Steps to Develop Peer Mentor and Mentee Program

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The following guide shares perspectives and research to design Mentor and Mentee programs (e.g. Big/Little and Prophyte/Neo) for campuses and organizations. Mentoring relationships in organizations, such as fraternities and sororities, as well as between older and younger members, have great potential to produce important outcomes (Allen et al, 2004; Armstrong & Jackson, 2017; Clark, 2019; Cory, 2011). These relationships provide a platform for personal and professional growth, guidance, and support. When designing policies and practices for mentoring relationships between peers, it is crucial to consider various question prompts and research that can assist campuses and organizations in creating effective and safe mentoring programs.

The Mentor serves as a guide, coach, resource, role model, and advocate for a Mentee. The Mentor and Mentee relationship should be a valued and meaningful aspect of the membership experience that results in positive individual and organizational gains (Meier & Luyster, 2009; Kennedy, 2017; Ragins & Kram, 2007).

Personal and Professional Growth

Mentors provide guidance, advice, and support to their mentees, helping them navigate challenges and make informed decisions. For example, in a fraternal organization, an older member can mentor a younger member by sharing their experiences and providing guidance on academic, social, and career-related matters.

Networking Opportunities

Mentoring relationships also offer valuable networking opportunities. Mentors can introduce their mentees to influential individuals within the organization or industry, expanding their professional network.

Emotional Support

Emotional support can be crucial in helping individuals overcome obstacles and maintain their well-being. For instance, in a fraternal organization, an older member can mentor a younger member who is struggling with academic stress or personal issues, offering guidance and support to help them navigate through difficult times.

Group Acclimation

The purpose of the Mentor and Mentee relationship is to help new members acclimate, assimilate, and transition to becoming a valued member in the organization and in campus communities. With a new group of friends, a new environment, and rigorous study schedule, adjusting can be challenging.

Leadership Development

Mentors often serve as role models, demonstrating effective leadership qualities and behaviors. Through observation and guidance, mentees can learn valuable leadership skills, such as communication, decision-making, and problem-solving.

Questions to Consider while Planning a Mentor and Mentee Program

1   Laws and Policies

Determine state laws, organizational and campus risk management policies.

- Resources for state laws can be found online at https://stophazing.org/policy/state-laws/
- Campuses and national /international organizations have a Risk Management Policy which outlines the rules around hazing, alcohol, sexual misconduct, assault and battery, harassment, firearms, retaliation, etc. In addition, some national/international organizations have specific policies around the new member education process and Mentor and Mentee relationship. Please be familiar with the policies of the state, local laws, in addition to university and national/fraternity policies in designing the Mentor and Mentee program.
    - How are laws and policies included in the Mentor and Mentee process?
    - How do students interpret both state laws and policies to maximize understanding and adoption?
    - An example of a hazing policy developed for organizations is found below.
- **Holmes Murphy Fraternal Practice defines hazing as:**
    - The term "hazing" means any intentional, knowing, or reckless act committed by a person, whether individually or in concert with other persons, against any individual or group of individuals, regardless of affiliation, whether or not committed on organizational property, for the purpose of recruiting, joining, pledging, initiating, admitting, affiliating, or for the purpose of retaining membership in an organization that causes an individual or group of individuals to do any of the following, regardless of a person's willingness to participate:
    - Be coerced to violate federal, state, provincial, local law, or [organizational] policy.
    - Be coerced to consume any food, liquid, alcoholic liquid, drug, or other substance in any non-customary manner which subjects the individual or group of individuals to a substantial risk of emotional or physical harm which includes but not limited to sickness, vomiting, intoxication, or unconsciousness.
    - Endure brutality of a physical nature, including but not limited to whipping, beating, paddling, branding, dangerous physical activity, or exposure to elements or endure threats of such conduct that results in mental or physical harm.
    - Endure brutality of a mental nature, including but not limited to activity adversely affecting the mental health or dignity of the individual, sleep deprivation, exclusion from social contact or conduct that could result in extreme embarrassment or endure threats of such conduct that results in mental or physical harm.
    - Endure any other activity which adversely affects the health and safety of an individual, including but not limited to the disruption of academic performance or class attendance, required designated driving programs, line ups, calisthenics, or personal, physical, or financial servitude.

2   Outcomes

Determine outcomes for a Mentor and Mentee program.

- How does the program help the Mentee become a better student?
- How does the program help the Mentee become a better member?
- What information is the Mentor expected to educate the Mentee on regarding the organization?
- Define the outcomes of the Mentor?
- Define the outcomes of the Mentee?

3 **Eligibility**

Determine Mentor and Mentee eligibility requirements to be a Mentor as well as a Mentee.

- Is there a length of time or membership status that is optimal for the goals of the program?
- Are there organizational requirements that should be achieved or maintained such as:
  - Institutional or organizational conduct standing
  - Dues/financial commitment
  - Minimum GPA
  - Positive contribution to the organization
- If a Mentor is not fulfilling the responsibilities, what system is in place to intervene, remove and provide a new Mentor?

4 **Competencies**

Determine attitudes, capacity, and skills for Mentors and Mentees.

- What mindsets do Mentors and Mentees need to have to approach a productive relationship? e.g. positive role model, believes in the dignity of all people
- What characteristics are important for Mentors as well as Mentees? e.g. trust, support, patience, and advocate
- How are Mentors positioned to be role models?

5 **Training**

Determine what training on expectations and competencies Mentors receive.

- Define expectations and competencies for Mentors and how each competency is taught and evaluated to maximize the Mentor and Mentee experiences on topics such as
  - Effective communication
  - Developing trust and respect in organizational relationship
  - Laws and policies around hazing (Section 1)
  - Campus support resources (e.g. Health Center, Counseling Center, Recreation Center, resources available for tutoring, alcohol assessment, sexual assault etc.) available
  - Bystander intervention strategies so Mentors are equipped to confront and intervene in situations
  - Reporting System (Section 8)

6 **Matching Process**

Determine how the Mentor and Mentee relationship will be selected. The process to develop these relationships should consider the following concepts to create connection, trust, and mutual respect.

- Developing a process (e.g., committee, rank order, random, self-matching, etc.) to build connection over mutual interests, such as similar courses of study, sports, volunteer interests, etc.
- Defining the needs of a Mentee and strengths of a Mentor is critical as part of the matching process.
- Situations to avoid in relationships are forced activities and arbitrary demands and unhealthy power dynamics.

7 | Touch Points

Determine what creates a healthy line of communication with Mentees through:

- Develop a schedule of events
  - Consistent check-ins
  - Providing guidance and advice
  - Determine a schedule that best fits with academic priorities and campus events.
  - A positive transition into the organization while becoming successful in college.
- Develop opportunities for both the Mentor and Mentee to form meaningful connections as well as within the organizations, campus community and campus staff and faculty.
  - Regular check-ins with Mentees by Mentors, members, organizational advisors, and academic advisors
  - Attending events: trainings, meetings with advisors, and organizational events
  - Meeting academic needs: class attendance, academic support, and study support
- Campus involvement
  - Share opportunities to connect to student organizations, leadership opportunities, and campus events and activities,
  - Awareness and exposure to campus resources such as fiscal resources, money management, health and safety, health awareness, and counseling.

8 | Reporting System

Determine the most transparent and effective reporting systems to empower new members, students, parents, etc. to report challenges in Mentoring relationships and the new member process. Various ways for someone to report hazing may include:

- In case of an emergency, call 911
- Utilize campus reporting system
- Utilize organizational reporting system
- Contact the local Chapter President to report.
- Contact Chapter Advisor to report.
- Report hazing: 1-888-NOT-HAZE.
- Call the International/National Headquarters during business hours to report.
- Contact university/college resources (campus police, Fraternity/Sorority Office, Dean of Students, Title IX office, etc.)

9 | Evaluation

Mentor/Mentee programs should be evaluated by both the Mentor and Mentee. By completing a survey that asks what they liked/disliked in the program, got out of the experience, would change/keep, or do differently, the next leaders can take note and continuously improve the program.

Steps to Consider while Implementing a Mentor and Mentee Program

1 | Resources

Mentees will benefit from understanding organizational and university resources available to them. Much of this information can be found on the university and organizational websites. This would include scholarship opportunities, mental health resources, tutorial services, etc.

2 | Sample Contract

While this is not required, this document signed during the training (Section 5) services as a visual reminder of expectations. If a contract is used, every single Mentor will need to sign.

To become an active leader, a healthy college student, and a member that lives the values of the organization.

I, _____, in serving as a Mentor do hereby promise to:

- Promote the health, well-being, human dignity, and respect of all new members in word and deed.
- Maintain responsibility for my actions, including meeting the time, academic, and financial commitments of the chapter.
- Encourage my Mentee to take responsibility for his actions, including meeting the time, academic, and financial commitments of the chapter.
- Challenge myself and my Mentee to meet our full potential as students and leaders through personal, fraternal, and academic achievement.
- Hold accountable any member of an organization who fails in their obligations to the chapter or national organization.
- Allow myself to be held accountable by any other member if I fail in my obligations to the chapter or national organization.
- Participate and promote participation in campus events, activities, and organizations.
- Participate in the Ritual of Initiation and encourage others to do the same.
- Embody the principles and ideals of my organization and do all in my power to make my chapter more like the ideal chapter, assisting my Mentee to do the same.
- Prepare my Mentee to assume lifelong membership.

Additionally, I understand that – should I fail in my duties as a Mentor – I may be removed from my position as a Mentor, my Mentee may be reassigned to another member, and I may lose the privilege to participate in any new member activities in the future. I also acknowledge that these sanctions may be assigned in addition to any other sanctions.

3 Mentor/Mentee Reveal

Historically, the night of Mentor and Mentee (Big/Little) reveals is a high-risk night across all of fraternal communities life due to over-consumption of alcohol and high-risk events. To avoid these activities and prevent risk, here is a list of activities that the chapter can take part in that should be planned by the officers. As a reminder, alcoholic beverages are prohibited at these events.

- "Family Dinner": a shared meal at the chapter house, a member's house, on campus, or at a restaurant with a "family" or all the Big-Little pairings is a great way to celebrate the ceremony and bond as friends and family.
- "Family Tree" introductions: introduce your Littles to their generations of Bigs. This is a great reason for alumni/alumnae to come back and introduce themselves to the newest class.
- "Family Feud": make teams of families or Bigs and Littles to compete in Family Feud. Keep the questions related to Fraternity and Sorority Life on campus, campus facts, or fun facts about the members. This is a great way to keep information fresh with members and educate new members.
- Host a keynote speaker: your campus fraternity and sorority life advisor, volunteer, or another speaker who could talk about the bonds of brotherhood/sisterhood, mentorship, or a related topic can really set the tone and show the new members they made the right decision to join.
- Team-builders and Icebreakers: one of the purposes of the Big/Little Program is to get to know more people in and out of the chapter. Use this time to participate in a ropes course, corn maze, bowling or one of many team-building exercises. Brotherhood_Building_NIC.pdf (pikapp.org)
- Guided Reflection: a deeper way to start off the Big and Little relationship would be to have all the pairs separate and walk through a set of expectations, goals, and talking points. These can be about the personal goals for their academics, expectations for the process, etc. Hold these meetings one-on-one, and really get to know one another with a genuine conversation.

4 Mentor/Mentee Change

It is possible that the Mentor or Mentee are not fulfilling their role. and failing to meet expectations.

- Develop a process in which Mentors and Mentees can be asked to be removed from their roles. Leaders should follow the conduct proceedings of the national/international organization.

Other Important Hazing Prevention Resources

- Anti-Hazing Education: Hazing Prevention Resources – Anti-Hazing Education (antihazingeducation.com)
- AFA Resource: fshazing_practitionerguide.pdf (ymaws.com)
- Fraternal Law Hazing Hotline: Help Us Stop Hazing - Fraternal Law
- Piazza Center Hazing Prevention Resources: Hazing Prevention Resources | Penn State Student Affairs (psu.edu)
- Stop Hazing: StopHazing | Leading Resource for Hazing Research and Prevention
- Anti-Hazing Laws State by State: States with Anti-Hazing Laws | StopHazing | Hazing Prevention Resource
- Holmes Murphy Prevention Plan: Prevention Plan Basic (holmesmurphy.com)

Citations

These scholarly sources provide valuable insights into the benefits and dynamics of Mentor and Mentee relationships in college and organizational contexts. They offer evidence-based research and practical guidance for designing effective mentoring programs and practices.

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