

# Giving Back: Supporting upperclassmen returning to their FYE program as mentors

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# Take-Aways

- A new way to look at mentoring
- How mentoring can line up with research
- Lessons learned
- Best practices
- New ideas

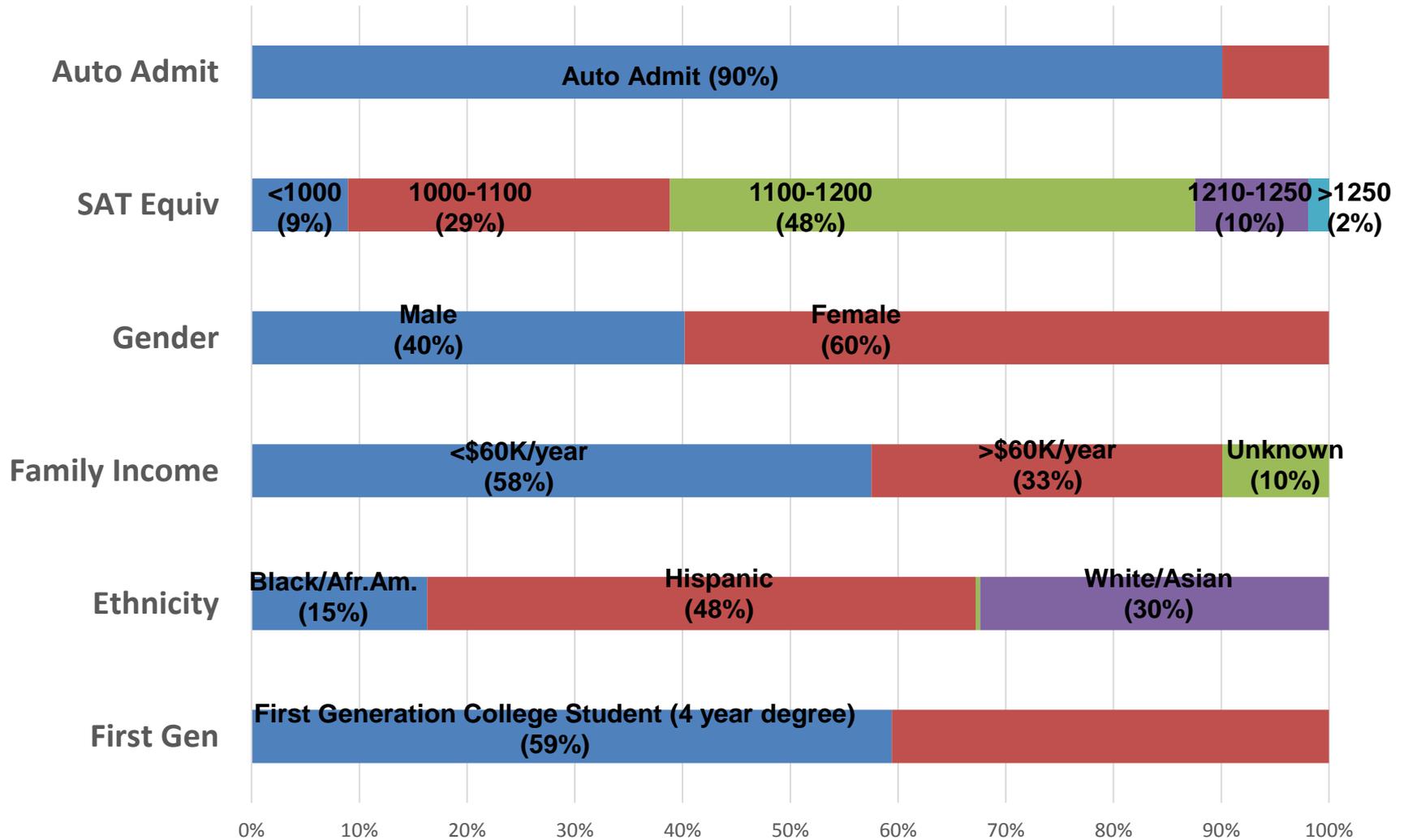
# Bigger Picture

- Nationally, there is a call to increase graduation and retention rates in our colleges and universities (Obama, 2009).
- One mechanism educational administrators are utilizing towards this goal is peer mentoring at the undergraduate level (Girves, Zepeda, & Gwathmey, 2007).
- Although many studies have examined the experience of undergraduate mentees, little research has focused on the lived experiences of undergraduate peer mentors.
- With rising demographic changes and an increased focus on increasing racial and ethnic diversity, universities are employing peer mentor programs to help increase the graduation and retention rates for specific populations like underrepresented students.

# TIP Scholars (aka the FYE)

- TIP's mission: To transform the learning experience so students can pursue their individual potentials. All students are empowered to transform their world for the better.
- How we do that
  - Peer mentoring
  - Linked classes
    - Critical thinking course
  - Dedicated academic advisors
  - Building community
  - Collaborative Studies

## TIP Scholars Demographics, Class of 2019



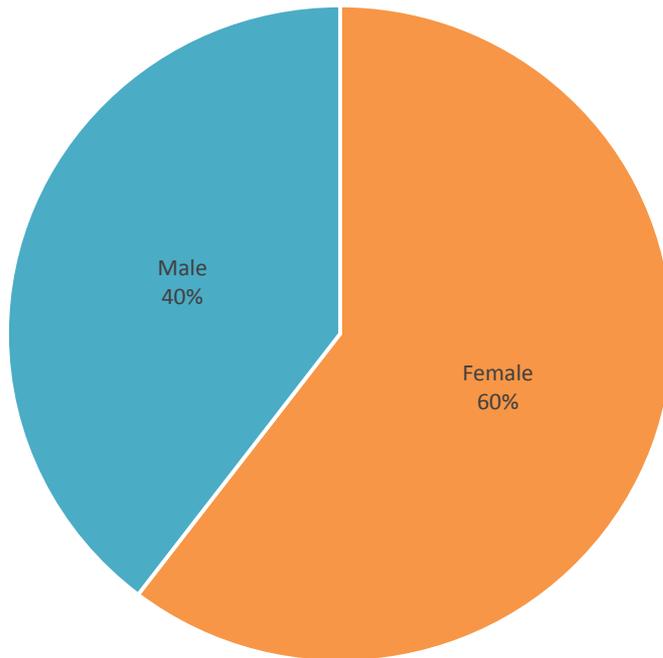
# TIP Mentor Academy

- Facilitate a smooth transition to college
- Promote academic success
- Recruit from within the program

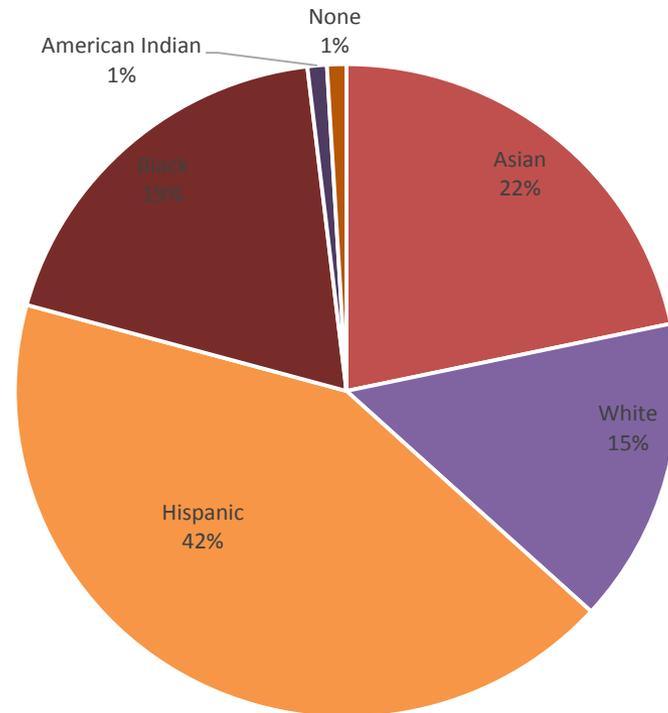


# 2015 Mentor Academy

2015 Gender



2015 Ethnicity



# Mentoring Theory Components

- *Psychosocial function* – “The mentor offers role modeling, counseling, confirmation, and friendship, which help the young adult to develop a sense of professional identity and competence” (Kram & Isabella, 1985, p. 111).
- *Vocational or Career-enhancing function* – Mentors offer “sponsorship, coaching, facilitating exposure and visibility, and offering challenging work or protection, all of which help the younger person establish a role in the organization, learn the ropes, and prepare for advancement” (Kram & Isabella, 1985, p. 111).

# What happens after FYE?

- TIP Scholars is a first year program (except advising)
- So much support their first year then nothing
- Highest compliment: we have 2 former mentors on our staff

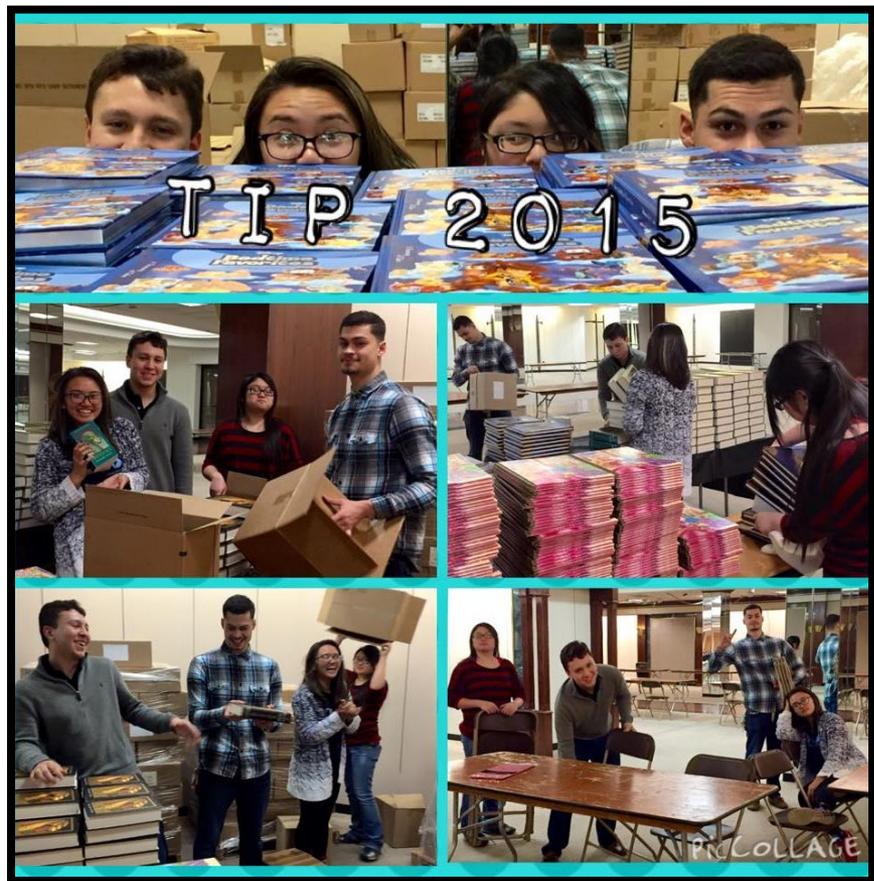


# Thriving in College

- Definition:
  - More than just surviving in college, student is fully engaged intellectually, socially, and emotionally. Student experiences sense of psychological well-being that contributes to persistence (graduation) and success in later life (Schreiner, Pothoven, Nelson, & McIntosh, 2009)
- 4 major pathways to thriving (Schreiner, 2010):
  - Campus involvement
  - Student-faculty interaction (especially outside the classroom)
  - Spirituality: sense of being part of something bigger than self
  - Sense of community

# Campus Involvement

- “I feel like being a mentor brings me closer to the University because I am more involved and I know much more about it and all the resources that it provides. It definitely gives me pride in attending this prestigious university and being an ambassador representing this university to incoming students.”  
–Jesse
- “I have been able to facilitate help because of the knowledge I've learned about well-being and resources on campus.” -Hannah



# Student-Faculty Interaction

- “It gives me a chance to get closer to the TIP staff and hopefully build some relationships that could be of benefit in the future.” -Charles
- “There are numerous resources for both myself and mentees and TIP faculty/staff is constantly available, whether it be individuals in the office or lead mentors, which is awesome.” -Kevin



# Spirituality

- “Being a TIP mentor is it's own reward! Being given the chance to inspire and motivate a fellow longhorn in the path towards their future is such an amazing privilege.” -Etzel
- “I was a dreamer, TIP helped my dreams come true, as cliché as that sounds. TIP gave me all of the tools I needed to succeed in college and I believe it is an honor and a benefit to be able to give those tools to more students at the University of Texas.”  
-Cassidy
- “The benefits of being a TIP Academic Peer Mentor is that I am always connected to the TIP Program and the TIP Staff. I feel like this is an added security blanket just in case I ever need help.” -Jonathan



# Sense of Community

- “Alex [the mentor] is awesome and I really don't know what I would have done had Alex not been there for me. He knows almost everything this campus has to offer and has really opened my eyes to some things that I would not have known were there.” – Anonymous
- “When I started school in UT, I used to think we, students, were just a number and professors would not even care to know our names. However, when I was aware I was part of the TIP program, everything changed. My advisor, David, knew my name, my professors did too. Everyone at the TIP Office cared a whole lot about every single TIP students and tried to help us in any way possible.” -Anonymous



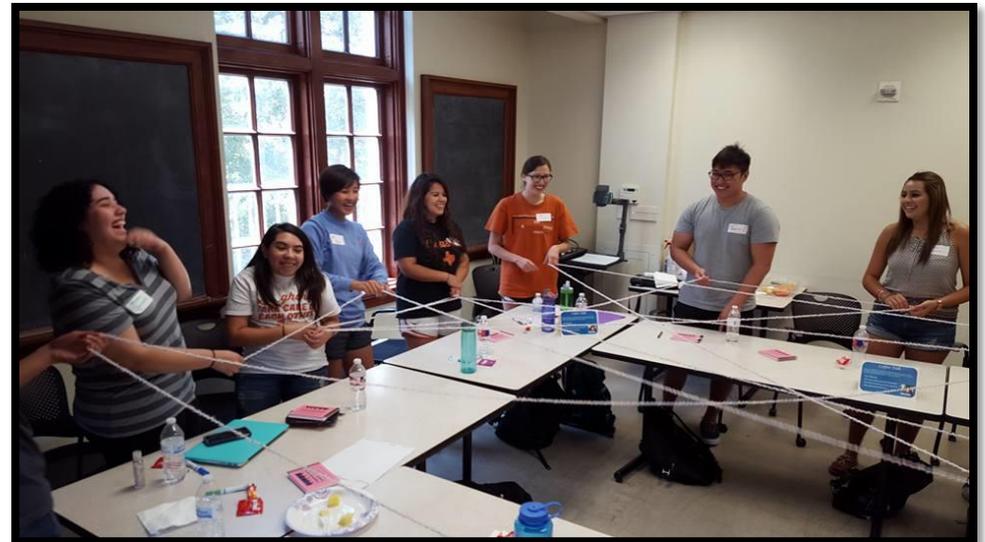
# What is the lived experience of the mentor?

- Culture
  - Professional
  - Responsibility
  - Part of something bigger
- Giving back to the program



# Training

- Revisiting → Reevaluating
- In weekly mentor trainings mentors perform the exercises they will share with their mentees
- Mentors are also encouraged to share experiences so everyone can grow



# Fall Trainings

Topic
Time Management
Study Habits
Academic Integrity
Building Relationships with Faculty and Staff
Growth Mindset
Mid Semester Check In
Active Listening
Alcohol Awareness
Mental Health and Suicide Prevention
Conflict Resolution

# Mentor Updates

- Biweekly
- Keep a pulse on freshmen
- Check up on mentors themselves
- In-person or virtual



# Levels of Mentoring

- 1<sup>st</sup> Year Mentors
  - Could be sophomores, juniors, or seniors
  - Can serve on committees
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Mentors
  - Highly encouraged to serve on committees
  - Role modeling for 1<sup>st</sup> year mentors
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Mentors
  - Take active role in speaking/teaching during trainings
  - Other leadership opportunities
- Leads
  - Create and lead trainings
  - Facilitate mentor updates
  - 1<sup>st</sup> line of contact for mentors with questions

# New Mentoring Definition

- [Undergraduate peer] mentoring is a relationship between a more experienced undergraduate student from an underrepresented population (typically older) acting as a role model, friend, and resource to a less experienced undergraduate student (typically younger) who is also from an underrepresented population. The aim of the mentoring relationship is to further the mutual development and refinement of both the mentee and mentor's psychosocial and vocational skills in order to aid in their successful transition to college life.
  - J. Smith, 2014

# Lessons Learned

- Need to actually do the activities in class
- Feedback to mentors is hard to do
  - Self evaluation
  - Mentee evaluation
  - One-on-one

# Best Practices

- Self evaluations
- Mentor updates
- Levels of mentoring
- Opportunities for leadership outside set structure
- Brag Board
- Getting the message out
  - Facebook
  - Texting