The Trusted Expert and Internationally Recognized Leader for all Postsecondary Student Transitions
Global Perspectives on Undergraduate Peer Leadership

Jennifer R. Keup, Director, National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition

Twitter: @jrkeup

March 12, 2017
Session Learning Objectives

As a result of attending this session, participants will:

• ...gain a greater understanding of the characteristics and outcomes of peer leadership experiences in their own country and globally.

• ...have the opportunity to compare features of their peer leadership programs to a national and international profiles.

• ...be able to use empirical evidence to consider innovations or refinements to their programs.

• ...advance their understanding of peer leadership as an emerging and innovative high-impact practice.
Introduction

BACKGROUND, HISTORY, & REVIEW OF LITERATURE
Support Networks in the First Year

Interacted “daily” with:

- Close friends at this institution: 75
- Family: 36
- Close friends not at this institution: 33
- Siblings or extended family: 24
- Faculty & staff: 15
- GAs/Tas: 3
- Academic advisors: 1

*2016 YFYC Survey
"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)
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)
Defining Peer Leaders

“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)
A Rose by Any Other Name....

Peer Leader

Peer Educator

Peer Mentor

Student Paraprofessional
Background on Peer Leaders

- Peer leaders are empowered to exert influence in a less intimidating way than staff or faculty (Cuseo, 1991; Hart, 1995)

- Student paraprofessionals are an effective and efficient resource

- The use of peer leaders provides benefit to:
  - Programs: improved student outcomes, stronger bridge between faculty/staff and students
  - Students: more opportunities for student interventions
  - Peer leaders: engagement with faculty & staff, leadership training
Methodology

INTERNATIONAL SURVEY OF PEER LEADERS

University of South Carolina

The purpose of this survey is to gather information about your experience as a peer leader. We define a peer leader as an undergraduate student who has been selected to serve as a mentor, educator, or advisor to other students through a position with a campus-run organization.

As you answer each question, please reflect on your experience(s) as a peer leader. Your responses will be used to help researchers study and better understand the peer leadership experience. All individual responses will be kept confidential. Responding to this survey will take approximately 10 - 15 minutes.

What college or university do you attend?

Status as a Peer Leader
We define a peer leader as an undergraduate student who has been selected to serve as a mentor, educator, or advisor to other students through a position with a campus-run organization.

Are you currently serving as a peer leader?

Yes

No

I don’t know

Type of Peer Leader Experience(s)

What type of campus-based organization have you worked for as a peer leader, either currently or in the past? (Check all that apply)

- Athletics
- Academic - peer advisor
- Academic - Supplemental Instruction leader
- Academic - tutor
- Academic - other (e.g., teaching assistant, lab assistant)
- Admissions
- Campus activities
- Community service or service learning
- Counseling or mental health
- Financial literacy
- First-year experience
- Greek life (i.e., social fraternity or sorority)
- International student office
- Judicial affairs or student conduct
- Multicultural affairs
- Orientation (e.g., new student, extended, or summer orientation)
- Outdoor or recreational sports
- Physical health
- Religious
Method: Data Source

2013 National Survey of Peer Leaders

• 2013 survey was a partnership with 5 leading educational organizations involved with peer leaders:
  – ACUHO-I
  – International Center for Supplemental Instruction
  – NACA
  – National Resource Center for FYE&SIT
  – NODA
• Institutional recruitment took place first (n = 49)
• 4,932 student peer leaders responded to the survey (28.6% response rate)
Method: Data Source

International Survey of Peer Leaders

• International survey was a collaboration with researchers in 5 English-speaking countries:
  – Australia & New Zealand (5 institutions; n = 302)
  – Canada (12 institutions; n = 610)
  – South Africa (6 institutions; n = 466)
  – United Kingdom (19 institutions; n = 452)
• Data collection spanned 2014-2016
“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.”

Findings

PEER LEADER SELECTION, TRAINING, & COMPENSATION
What is your operating definition of a peer leader?
Training

• Were you trained for (all*) your PL positions?
  – United States: 86%
  – United Kingdom: 71%
  – Australasia: 66%
  – South Africa: 62%
  – Canada: 55%

• Australasia, Canada, South Africa, & UK all had initial trainings of 3 days or less
• USA had much longer initial trainings
Training

Did you receive any additional ongoing formal training after the initial training?

- **Canada:** 69%
- **USA:** 69%
- **Australasia:** 68%
- **South Africa:** 64%
- **United Kingdom:** 34%

- Regular training meetings or workshops
- Retreat
- Staff meetings
- Meetings with supervisor
- Off-campus conference/event
- Course or curriculum
- Observations
- Check-ins
- Structured reflection
Compensation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compensation Type</th>
<th>Australasia</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>South Africa</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>USA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Compensation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room &amp; Board</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Credit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Food for Thought

• Potential for innovation!
• Skills to seek in selection vs. building in training
• Duration of initial training
• Extended training opportunities (supervision)
• Peer leaders vs. student paraprofessionals ($)
• How does PL selection, training, and compensation affect issues of equity and access to peer leadership?
Findings

TYPE OF PEER LEADER EXPERIENCES
How are peer leaders being used on your campus?
Most Common PL Sponsors

- Acd: PASS/PAL leader: 48%
- Acd: Course programme rep: 29%
- Acd: Peer adv/mentor/tutor: 24%
- Admissions ambassador: 18%
- Student clubs and orgs: 15%

- Acd: Peer mentors: 49%
- Student clubs & orgs: 38%
- Campus activities: 34%
- Orientation: 29%
- FYE: 27%
- Acd: Peer tutor: 22%

- Student clubs & orgs: 45%
- Residence halls: 29%
- FYE: 29%
- Campus Activities: 29%
- Orientation: 25%
- Acd: Peer advisor: 25%

- Acd: Peer tutor: 62%
- Acd: Other: 25%
- Acd: Peer mentor: 23%
- FYE: 15%

- Acd: PASS/PAL leader: 49%
- Acd: Peer mentor: 29%
- Orientation: 19%
- FYE: 18%
- Student clubs & orgs: 16%
- Acd: Peer tutor: 16%
Less Common/Emergent PL Sponsors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peer Leader Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic-Supplemental Instruction leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor or recreational sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling or mental health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student productions or media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judicial affairs or student conduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International student office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial literacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Others?
Takeaways

• Historic places and current spaces for peer leadership
• International comparisons; what can we learn?
• Emergent peer leader roles
  – How are students defining leadership?
  – Where do we need the benefits of peer leaders?
• Other domains for peer leader roles
Findings

PEER LEADER OUTCOMES
What are the stated outcomes for peer leaders at your institution?
Self-Rated Benefit of PLEs

USA
UK
South Africa
Canada
Australasia

Satisfied
Recommend

www.sc.edu/fye
Outcomes of Peer Leader Experiences

• Student peer leaders were asked to report their growth in four outcome areas:
  – “To what degree has the following (outcome) changed as a direct result of your peer leadership experiences?”

• Outcome areas
  – Skills
  – Undergraduate Experiences
  – Employability Outcomes
  – Academic Performance

• Thematic presentation of findings
Leadership Potential Unlocked

% of PLs who reported an increase in Leadership Skills

- UK
- Canada
- Australasia
- South Africa
- USA
PLEs Advance Employability Skills

- Multicultural competence
- Civic engagement/development as citizens
- Ability to identify, seek, and utilize organizational resources and student programs
- Leadership skills
- Moral and ethical development
- Project management
- Information literacy
- Quantitative literacy
Academic Skills are the Lowest Gains
“Give a Little to Gain a Lot”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Performance (USA)</th>
<th>% Increased</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic skill development</td>
<td>39.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall academic performance</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade point average</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of credit hours completed each term</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate timely graduation</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Opportunity: Dealing with Difference

• Campus diversity is comprised of historical, structural, behavioral, and psychological aspects

• PLs report significant improvement in:
  – Knowledge of difference
  – Interaction with difference
  – Understanding of difference

• PL provides exposure beyond social engineering in very diverse contexts

• So organic, it requires reflection and support
PLEs Develop Resiliency Skills

PLs reported increases in:

• Adaptability
• Analytical skills
• Critical thinking
• Innovation
• Integration of ideas
• Problem solving
Applications and Implications

- Commonality of outcomes across countries and contexts
- Areas of potential improvement are some of the most challenging areas to impact (e.g., leadership, intercultural competence, resilience)
- Translation of PLE to employment searches
- Academic skills show the least gains but many PLs are in academics
PEER LEADERSHIP AS A HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICE
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 suggest increase rates of retention and student engagement.”

(Kuh, 2010)
10 High-Impact Practices

- First-Year Seminars and Experiences
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Learning Communities
- Writing-Intensive Courses
- Collaborative Assignments & Projects

- Undergraduate Research
- Diversity/Global Learning
- Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- Internships
- Capstone Courses and Projects
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
Self-Rated Impact of PLEs on Undergraduate Experience

“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.”
Consider Adaptability of HIPs

“[HIP] key conditions can be adapted and incorporated into any teaching and learning situation inside or outside the classroom to promote higher levels of student performance. There are doubtless other high-impact activities...in which large number of students participate.”

Kuh in Brownell & Swaner, 2010
PL as an Emergent HIP

- First-Year Seminars & Experiences
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Learning Communities
- Writing-Intensive Courses
- Collaborative Assignments & Projects
- Internships
- Undergraduate Research
- Diversity/Global Learning
- Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- Capstone Courses & Projects
- Peer Leadership
Next Steps

• How aware of high-impact practices are educators and peer leaders in your context? How do you “preach the word” of HIPs?
• Intentionally facilitate the development of PLEs as a high-impact practice
• Use the characteristics of HIPs as a standard for development, administration, and assessment of PLEs