

*Providing a High-Impact and
Transformative Peer Leader
Experience*

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Goals for the Session

- What do you hope to gain from the session?

Goals for the Session

- After participating in this facilitated discussion, participants will be able to:
 1. Identify the characteristics of transformative and high-impact peer leadership experiences;
 2. Apply a framework for facilitating high-impact and transformative peer leadership experiences to the design of high-quality peer leadership experiences on their own campus; and
 3. Continue to network and collaborate with session colleagues who share an interest in peer leadership as a high-impact practice.

Peer Pressure

“The student’s peer group is **the single most potent source of influence** on growth and development during the undergraduate years.”

(Astin, 1993)

Background on Peer Leaders

- The use of Peer Leaders provides benefits to:
 - Programs
 - Improved student outcomes
 - Shared workload with staff and instructors
 - Strengthened connection between staff, instructors, and students (with Peer Leader as the bridge)
 - Students
 - Improved student outcomes
 - Increased attention
 - Expanded opportunities for student interventions
 - Peer Leaders
 - Training and ongoing support
 - Engagement with faculty and staff
 - Challenging duties and responsibilities
 - Reflection and self-appraisal

Definition of High-Impact Practices

- “Teaching and learning practices that have been **widely tested** and have been shown to **be beneficial for college students** from many backgrounds. These practices **take many different forms**, depending upon learner characteristics and on institutional priorities and contexts. [*HIPs are*] practices that educational research suggests **increase rates of retention and student engagement.**”

(Kuh, 2010)

Characteristics of High-Impact Practices

- Investment of time and energy
- Real-world applications
- Reflection and integrative learning
- Interaction with faculty and peers about substantive matters
- Frequent feedback
- High expectations
- Accountability
- Exposure to diverse perspectives

A Framework for high-impact and transformative PL experience



Discussion

- Which of the benefits of peer leadership have you witnessed with the students you have worked with?
- When have you seen the peer leadership experience have a transformative impact upon PLs on your campus?
- How do you know that students have gained benefits?

Results from a National Survey of Peer Leaders

- Investment of Time and Energy
 - Total # of peer leader experiences
 - Time spent performing peer leader responsibilities
- High Expectations
 - Training
- Reflection and Integrated Learning/Frequent Feedback
 - Ongoing formal training
- Real-World Applications
 - Skill Development and Employability Outcomes

Investment of Time and Energy

Evidence of Engagement

- Half of all peer leaders have held 2-4 total PL positions
- Nearly half of all peer leaders spend 6-15 hours per week on PL duties

Over-Engagement?

- 1 in 10 have held 8 or more PL positions
- More than 1 in 20 spend 30 or more hours per week.

High Expectations

Communicating Expectations through Training

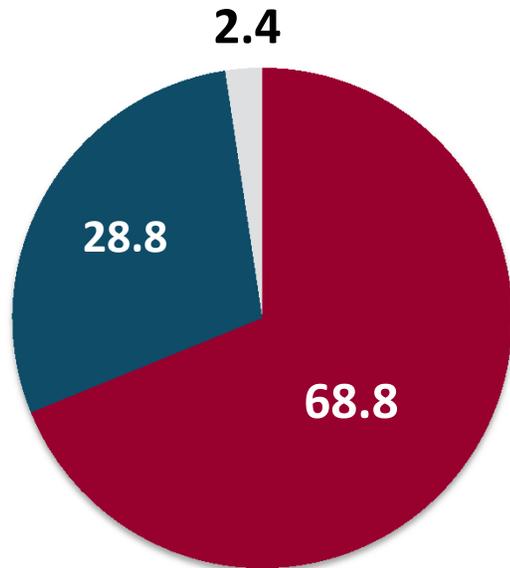
- 85% of peer leaders received some training for their peer leader positions
- 4.5 in 10 reported training for one or more PL experience lasted one week or longer

Expectations Unclear – Little or no Training

- 15% of peer leaders did not receive formal training for their positions
- 6 in 10 reported training for one or more PL experience was 2 days or shorter

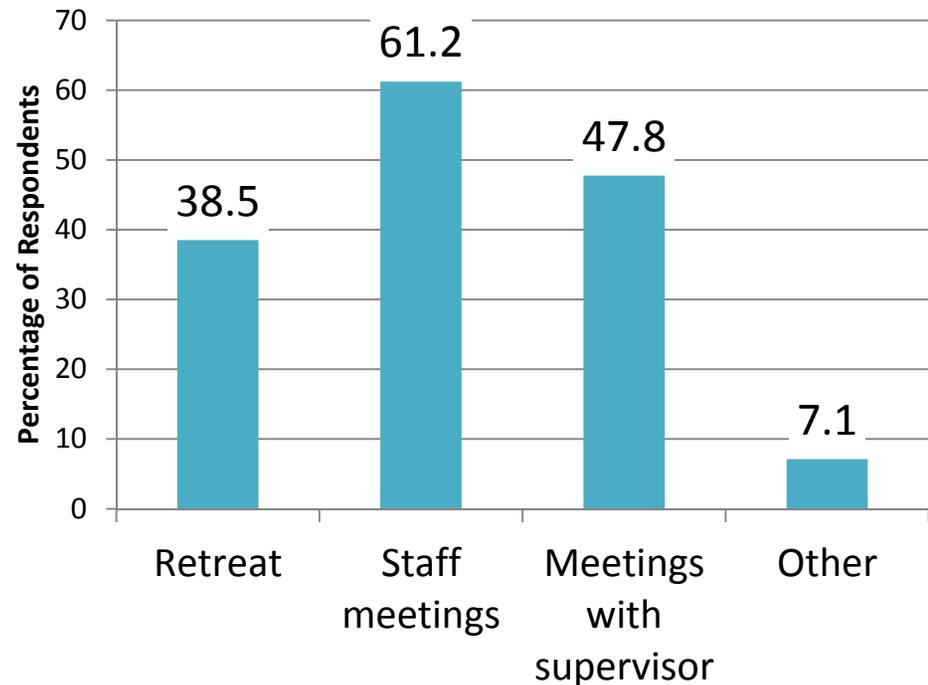
Reflection and Integrated Learning/ Frequent Feedback

Did you receive any additional ongoing formal training after the initial training? (n = 3,353)



■ Yes ■ No ■ I don't know

What type of additional ongoing formal training did you receive? (n = 2,303)



Real-World Applications

Skill Development	% Increased
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

Real-World Applications

Employability Outcomes	% Increased
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

Discussion

- What are the key components of a high-impact PL experience?
- What are some of the “best practices” you have implemented on your campus (or seen on other campuses) that seem to facilitate a high-impact PL experience?
- How are you structuring your peer educator program to provide a high-impact educational experience?
- How can we make high-impact PL experience more likely for a diversity of students?

Key Takeaways

- Providing a high-impact and transformative PL experience requires intentionality and thoughtful inclusion of key elements.
 - Supervision that is educational and relational (not just transactional).
 - Regular reflection and feedback.
 - Ongoing training.
- Investment of Time and Energy Matters.
- Seek to involve students who would not normally think to be involved.
- Peer leadership isn't just about efficiencies
 - *it should be an educationally purposeful experience.

High-Impact Practices

“While promising, **they are not a panacea**. Only when they are **implemented well** and **continually evaluated**...will we realize their considerable potential.”

- Kuh in Brownell & Swaner, 2010

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