



UNSW
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

**Arts and
Social Sciences**

Development of the Arts and Social Science Peer Mentoring at UNSW 2004-2010

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- 1. Origins of the Peer-Mentoring Program**
 - **First-year transition problems in Australia**

- National study in 1995 by McGinnis and James
- First-year experience study by Hall (2000)
- Growth of peer-mentoring literature
- **Introduction of first programs at UNSW**
 - Rural and Remote Scheme in 2002
 - Arts and Social Science program introduced in 2003
 - University wide programs by 2004 total 27

2. The University of New South Wales

- Large university located in Sydney, New South Wales Australia with a total enrolment of over 46,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students of which over 11,000 are international students
- Established in 1949
- Programs offered in Arts and Social Sciences, Built Environment, Business, Engineering, Fine Arts, Law, Medicine and Science

3. Program Structure

- **Mentor recruitment and training**
 - Mentors recruited from upper level students in the preceding year
 - Mentors complete a training course offered by the University Counseling service
- **Mentee recruitment**
 - By invitation on enrolment
- **Duration and Organization**
 - Program runs for first seven weeks of semester
 - Mentees assigned in groups of six to ten to mentors
 - Meetings of mentees with their mentors held at least bi-weekly
- **Program administration**
 - Each program coordinated by a program manager

4. The Arts and Social Science Program

- Arts and Social Sciences at the University of New South Wales offers undergraduate and postgraduate programs in arts, social sciences, social work, media and communications and education
- Over 1,000 students commence undergraduate programs each year
- The Peer-Mentoring program is offered to all new undergraduate students each year since 2003

5. Evaluation of the Program

- Questionnaires sent to all mentees and mentors after program completion
- Mentee questionnaire addressed helpfulness of the program and problems experienced with it

- Mentor questionnaire addressed how mentors had helped their mentees and skills acquired from the program
- Interviews with selected mentees in 2004 to ascertain problems experienced by them with the program

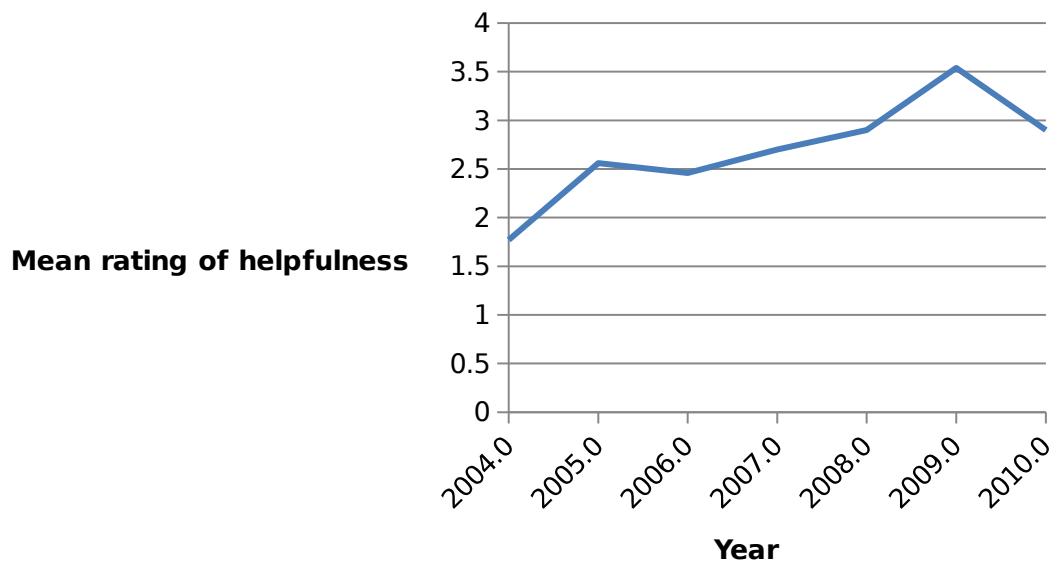
6. Participation in the Peer-Mentoring Program

	Year						
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Participants in peer-mentoring program	152	161	200	249	188	278	306
New Arts & Social Science students	1060	1171	1300	1395	1250	1384	1661
% participating in program	14.3	13.8	15.4	17.8	15.0	20.1	18.4
Number completing questionnaire	63	112	123	75	81	142	142
Response rate (%)	41.4	69.6	61.5	30.1	43.1	51.1	46.4
Number of mentors	22	27	25	24	24	34	41

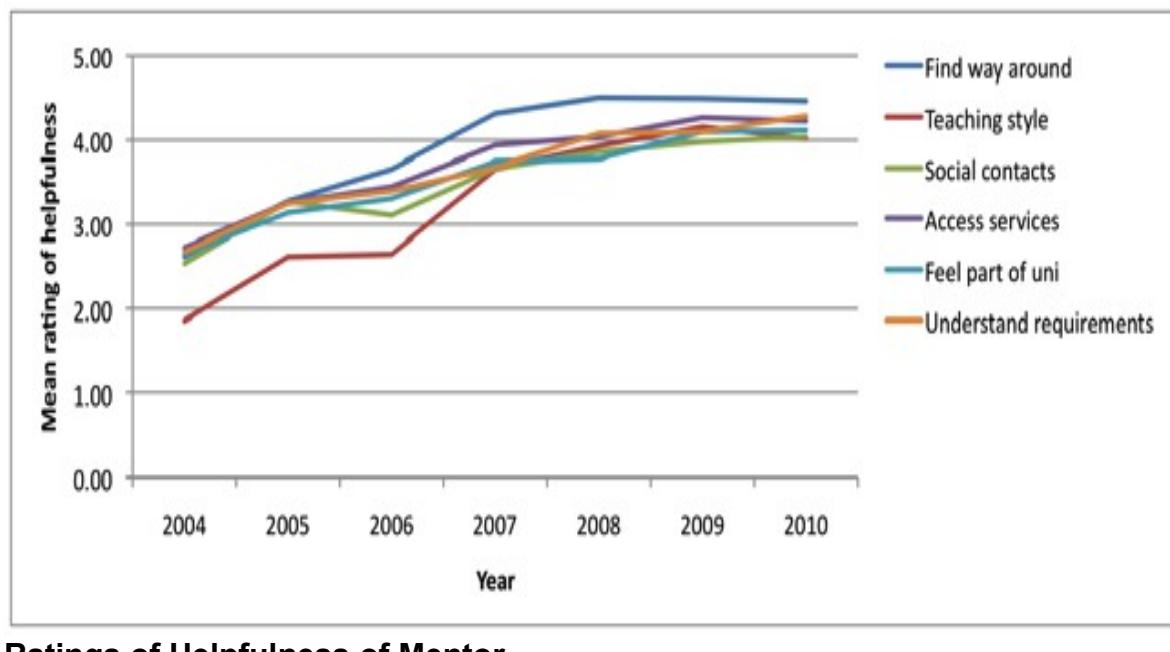
7. Mentee Feedback

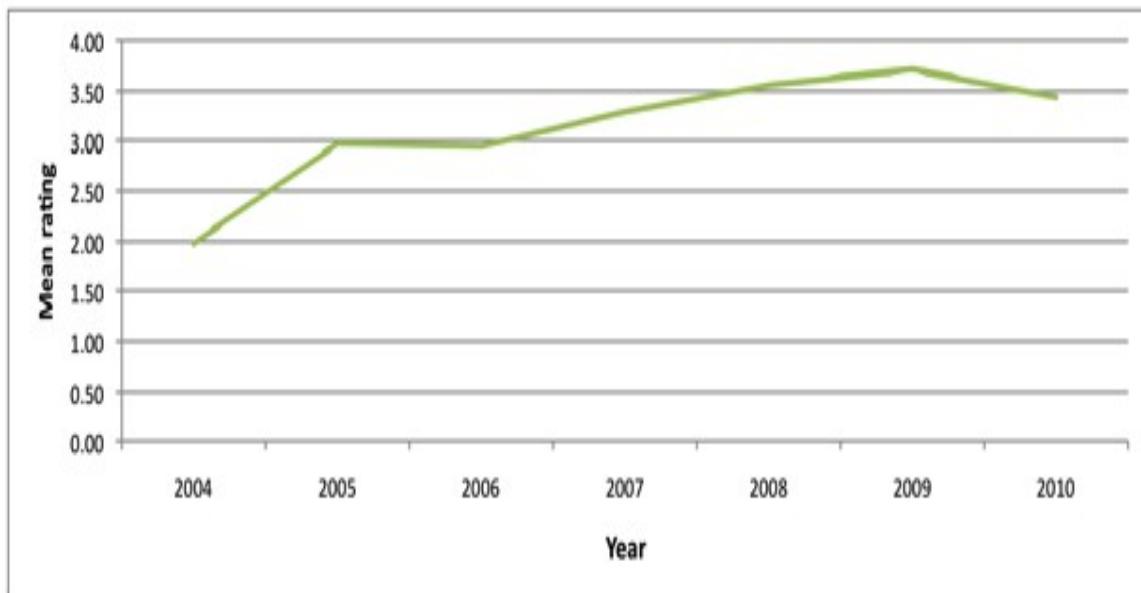
- Had mentees considered discontinuing or deferring their studies and if so what impact did the peer-mentoring program have on their decision to stay?
- How helpful did mentees find the program in the following areas?
 - Finding their way around the university
 - Adjusting to the teaching style at university
 - Making social contacts
 - Accessing university services
 - Feeling part of the university community
 - Dealing with administrative requirements
- How helpful did mentees find their mentor?
- What problems with the program did mentees experience?

8. Helpfulness of the Program in Averting Discontinuations



9. Helpfulness of the Program in specific areas





Percentage of Mentees Reporting Scheduling Problems

Year	% Reporting Problems		
	Major	Minor	None
2006	29.4	40.4	30.3
2007	22.1	27.9	50.0
2008	12.3	23.3	64.4
2009	12.0	29.1	59.0
2010	9.8	26.2	63.9

12. Comments by Mentees

Typical comments by mentees included:

"I'm usually a shy person though, so it was hard to participate in the discussions at first but I think now I'm fine. I think signing up for a peer mentor is the best decision I have ever made."

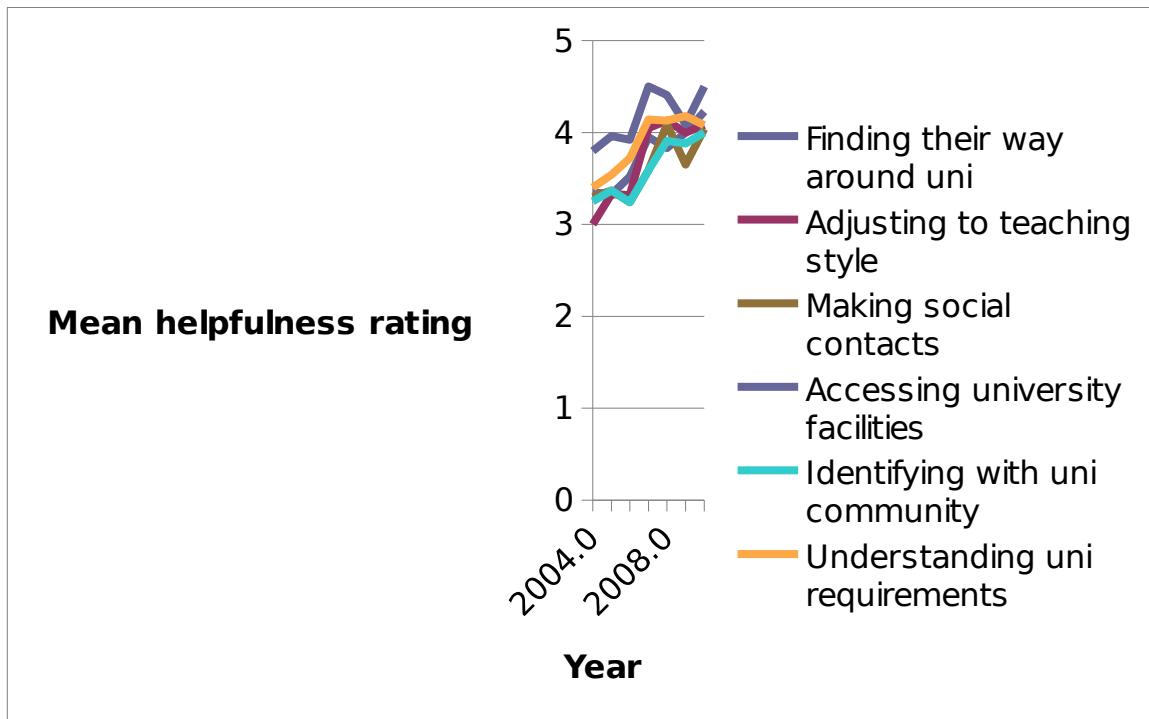
"I think the mentoring program is really special because there is another avenue to feel a part of this campus when it is so easy to feel small and out of place."

"The peer mentoring program I think has been a great idea. It has allowed us to adapt to university life knowing that someone older and experienced will be there if we have had any problems. It has also been a great way of meeting new people and making new friends, which I think has been very important at this early stage of university life."

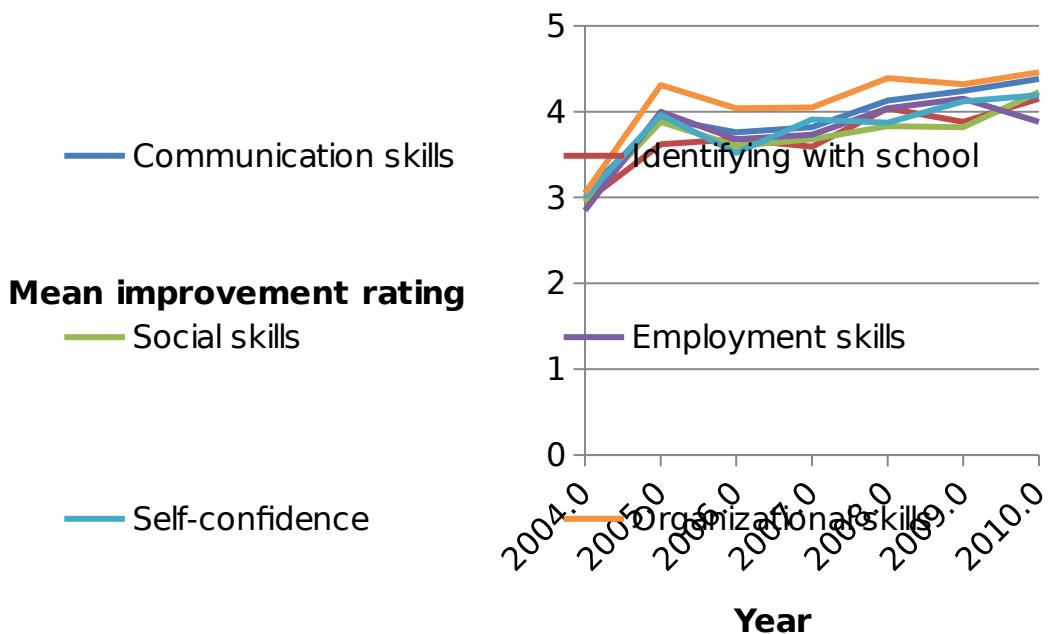
13. Mentor Feedback

- How helpful did mentors feel they had been in each of the areas identified in the mentee questionnaire?
- What skills did mentors feel they had gained from participation in the program?
- How helpful did mentors find the training program?

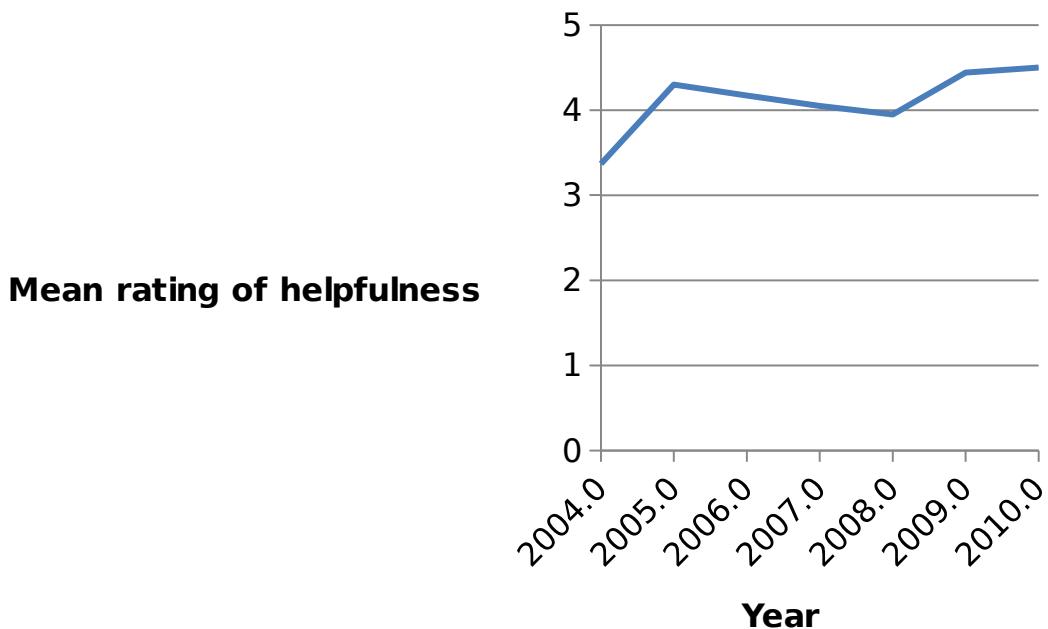
14. Ratings of Helpfulness by Mentors



15. Ratings by Mentors of Skill Improvements



16. Ratings by Mentors of Helpfulness of Training



17. Comment by Mentor

Selected comment by Mentor in 2009 through the mentors journal:

“A major insight in the past few weeks has definitely been the confirmation of how important I and the other mentors, and the mentoring program as a whole, are. I always thought of the role of being a mentor as important, but actually taking part in activities, organizing meetings, sending emails, answering phone calls from lost first year students and facilitating my meetings with my first years has only made my knowledge of this all the more stronger. Seeing the experience of my first years has made me realise only more that uni can be daunting and it is good to have someone there to act as a kind of guide, and to answer questions. This insight is also coupled with discoveries about myself, mainly that my confidence has improved, showing me that this is a rewarding experience for me and I also very much hope for my first year students.”

18. Program Improvements Implemented

- **Mentor recruitment**

- New procedure introduced in 2006. All applicants are interviewed to assess their suitability for the role of mentor
- In addition to University Counseling Training mentors attend an information meeting and two strategic planning sessions
- Resources for mentors provided to assist with program content

- **Support for mentees**

- Introduction of weekly drop-in sessions from 2007 hosted by mentors for mentees not able to attend meetings
- Mentoring groups combined when numbers attending drop below three to ensure adequate group size for effective communication
- Introduction of a “Meet the Professor” forum where a senior academic spoke about how to communicate with faculty members, student rights and responsibilities and the differences between school and university

- **Communication with Mentees**

- Introduction of a mentoring web site in 2007 to facilitate communication among mentees, mentors and the Program Manager
- More frequent phone and email contact with mentees to keep them informed of developments

- **Support for Mentors**

- Feedback meeting held with the Program Manager mid-way through the program to enable them to exchange ideas, raise problems and discuss solutions
- Establishment of a Peer Mentors web site in 2007 to enable communication among mentors and with the Program Manager

- Introduction of Senior Mentors in 2008 to mentor the mentors. Senior Mentors were chosen from among mentors from previous years

19. Conclusion

- Program changes have resulted in improvements in all indicators of program success
- Mentoring programs need to include:
 - Careful selection of mentors to ensure suitability for the role
 - Comprehensive training of mentors in their role and responsibilities
 - Provision of resources to mentors to assist in program content
 - Inclusion of content designed to promote successful integration and social support for mentees
 - Effective communication strategies among mentees, mentors and program administrators to enable frequent contact, exchange of ideas and problem solving
- Generalizability of Findings
 - Can the features of this program be generalized to other institutions?

20. References

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