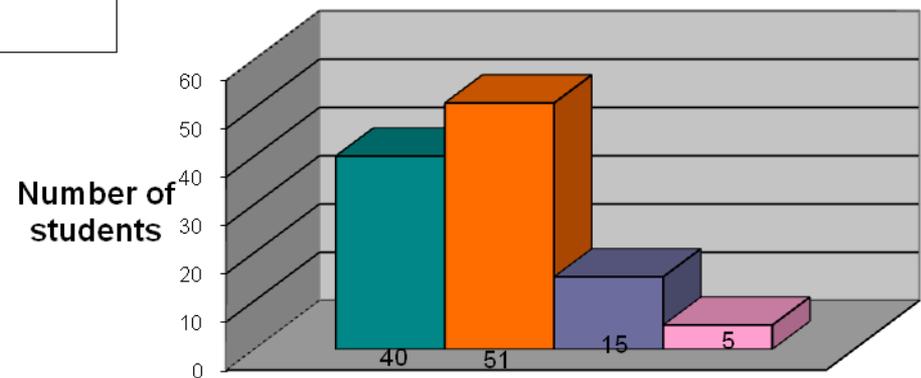
Feedback first-years degree students South Campus residences

Relevancy to needs



n=115 (number of respondents)

Met my expectations



Most helpful topics

Residences 1st years indicated most helpful topics to be:

- time management
- stress management
- study techniques
- test and exam preparation
- doing assignments
- discussions between “flat mates”.

Qualities of mentors



Descriptions	Total N= 185
Approachable	77%
Speaks clearly	66%
Supporter and encourager	65%
Non-judgmental	65%
Good listener	65%
Encourages participation	64%
On time	64%
Advisor	63%
Well prepared	63%
Knowledgeable	60%

Impact on mentors

- gained personally, one said *“I improved my own time management and goal-setting. The experience I have gained has improved my marks and has helped me grow as a woman”*.
- Another said *“Going through certain topics kept me going as I can re-apply what I will be sharing with the mentees to my own life”*.
- A further indicated he *“learned a lot even from them because to deal with diverse cultures in one group is another experience alone but I taught them to learn to assimilate with one another and let each one of us move away from our comfort zones and create an environment that will be conducive for all of us”*.
- Many indicated growth, one said *“I grew a lot. I became more open and friendlier. I’m confident now to address or speak in front of a group”*.

Mentors valued

- Mentors indicated that participating in the mentoring programme contributed very positively to their own personal development.
- They highly valued the impact the programme on;
 - improving their study strategies
 - focusing on their own studies
 - having more effective time management
 - better relationship skills
 - more committed to their studies
 - opportunities to share knowledge
 - developing mentoring and facilitation skills
 - increased self-knowledge.

Feedback utilised

More structured residence mentoring programme included:

- Teambuilding event to encouraging community building
- Get to know each other, residence life and adjusting to varsity life and getting along with your room mate
- Goal setting + Time management
- Study Strategies + Social event of their choice
- The group had a choice of one session's topic
- Note taking strategies
- One general + one academic reflection - test problems and progress on tests and assignments
- Dealing with their concerns – Individual sessions
- Organising for exams
- Reflection, social and evaluations

Suggestions for improvement

- Mentors should be studying the same course as the mentees to be able to help with subject content;
- More fun during sessions, creative with mental games, challenges + discussions that encourage participation;
- Possibly an awards ceremony for best, participating/attending
- Mentoring venue should be made more comfortable;
- Market and advertise the mentoring more;
- Encourage study groups;
- More social functions and interaction;
- Sessions on specific day + time - students then not forget to attend – consult mentees to decide on convenient time
- More course specific

Finally

- The value of a mentoring programme to the mentor is clearly indicated by a mentor saying *“thanks for giving us this wonderful opportunity to help shape the future of fellow students and at the same time developing our facilitation skills and interpersonal relations”*.

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Thank you

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More photos! Second ave campus



Second avenue campus



North campus



South campus



George campus





