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# **The Impact of Compensation Models on the Outcome of Peer Leadership Experiences**

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# Background

**Peers play a large role in college student success  
& can positively affect:**

- Students' transition to college (*Brissette, Scheier, & Carver, 2002; Crissman Ishler, 2002; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Paul & Brier, 2001; Schlossberg, 1981*)
- Social and emotional development (*Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Guon, 1988; Harmon, 2006*)
- Leadership & career skills development (*Astin, 1993; Astin & Kent, Gardner, 2010; 1983; Pascarella, Ethington, & Smart, 1988; Schuh & Laverty, 1983*)



# Background

**Peers play a large role in college student success  
& can positively affect:**

- Satisfaction with college (*Astin, 1993; Coffman & Gilligan, 2002*)
- Learning & academic performance (*Astin, 1993; Donahue, 2004; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt & Associates, 1991; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996*)
- Persistence & retention (*Bean, 1985; Braxton, 2002; Potts, Schultz & Foust, 2003-4; Thomas, 2000; Tinto, 1993*)



“The student’s peer group is the **single most potent source of influence** on growth and development during the undergraduate years” (*Astin, 1993, p. 398*)

“**Students’ interactions with their peers also have a strong influence on many aspects of change during college**, [including] intellectual development and orientation; political, social, and religious values, academic and social self-concept; intellectual orientation; interpersonal skills; moral development; general maturity and personal development” (*Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991, pp. 620-621*)



# Peer Leadership: A Definition

“Students who have been **selected and trained** to offer educational services to their peers. These services are **intentionally designed** to assist in the adjustment, satisfaction, and persistence of students toward attainment of their educational goals, Students performing in [*these*] paraprofessional roles **are usually compensated** in some manner for their services and are **supervised by qualified professionals.**” (*Ender & Newton, 2000, 2010*)



# Literature on Peer Leadership

- Ender & Kay (2001) integrative review of literature on peer leadership
  - First emerged in residential life and orientation & remain most prominent in these settings
  - Growing range of uses
  - Least utilized but growing area: Academics
- Peer leaders are empowered to exert influence in a less intimidating way than staff or faculty (Cuseo, 1991; Hart, 1995)
- Peers are an efficient and effective resource

# Research Questions

- What are the characteristics of compensation models (i.e., . financial compensation, course credit, or volunteer experience) in peer leadership programs?
- Is there a differential impact of peer leadership experiences on a range of outcomes (i.e., skill development, undergraduate experience, employability outcomes, academic performance) by type of compensation for their peer leadership service?





# Data Source

## 2013 National Survey of Peer Leadership

- Partnership between 5 national organizations: NRC, NACA, NODA, ACUHO-I, and Int'l Center for SI
- 49 four-year institutions participated
- 4,932 student responses (4,639 with PL experience)
- Overall response rate: 28.6%
- Over-represents women & high acd performers
- Adequate representation by race/ethnicity, class standing, & Pell Grant eligibility

# Analytical Methods

- **Frequency distributions** of variables of interest
- **Cross tabulations** to identify the types of compensation used for different PL experiences
- **Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA)** to test whether the observed outcome variables were measuring latent variables
- **Structural equation modeling (SEM)** to examine the direct effects of compensation on PL outcomes



# IV: Peer Leader Compensation

Method of Compensation	Percent
None (PL was a volunteer experience)	59.4
Financial compensation	56.0
Room and board	23.7
Course credit	15.1
Other	4.4

Notes: N=3,942; Percentages add up to more than 100 because respondents were asked to “Mark all that apply”

# IV: Peer Leader Compensation

Method of Compensation	Percent
None (PL was a volunteer experience)	59.4
Financial compensation	56.0
Room and board	
Course credit	
Other	

- Religious organizations
- Greek life
- Student clubs
- Community service/S-L

Notes: N=3,942; Percentages add up to more than 100 because respondents were asked to “Mark all that apply”

# IV: Peer Leader Compensation

Method of Compensation	Percent
None (PL was a volunteer experience)	59.4
Financial compensation	56.0
Room and board	23.7
Course credit	15.1
Other	4.4

- Residential life
- Tutors
- SI leaders
- Orientation

Notes: N=3,942; Percentages add up to more than 100 because respondents were asked to “Mark all that apply”

# IV: Peer Leader Compensation

Method of Compensation	Percent
None (PL was a volunteer experience)	59.4
Financial compensation	6.0
Room and board	3.7
Course credit	5.1
Other	1.4

- Teaching assistant
- Academic advisor
- Study abroad
- Physical health
- Student conduct

Notes: N=3,942; Percentages add up to more than 100 because respondents were asked to “Mark all that apply”

# DV: Self-Rated Effect of PL on Skills

Skill Development	% ↑
Leadership	87.3
Interpersonal communication	82.5
Teamwork	77.5
Time management	73.6
Project management	72.9
Organization	71.5
Presentation	67.5
Critical thinking	65.8
Written communication	53.4

# DV: S-R Effect of PL on UG Experience

Undergraduate Experience	% ↑
Knowledge of campus resources	83.6
Meaningful interaction with peers	81.2
Feeling of belonging at institution	76.6
Meaningful interaction with staff members	75.9
Interaction with people from diff backgrounds	75.6
Meaningful interaction with faculty	73.3
Understanding people from diff backgrounds	72.9
Desire to engage in continuous learning	71.8
Desire to persist at institution	68.9



# DV: S-R Effect of PL on Employability

Employability Outcomes	% ↑
Building professional interpersonal relationships	77.9
Applying knowledge to a real-world setting	72.7
Bringing together info from different places	71.2
Providing direction through persuasion	67.8
Analyzing a problem from new perspectives	65.8
Expectations for success in a FT job after grad	65.5
Creating innovative approaches to a task	65.4
Engaging in ethical decision-making	64.5
Sharing ideas with others in writing	46.2

# DV: S-R Effect of PL on Academics

Academic Performance	% ↑
Academic skill development	39.9
Overall academic performance	23.8
Grade point average	19.0
# of credit hours completed each term	15.1
Facilitate timely graduation	1.8

Notes: N=3,810

# Limitations

- Student self-report of gains on outcome measures
- Dataset only contains data from students who self-identify as peer leaders
- Definitional limitation of peer leaders to campus-based groups
- Respondent fatigue led to decreasing N
- Study is exploratory and not testing a model

# CFA Results

## 27 variables loaded into 5 DV measures:

- Skills (7 items;  $\alpha = .874$ )
- Institution Interaction (3 items;  $\alpha = .812$ )
- Institution Connection (4 items;  $\alpha = .838$ )
- Employability Outcomes (9 items;  $\alpha = .931$ )
- Academic Success (4 items;  $\alpha = .816$ )

Notes: Model fit statistics included an RMSEA of .054 and an SRMR of .054 both indicating good model fit.

# SEM Results: Control Variables

- Race/ethnicity was a small and marginally significant positive predictor for all outcomes
  - No pattern for specific race/ethnicity
- Gender: Male was a highly significant negative predictor for all outcomes except academic skills
- Total number of PL positions was a highly significant positive predictor for all outcomes
  - Largest beta for all the outcomes except academic skills



# SEM Results: PL Compensation

- Course credit was a consistent positive predictor across all four categories of DVs
  - Academic performance ( $\beta = .101, p < .001$ )
  - Skill development ( $\beta = .085, p < .001$ )
  - Institutional connection ( $\beta = .069, p < .001$ )
  - Institutional interaction ( $\beta = .068, p < .001$ )
  - Employability outcomes ( $\beta = .047, p < .01$ )

# SEM Results: PL Compensation

- Financial compensation had
  - a small positive effect on institutional interaction outcomes ( $\beta = .083, p \leq .001$ )
- Volunteer positions (no compensation) had:
  - No impact on skill development, institutional interaction and connection, and employability outcomes
  - Very small negative impact on academic skills ( $\beta = .062, p \leq .01$ )



# SEM Results: Outcomes

- Institutional interaction and academic success are most impacted by PL compensation
- Institutional interaction is affected by both course credit and financial compensation
- Self-rated academic success of peer leaders is more varied by compensation:
  - Course credit fosters self-rated academic success
  - Volunteer peer leader positions and financial rewards hinder students' perceptions of academic success





# Significance

- Course credit as compensation for PLE is promising
  - Peer interaction
  - Accountability
  - Interaction with faculty
  - Greater intentionality
- Academic outcomes of PL experience are unique
- Further the consideration of peer leadership and student paraprofessional
- Equity considerations
  - Financial rewards attract certain students
  - Cost of adding class

**QUESTIONS?**

**THANK YOU!**

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