

An International Perspective on Peer Education and Leadership Best Practices in the FYE and Beyond

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York University, Canada



- Third largest university in Canada with over 55,000 students
- One of top ten universities in Canada for research impact with the largest liberal arts program in the country
- Ranked as one of the top 100 universities in the world in social sciences and humanities

University of Wollongong, Australia



- Over 30,000 students
- Ranked in the top 2% of universities in the world
- Globally ranked (33) as one of the world's best modern universities (THE 100 under 50)
- Research intensive
- Globally rated a 5 star university

University of South Carolina, United States

- 24,180 undergraduates
- USNWR Ranking
 - Top 10 FYE program
 - U101 is “Program to Look for”
- Premier student success programs
 - University 101
 - USC Connect
 - SC Honors College
- Research intensive



Home of the **National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition**, which pursues a mission “to support and advance efforts to improve student learning and transitions into and through higher education” and is dedicated to “student transitions, the connection between research and practice, inclusion, collaboration, and lifelong learning.”

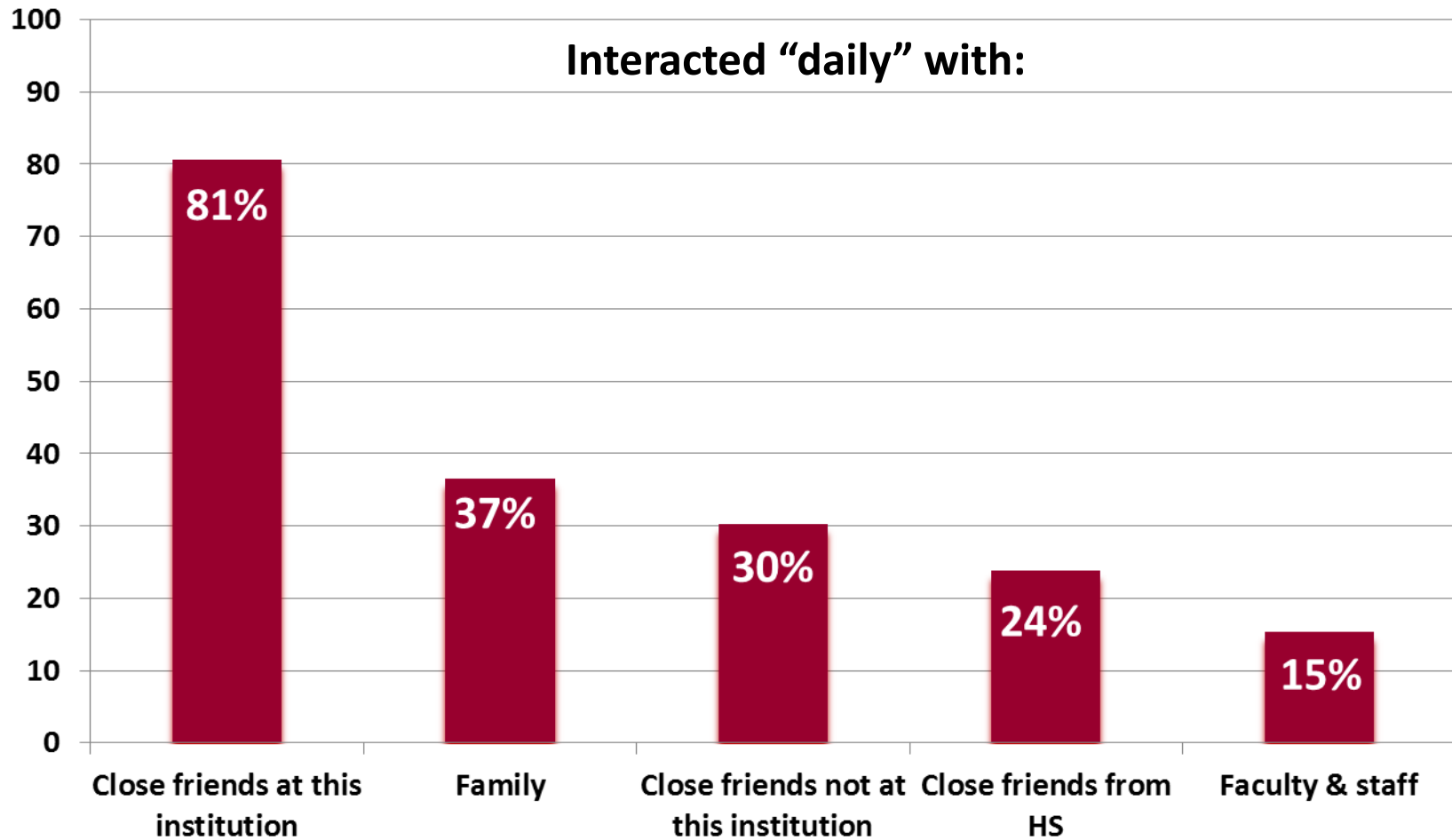
Key Discussion Areas

Discussion areas to achieve best practice peer learning:

- Understanding the key successes and challenges for Peer Educator Programs
- Importance of training to ensure program success
- Demonstrating the impact of peer learning on student retention
- Sustainable remuneration of Peer Educators
- Peer Educator expectations
- Administration structures of peer learning

Background & Research

Support Networks in the First Year



*2009 YFYC Survey



Peer leaders are
**empowered to exert
influence in a less
intimidating way** than
staff or faculty
(Cuseo, 1991)



Peer Pressure

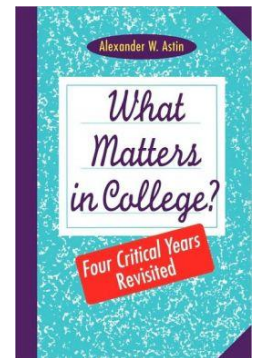
- Peers have a significant and profound impact on the undergraduate experience:
 - Intellectual development
 - Academic Engagement
 - Moral Development
 - Clarification of Political and Social Values
 - Determination of Academic and Social Self-Concept
 - Interpersonal Skills
 - Critical Thinking Skills
 - Positive Gains in Writing and Reading Comprehension

(Greenfield, Keup, & Gardner, 2013; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Skipper, 2005)



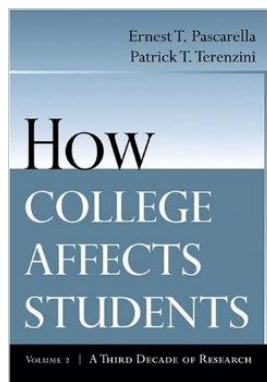
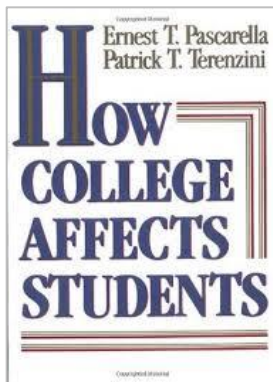
Peer Pressure

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

- Understood internationally as:

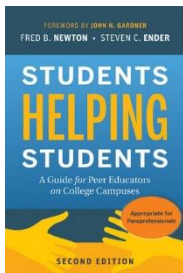
“The use of teaching and learning strategies in which students learn with and from each other without the immediate intervention of a teacher” (Boud et al. 1999)

Although various forms of structured peer learning have existed for decades within the education sector (Hilsdon 2013), the implementation of peer learning as a highly impactful support service to enhance student learning has grown dramatically (Topping 2007).

Defining Peer Educators

“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.**”

(Newton & Ender, 2010, p. 6)





“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. [HIEPs are] practices that educational research suggest increase rates of retention and student engagement.”

(Kuh, 2010)

PEER EDUCATION AS A HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICE

Characteristics of HIPs

- Creates an investment of time and energy
- Includes interaction with faculty and peers about substantive matters
- Real-world applications
- High expectations
- Includes frequent feedback
- Exposure to diverse perspectives
- Demands reflection and integrated learning
- Accountability



Peer Leadership in the U.S.

Benefits to the Institution/Program

- Student paraprofessionals are an effective and cost efficient staffing model
- Efficient scalability; tool to broaden impact of effective programs and conduct large-scale programs
- Connection between academic and student affairs
- Increases pool of advocates for program and institution
- Contributes to culture and sustainability of a program
- Important link in communication loop
- Positive impact on institutional persistence and completion rates



Most Common PL Sponsors

What type of campus-based organization have you worked for as a peer leader, either currently or in the past? (n = 4,016)

Peer Leader Experience	%
Student clubs and organization(s)	44.5
Residence Hall	28.9
First-Year Experience	28.6
Campus activities	28.5
Orientation	24.6
Academic - peer advisor	24.5
Community service or service learning	23.8
Academic - Tutor	23.4

Least Common PL Sponsors

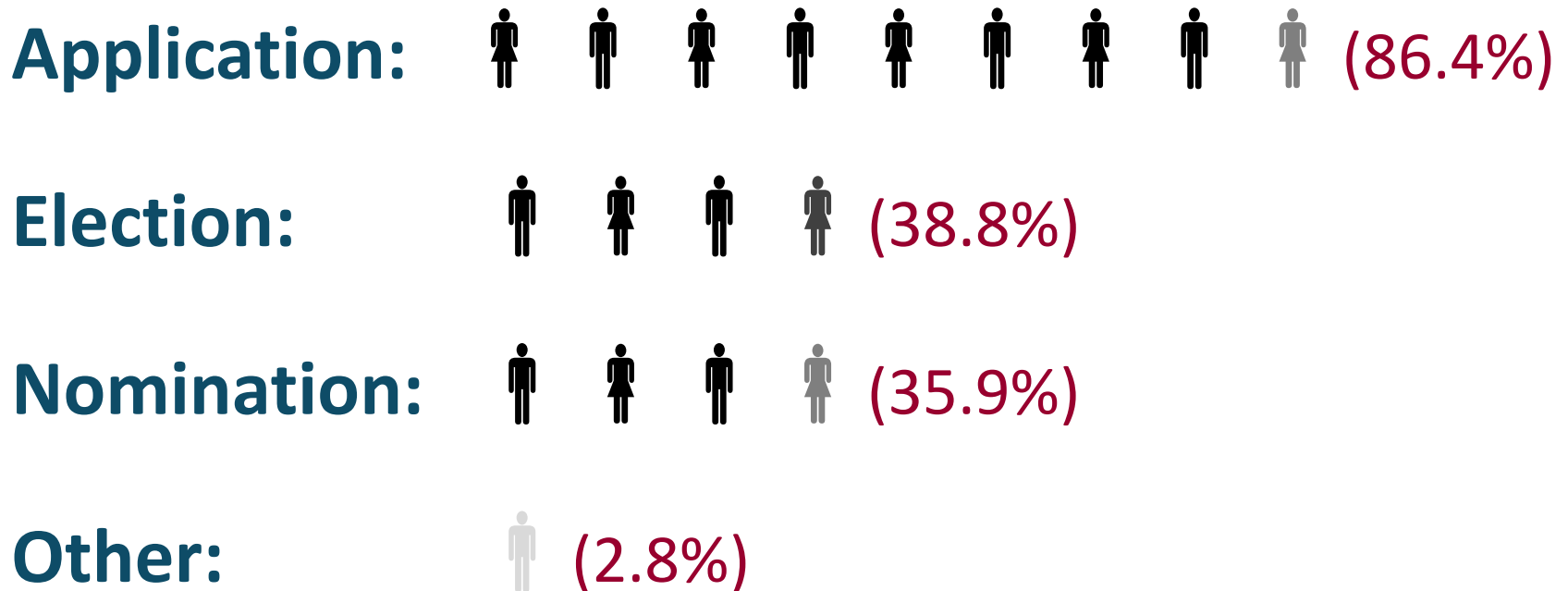
What type of campus-based organization have you worked for as a peer leader, either currently or in the past? (n = 4,016)

Peer Leader Experience	%
Athletics	9.5
Admissions	9.3
Religious	8.9
Academic-Supplemental Instruction leader	8.7
Multicultural affairs	5.4
Study abroad	5.2
Outdoor or recreational sports	4.3
Counseling or mental health	3.1
Student productions or media	2.8
Judicial affairs or student conduct	2.6
Physical health	2.6
International student office	2.2
Financial literacy	.8



PL Selection Process

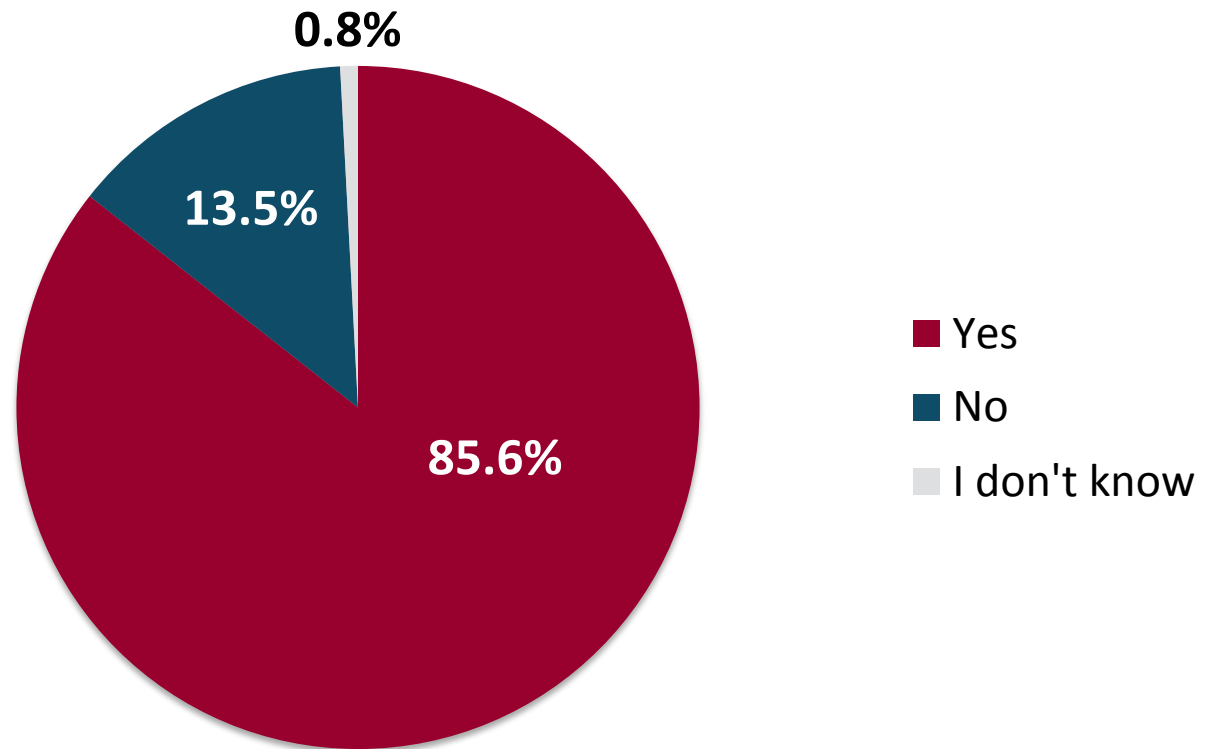
Which of the following best describes the peer leader selection process you went through (n = 3,942)



Training

Were you trained for your peer leader position(s)?

(n = 3,942)

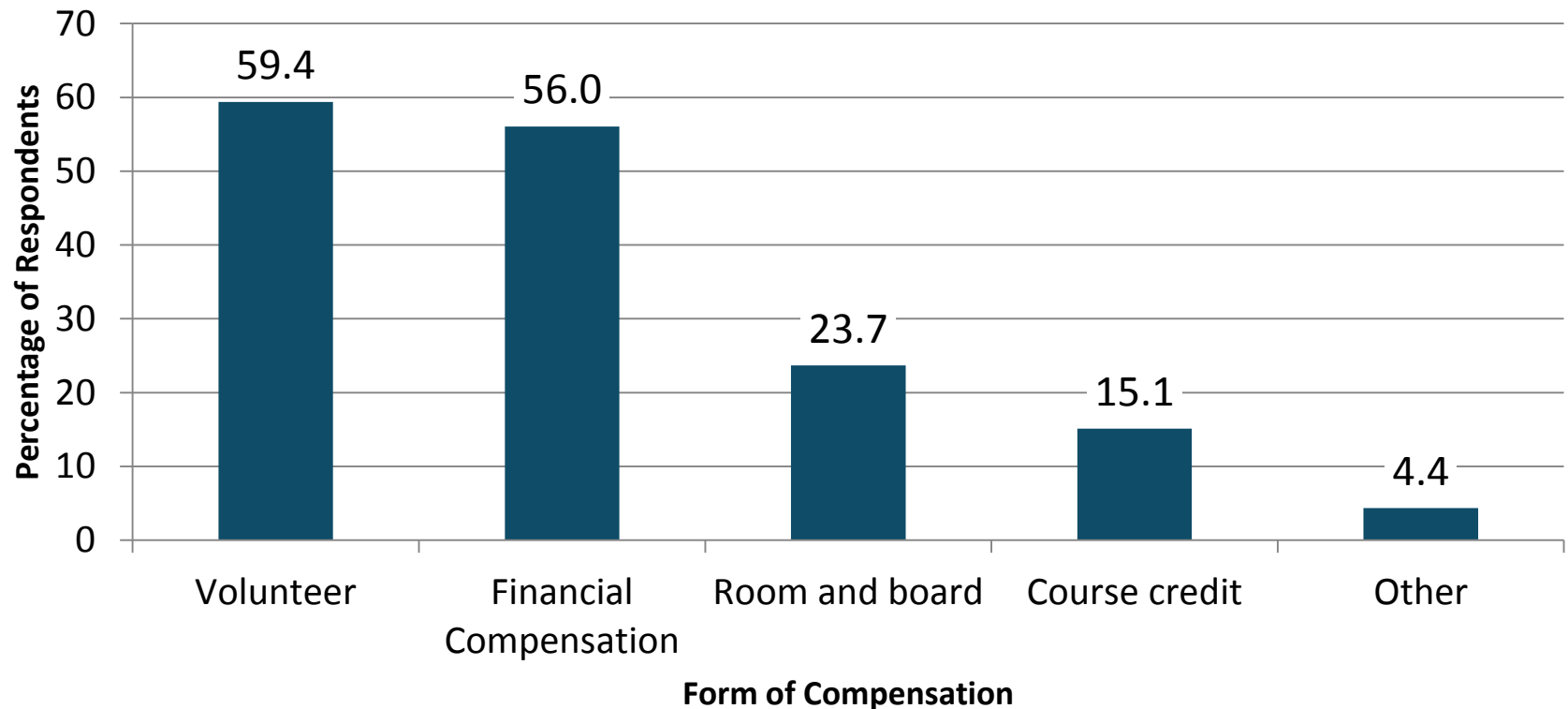


Trends in Peer Leader Training

- Longer training modules
- Ongoing support & professional development
- Curricular components
- Outcomes focused
- Focus on supervision as part of training
- Peer leadership & training among peer leaders
- Integrated across campus and across PLE

Compensation

What compensation did or do you receive for your work as a peer leader? (n = 3,942)



Benefits to the Peer Educators

- Experiential education opportunity
- Development of employability competencies
- Academic, personal, and interpersonal skill development
- Greater sense of community and campus integration
- Increased knowledge of institutional resources
- Engagement with faculty and staff
- Intercultural competencies
- Leadership training

Benefits to the Peer Educators

“When I first got the job I was shy and unsure of myself a lot of the times but over the past almost two years I have grown and become more confident. I have learned to communicate effectively with people from different backgrounds. I have also had the opportunity to become close to faculty and staff that I work with. I feel more connected to campus and have enjoyed being there for freshmen students that are struggling with the college transition.”



University of South Carolina



- Three-credit, extended orientation course
- 80% of first-year class enrolls annually
- 217 sections offered during fall 2014
 - 204 faculty and staff instructors
 - 214 peer and graduate leaders

Principles of PL Sustainability

- Theoretically grounded in research on peer influence
- Understanding institutional context
- Gaining institutional buy-in by including LOTS of voices (instructors, FY students, alumni)
- Position within the organizational structure
- Leadership saw U101 as premier program
- Budget and funding concerns made it a resource-sensitive solution
- Accountability engages formal and informal assessment in an evidence-driven culture

Peer Leadership in Australia

Use of Peer Educators within Higher Education

Uses of Peer Educators in Australia include:

- Academic Peer Learning Programs such as PASS
- Outreach and School Mentoring Programs
- Writing Assistance
- Student Wellbeing
- Academic Student Rovers
- Peer Leadership Programs
- Halls of Residence

Sustainable Remuneration of Peer Educators

Multiple forms of remuneration for Peer Educators in Australia:

- Financial Payment (per hour or semester) most common
- Academic Credit
- Embedded within a university recognised award scheme
- Subsidized board or book/carpark vouchers
- Voluntary role but with opportunities to connect with industry

Case Study: PASS@UOW



- Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) commenced at UOW in 2002
- Most awarded peer learning program in the world!
- Over 100 PASS Leaders (paid)
- Facilitated 40,000 contact hours to over 4,000 unique students in 2014
- Flagship FYE program and central co-ordination
- National Centre for Australasia

Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS)

- Academic PL program which aims to help students master subject content while gaining discipline specific learning skills
- **Super group learning!** Sessions facilitated by PASS Peer Leaders – high achieving senior students
- Attached to difficult subjects or used in some disciplines to promote development of learning communities
- Avoids remedial stigma by targeting subjects rather than students. PASS is open to anyone enrolled in the subject
- Mainstream and voluntary

Key Element of Success – Training



Our philosophy – that the implementation of strong training and ongoing professional development is vital to ensure the team is delivering a best practice, high quality program.

Key Element of Success – Training

Case Study: PASS@UOW

Professional Development Model

Peer Educators facilitate PASS for students and model best practice for incoming recruits

PASS Participant

Participants are recruited as leaders

PASS Leader

PASS Leader

Mentors support and develop new leaders

PASS Senior Mentor

Peer Educators are promoted to senior mentors

Key Element of Success – Training

Case Study: PASS@UOW

- Underpinned by a quality recruitment
- 3 Tiered Approach:
 - Online pre training modules and a 2 day New Leader training
 - Support & observations in early weeks of PASS
 - Ongoing professional development & opportunities

Key Element of Success – Training

New Peer-Educator Training

Comprehensive two day training program:

Key areas of focus:

- Promoting positive group dynamics and engaging students
- Facilitation, not re-teaching
- Questioning techniques which promote deeper learning
- Preparing suitable learning activities / study integration
- Organisation and time management
- Relationship building
- Role plays and self reflection

Key Element of Success – Training

Structured Mentor Program

- All Leaders are allocated a Mentor
- New Leaders are observed within the 1st week of PASS and at other designated timeframes
- Early visits to ensure the Leader is well supported and utilising their training
- Any issues are addressed promptly
- All Mentors go through extensive additional training to ensure they are equipped for the role
- Other peer observations encouraged

Key Element of Success – Training

Benefits to the Peer Educators

Results from the end of year anonymous Leader survey show:

- 100% of Leaders surveyed agreed that:
 - Leader Training successfully prepared them for their role as a PASS Leader
 - They valued the supportive environment
 - They were developing their personal and professional skills as a PASS Leader – huge value to their Resume!
- 91% of Leaders agreed that the feedback they received from their mentor was extremely helpful in developing in the role

Data collected November 2013 – November 2014, n=65 Leaders

Benefits of PASS

Results from the UOW PASS Participant Survey indicate that students receive multiple benefits by attending:*

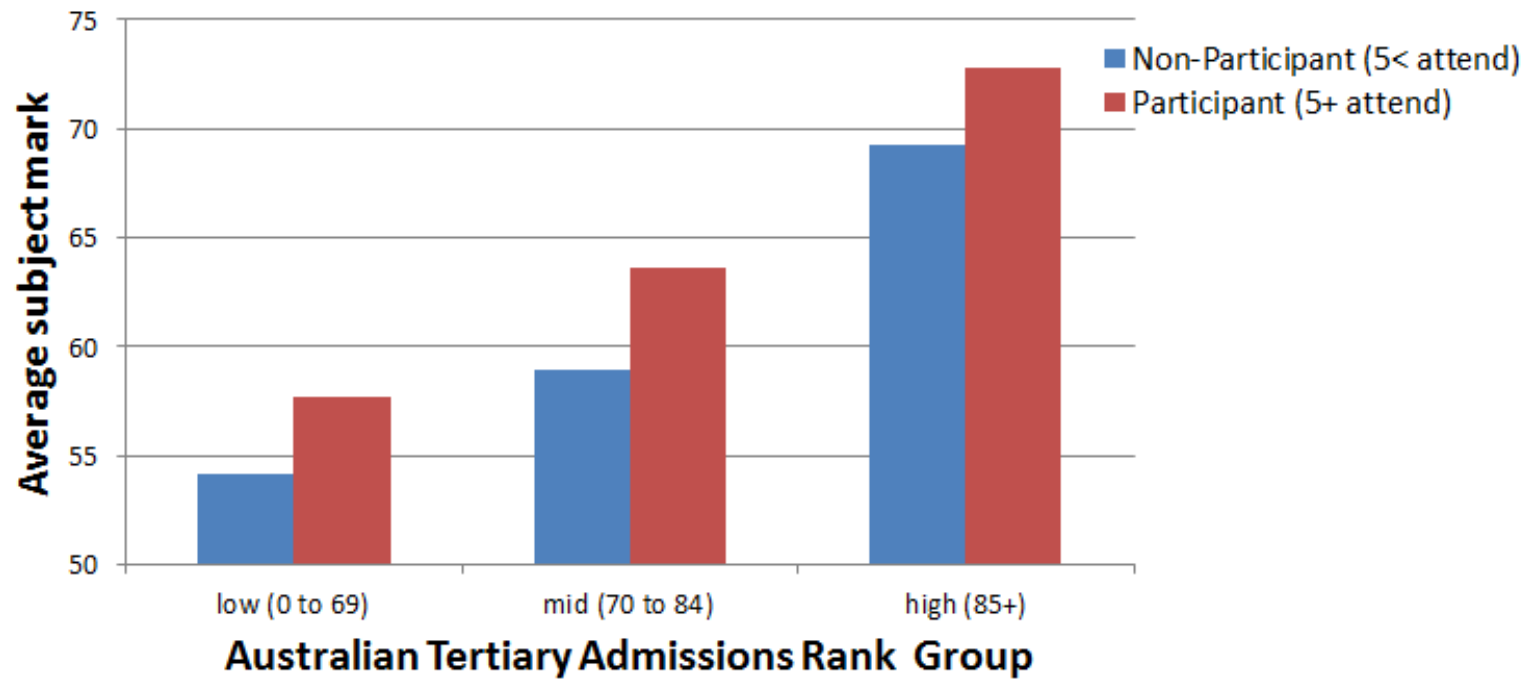
- 98% agreed PASS had improved their understanding of the subject content
- 94% agreed PASS assisted them when preparing for exams
- 93% agreed PASS had been an enjoyable learning experience
- 91% agreed PASS helped them to work collaboratively and productively
- 86% agreed PASS encouraged them to take responsibility of their own learning

* 2675 students responded to the survey, data collected in 2013

Impact of Peer Educators

Case Study: PASS@UOW Everyone Benefits

Average student mark by ATAR rank and PASS participation, 2003 to 2013
(no unique student = 31864)

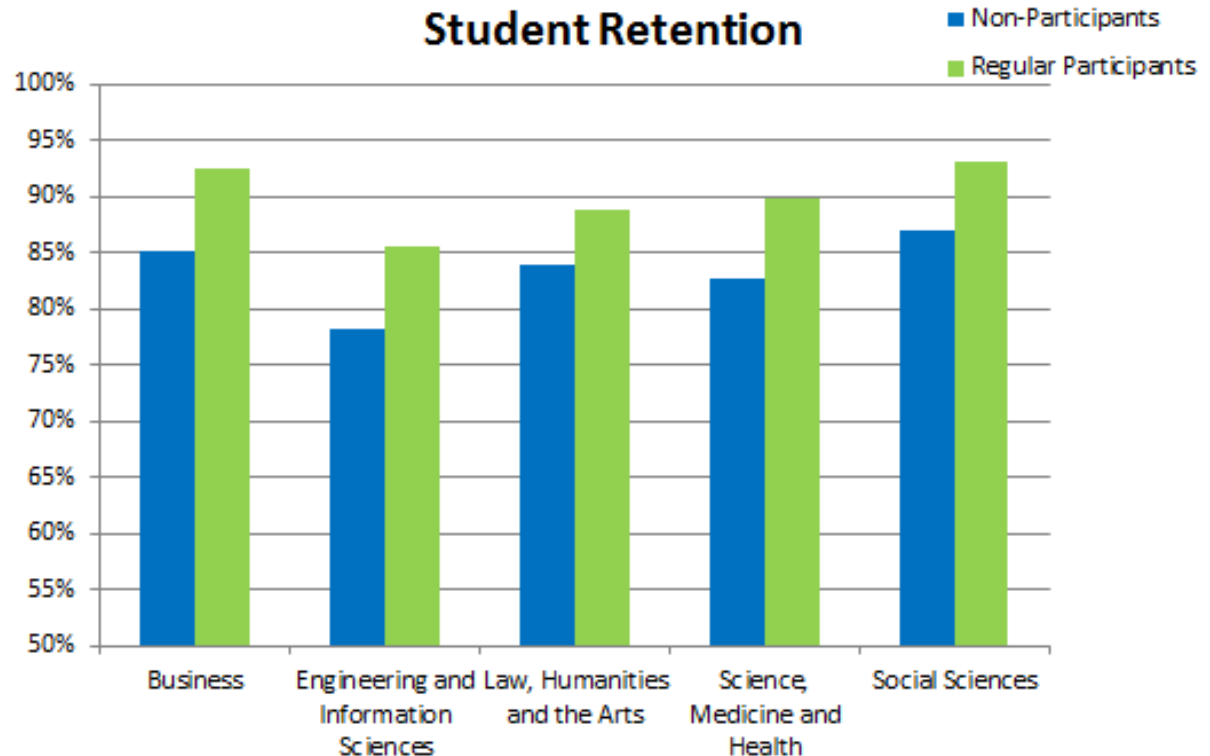


Impact of Peer Educators on Retention

Case Study: PASS@UOW

This chart illustrates the retention rates of regular PASS participants (attended 5+ times) and non-PASS participants (0 attendances).

*UOW Data:
2003- 2013,
n=67219 participants
(Humanities data collected
from
2007 – 2013)*



Peer Leadership in Canada

Canadian Case Study: York University



- The York University program is a combined peer mentoring, peer leadership, and peer educators initiative.
- This program is based on undergraduate peer leader training.
- Eventually, a select few become formal peer educators in the Intro to Sociology course I teach.
- I have been running peer mentor, educator, and leadership programs since 2001 that integrated into academic orientations, mentoring throughout the year, peer leader initiatives, and formal peer education.



York Peer Mentoring, Leadership, & Education

- This ongoing program operates from August to assist in academic orientation and continues throughout the academic year.
- During academic Orientation, Mentors are matched with mentees. They have booth hours on a weekly basis from September to April where they mentor students.
- The key part of the program is the peer educators who are part of my Intro to Sociology course in January.

Recruitment and Selection Process

- Recruitment begins during the last part of the academic year from Feb to April based on posters, social networking, social media, and other means.
- Senior students with at least a B average are encouraged to apply by sending in a resume with references.
- The selection and interview process begins in May and is based on a panel that includes 2-3 continuing mentors and myself.
- Those recruited are initially volunteers with the potential of being paid Peer Mentors, Leaders, and Educators.

Tripartite Training: Peer Mentoring & Education

- **Based on Training Manual on Peer Mentoring, Leadership, and Education.**
- **Part 1** Three 3 hour training sessions from May to Aug focusing on peer mentoring parameters, duties, during academic orientation and the academic year.
- **Part 2** Three 3 hour training sessions in Sept and Nov emphasizing peer leader initiatives planning and implementation
- **Part 3** Four 2 hour Peer Educator training sessions from Dec to April focusing on writing skills in Sociology 1010.

Peer Education Program in Sociology 1010

- **Peer Education Program** – Peer Educators meet with students about their papers and guide them in terms of thesis statements, essay structure, formulating ideas, and related issues.
- **Structure** – Peer Educators meet with students based on guidelines given to both students and Educators for half-hour sessions.
- **Structural Reporting** – Peer Educators meet with students and report on the same day, filling in a form and sending it to me.

Peer Education Program in Soc 1010

- **Goal of the program:** Peer Educators helping students learn to write successful papers based on critical thinking analyses, proper essay formats, and application of course concepts.
- **Support materials:** 10 handouts provided to students and Educators as well as a course package that includes a writing guide, research guides, a social science dictionary, and other materials.



Peer Education Program Assessment

- **Three-Year Ongoing Assessment – Methodology** Based on structured interviews with Peer Educators (n= 10) and students (n=32) conducted (using 2012 and 2013 data).
- There is a **qualitative analysis** of interview data using various software and grounded theory analysis.
- Data led to many changes and **restructuring**.

Findings and Conclusions

- Students benefit from ongoing guidance by Peer Educators.
- As in past studies (Kenedy et al., 2012a; Kenedy et al., 2012b) Peer Educators and Mentors often benefit academically and socially from these programs. Ongoing research (Kenedy, in progress) also notes how Peer Educators and Mentors seem to significantly benefit from these programs.



Findings and Conclusions

- Mature students with families and those who were away from school for a while found the convenience of being able to meet with various Peer Educators helpful in terms of their schedules. These students often met more often with Peer Educators.
- International students also found the Peer Educators helpful in terms of writing assistance.
- Students also noted that it was easier getting help from Peer Educators who were not evaluating their work and could guide them and give them “advice” on the essay.

Findings and Conclusions

- Some students reported grade increases as a result of the guidance of Peer Educators. Students also reported gaining better writing, thinking, and advocacy skill.
- Some students also reported that Peer Educators also helped them gain insight into the writing process and time management related to beginning assignments and writing drafts.

Findings and Conclusions

- Some students wanted more from the Peer Educators than they were mandated to do and were disappointed. Students reported wanting to be “shown” how to write the essay and explicitly told what to do. Students also wanted Educators to tell them what they missed in lecture and explain the material.
- Often students said the Educators “surpassed my expectations” and that it was a “great program”; that it was “very effective” and would help them with their essay.

Program Assessment and Restructuring

- Based on interview data from Educators and students, Peer Educators were introduced earlier in the course, more critical skills handouts were created, better reporting sheets were created, clearer guidance handout for Educators and students were developed, and other changes.
- Changed the syllabus and the lecture order, augmented the assignments, assignment and test dates adjusted, altered the procedures for returning assignments, fine-tuned evaluation, and other changes.

Ongoing Outcomes of the Research

- Peer Educators were trained more extensively to help students inside and outside of class.
- Peer Educators helped during and after class.
- Again, some students wanted more from the Peer Educators than they were mandated to do and were disappointed. Students reported wanting to be “shown” how to write the essay and explicitly told what to do. Students also wanted Educators to tell them what they missed in lecture and explain the material – something to be explored.

Ongoing Outcomes of the Research

- The training manual was augmented to help train Peer Educators.
- I also had to spend more time explaining the roles of the Peer Educators and create a clearer handout so students were clear about the Peer Educator's role and mandate.
- I had to integrate more sessions about critical thinking and analytical writing as well as other critical skills sessions.

Group Discussion

1. Discuss the different structures of Peer Educator Programs – e.g. Centralised Model, School-Based Model, paid or not and how these may impact on success
2. List the possible challenges for different structures and consider some strategies to ensure best practice is met.
3. Top 3 tips/elements for quality training and support of PEs

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Other References available.



Thank you for attending

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