FOCUSING ON THE FIRST YEAR

A campus-wide discussion for faculty, staff, and administrators

Wednesday
February 13, 2013
Coffman Memorial Union
Peer Leadership
Experiences & Outcomes:
Learning from National Data

Jennifer R. Keup
“Focusing on the First Year” Conference
University of Minnesota
February 13, 2013
Organizing Questions

1. What do we know about the influence of peers on the undergraduate experience?
2. What do we know about the influence of peer leadership on the undergraduate experience?
3. What is the National Survey of Peer Leadership?
4. Where/in what domains of the institution are students serving as Peer Leaders?
5. How are Peer Leaders being prepared and trained?
6. How are Peer Leaders being rewarded and recognized?
7. What are the outcomes of PL service for Peer Leaders?
8. What are the takeaway messages from this presentation?
WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE INFLUENCE OF PEERS ON THE UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE?
A Look to the Literature: Peers

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)
A Look to the Literature: Peers

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

- **Satisfaction with college** (Astin, 1993; Coffman & Gilligan, 2002)
- **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)

“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)
Question #2:

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE INFLUENCE OF PEER LEADERSHIP ON THE UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE?
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)
Peer Leadership: A Definition

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(Cuseo, 2010)

“Peer leader has the broadest meaning and appears to be the best candidate for providing a comprehensive descriptor.”

(Ender & Newton, 2000, 2010)
Literature on Peer Leadership

• Ender & Kay (2001) meta-analysis on peer leadership
  o First emerged in residential life and orientation & remain most prominent in these settings
  o Growing range of uses
  o 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
Impact on the Students PLs Serve

Service to peers as a leader, educator, or mentor yields positive results to the recipients:

• Increased engagement (Black & Voelker, 2008)
• Student satisfaction (Rose, 2003; Washburn, 2008)
• Feelings of support & belonging (Colvin & Ashman, 2010; Jacobi, 1991; Light, 2011; Yazedijian, Purswell, Toews, & Sevin, 2007)
• Academic performance (Astin, 1993; Landrum & Nelson, 2002; Lewis & Lewis, 2005)
• Retention & persistence (Cuseo, 2010; Schwitzer & Thomas, 1998; Tinto, 1993)
Impact on the Peer Leaders

Peer leader positions provide benefit to the PLs:

- Increased ability to manage groups, empathize with students, and facilitate learning (Harmon, 2006)
- Development in leadership skills, integrative & applied learning, critical thinking, & interpersonal skills (Astin, 1993; Ender & Newton, 2001; Kenedy & Skipper, 2012; Russel & Skinkle, 1990)
- Employability outcomes (Cuseo, 2010; Shook & Keup, 2012)
Question #3:

WHAT IS THE NATIONAL SURVEY OF PEER LEADERSHIP?
Data Source

• Peer Leadership Survey sponsored by Center
• Administered in Spring 2009 to 3,733 institutional reps asking them to forward to student peer leaders
• Online survey containing items on:
  o Student demographics
  o Experiences with peer leadership
  o Characteristics of peer leader roles & programs
  o Self-rated change related to PL experience
  o Open-ended items
• 1,972 survey respondents
Data Source

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"We define a peer leader as an undergraduate student who has been selected to serve as a mentor or peer educator to other students through a position with a school-run organization."
Sample

• Skewed toward:
  o Female students (74% of respondents were women)
  o High academic performers (80% reported GPA ≥ 3.0)
  o Students engaged in peer leadership

• Adequate representation by:
  o Race/ethnicity
  o Class standing
  o In-state vs. out-of-state students
  o Residential vs. commuter students

• Not nationally representative but comprehensive
Limitations

• Campus-based leadership only
• Snowball sampling and institutional-level recruitment make calculation of response rate and representation challenging
• Wording of questions enhanced descriptive capabilities but limited some more sophisticated analyses
• Limited institutional controls
• Self-reported outcomes
General Results

• 89.5% of respondents reported being peer leaders
• 43.6% report holding more than one peer leader position “currently”
• 7.9% hold four or more peer leader positions “currently”
• Most have held several peer leader positions throughout college (mean = 2.67)
• 97.8% would recommend being a peer leader to other students
WHERE/IN WHAT DOMAINS OF THE INSTITUTION ARE STUDENTS SERVING AS PEER LEADERS?
Question #4:

WHERE/IN WHAT DOMAINS OF THE INSTITUTION ARE STUDENTS SERVING AS PEER LEADERS?
## Most Common Sponsors of PLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus-Based Organization</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
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**Titles for Academic Peer Leader Roles:**
- FY seminar peer leader
- Tutor
- Academic mentor
- Peer advisor
- Teaching assistant
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**Other Sponsors of Peer Leadership Experiences:**
- First-year experience
- Greek life
- Leadership programs
- Admissions
- Student media
## Less Common Sponsors of PLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus-Based Organization</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Organizations</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural Organizations</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling or Mental Health</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Productions</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Health</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judicial</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Abroad</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question #5:

HOW ARE PEER LEADERS BEING PREPARED AND TRAINED FOR THEIR ROLE?
Peer Leader Training

“Students who have been selected AND TRAINED to offer educational services to their peers.”

(Newton & Ender, 2010)
83.6% of respondents reported receiving training for their PL role
Training by Peer Leader Position

• Training reported at a **higher** level (>90%)
  ➰ Counseling or mental health
  ➰ Orientation
  ➰ Physical health
  ➰ Residence halls

• Training reported at a **lower** level (<80%)
  ➯ Religious organizations
  ➯ Student government
  ➯ Student productions
Duration of Peer Leader Training

- Half day or less: 13.8
- 1 day: 12.9
- 2 days: 15.3
- 3 days: 9.6
- 4 days: 6.5
- 1 week: 24.8
- Other: 36.6

[Graph showing the duration of peer leader training with specific percentages for each category.]
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
Question #6:

HOW ARE PEER LEADERS BEING REWARDED AND RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR SERVICE?
## Peer Leader Rewards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of Compensation</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial compensation</td>
<td>65.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer (no compensation)</td>
<td>50.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course credit</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Housing)</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Does the Money Matter?

- Different recruitment and training patterns for student paraprofessionals
- Students noted fewer benefits and transferable skills for Residential Life PL positions
- Compensation can facilitate PL participation from historically under-represented groups
- Intrinsic motivators seem most important
Intrinsic Motivation

• Students found PLE to be intrinsically motivating

• Common adjectives to describe PLE were “fulfilling” and “rewarding”

• Intrinsic motivators for being a peer leader were described much more often than extrinsic motivators, such as earning money or course credit
Intrinsic Motivators

“Being a leader gives you the chance to serve as a positive role model for others, and hopefully inspire them to want to become successful too! There is no more rewarding feeling than to know that you were the one who helped make things possible.”

“It can be frustrating when you’re trying to help people who don’t even want to listen to you, but it’s a good feeling when the messages get across to some people and make a difference in their lives.”
Question #7:

WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES OF SERVICE IN A PL ROLE FOR THE PEER LEADERS?
## Self-Rated Change in Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>% Reporting “Stronger” or “Much Stronger”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal communication</td>
<td>93.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>80.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>79.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>79.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written communication</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>51.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Self-Rated Change in Skills

“Peer leadership increases your communication skills dramatically... I just feel strongly about peer leadership because it boosts your confidence.”

“The responsibilities of peer leadership helped me to learn more about organization, time management, as well as teamwork, and cooperation.”
# Self-Rated Impact on Undergraduate Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>% “Increased”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of campus resources</td>
<td>91.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful interaction with peers</td>
<td>89.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful interaction with staff</td>
<td>85.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful interaction with faculty</td>
<td>82.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling of belonging at institution</td>
<td>80.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of diverse people</td>
<td>78.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction with diverse people</td>
<td>78.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to persist at institution</td>
<td>70.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Self-Rated Impact 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.”
## Student Self-Rated Outcomes by Sponsorship of Peer Leadership Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Residence Halls</th>
<th>Community Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time management</td>
<td></td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>+++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>++</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written communication</td>
<td>+</td>
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<td>++</td>
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<td>Academic</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful interaction with faculty</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>+</td>
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<td>+++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful interaction with peers</td>
<td>++</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse interactions</td>
<td>++</td>
<td></td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of diversity</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of campus resources</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling of belonging at institution</td>
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<td>+++</td>
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Question #8:

WHAT ARE THE TAKEAWAY MESSAGES FROM THIS PRESENTATION?
Thoughts and Opportunities

• Prominent and emergent areas of peer leadership
• Challenge of over-involved peer leaders
• Movement to longer & ongoing training modules
• Opportunities to highlight the intrinsic rewards of PL
• Peer leaders perceive that it has positive outcomes
  – Academics outcomes is an area for exploration
  – Differential impact based upon PL role
  – Power of Community Service PL experience

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 High-Impact Practices

- Creates an investment of time and energy
- Includes interaction with faculty and peers about substantive matters
- High expectations
- Includes frequent feedback
- Exposure to diverse perspectives
- Demands reflection and integrated learning
- Discovering relevance through real-world application
- Accountability
HIPs are Highly Transferable

“It stands to reason that these 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.”

(Kuh in Brownell & Swaner, 2010)
High-Impact Practices

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- Peer Leadership
Questions & Comments

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