

Peer Advising: Evaluating Effectiveness

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Peer advising is a unique model for delivering advising services. The authors describe one such program at The University of Tennessee. A review of peer advising efforts and evaluation from the perspective of peer advisors and faculty members is included. Evidence suggests that peer advisors benefit the faculty and the Human Services Program. In addition, peer advisors perceive benefits from the experience.

KEY WORDS: Administrative organizational systems, advising approaches, experiential learning

A common definition of peer advising is "students helping students." Peer advisors are undergraduates who are trained in a variety of academic programs and who assist fellow students with class scheduling, time management, and program progression issues. Across the United States, peer advisors are offering an increasingly popular advising service, and demand for this service increases as pressures on students and faculty members increase in the academic setting.

The faculty and staff at The University of Tennessee, a research-extensive institution, value advising, and as a result, along with sound teaching and scholarly research, advising is considered an important facet of faculty excellence. Through the Human Service Education Program at The University of Tennessee, peer advisors expand traditional academic advising, which is typically focused on student retention and academic success. In addition to developing purposeful competency development, they are involved in programmatic and community service projects and become exemplary models for fellow students.

Faculty members developed this peer advising program to initiate a process whereby peer advisors contribute to the welfare of students, assist faculty members in supporting the Human Service Program, and practice skills directly related to professional competence. Faculty members set up the peer advising program as an independent study course. Initially, the faculty chose a student to serve as a peer advisor and then encouraged that student to develop and maintain a collaborative relationship with the peer advisor director.

The peer advisor director identifies needs and

goals of the program, shares these needs with peer advisors, and encourages them to generate, plan, and implement solutions. Through regular meetings and supervision, peer advisors receive assistance from the director in the development of meaningful programmatic goals that are also consistent with personal and educational interests, values, and abilities. To evaluate the effectiveness of peer advising efforts, we studied the perspectives of both peer advisors and faculty members in the Human Services Program at the University of Tennessee.

Literature Review

One can find a number of studies related to peer advising: stresses of college life and adaptation (Altschuler, 2000; Johnson, Schwartz, & Bower, 2000); student preferences when being advised by professors (Alexitch, 1997); attributes and strategies for peer advisors dealing with underachievers (Rittenhouse, Stephan, & LeVine, 1984); ethical considerations for faculty-student dual relationships (Biaggio, Paget, & Chenoweth, 1997); and multicultural peer counseling (Frisz, 1999).

Peer advising programs have been developed to fill a variety of purposes from augmenting student recruitment, to enhancing academic services, to reducing faculty responsibility (Fedor-Joseph, 1992; Privette & DeLawder, 1982). In a well-designed program, advisees, faculty members, and the peer advisors benefit from good advising, but the advisees receive the most apparent advantages. Freshmen who are new to the college atmosphere have special needs that are often more apparent to other students, who may have had similar experiences in their own transitions to university life. In addition, peer advisors may be a more approachable resource for many students who wish to broach personal or informational problems. Johnson et al. (2000) suggested that peer advisors could be especially helpful for students who are susceptible to stress and dropout. Russel and Skinkle (1990) reported that students take a more active role in educational and social aspects of their programs when advised by peers rather than by faculty members. Peer advisors can also fill recruitment needs. Fedor-Joseph (1992) indicated that when advised by a peer, students report positive influence in decisions regarding

school selection and choice of a major.

The benefits to the faculty are numerous. Stickle (1982) discovered high discrepancies between student and faculty perceptions of advising effectiveness. Stickle delineated four possible factors contributing to this discrepancy: Faculty members receive little advisor training, hold nonadvising responsibilities, need to provide little accountability, and have little time for regularly scheduled appointments. The contributors to a peer advising system can address each of these factors. First, peer advisors are often trained in models through which they are encouraged to research effective advising skills. For example, they can use a manual that delineates the core competencies needed to fulfill the position (Nelson & Fonzi, 1995). Second, faculty supervision of a few peer advisors takes considerably less time than meeting many individual students for advising appointments. In addition, peer advisors can cover the more routine and time-consuming aspects of the advising process. Third, peer advisors and advisees take responsibility for many of the accountability and scheduling responsibilities, thereby alleviating this burden from the faculty.

Peer advisors experience a typically unexpected benefit from the program. The faculty selection process, training, and additional responsibility given to peer advisors may have a positive effect on their personal and professional development. The role of a peer advisor gives advanced students the forum to practice skills and roles learned in their program, thus allowing them to develop good communication, leadership, and helping skills (Holland & Huba, 1989).

Because students are the intended consumers of the service, researchers have focused on the benefits of peer advising programs as perceived by advisees and measured by their levels of satisfaction (Nelson & Fonzi, 1995). However, they have often commented that the benefits to the faculty and peer advisors are additional advantages of peer advising programs (Holland & Huba, 1989; Privette & DeLawder, 1982; Russel & Skinkle, 1990).

Program Description

Because of the diversity of students and their equally diverse goals in the human service field, faculty members at The University of Tennessee designed a peer advisor model to address a variety of needs. Advanced students in the program (i.e., those having completed a majority of core courses within the major and usually one of two required internships) take responsibility by providing assis-

tance to new students on issues such as class scheduling, time management, internship options, and program progression issues. Diambra (in press) reported that these peer advisors assist students in the major through orientation, guidance, resources, referrals, and programmatic activities. At the time of this study, the peer advising model in the Human Service Program had been in place for 2 years. One faculty member acts as director and supervises the peer advisors each semester.

In developing the peer advisor program, faculty members hoped to assist peer advisors by providing orientation, guidance, resources, referrals, and developing programmatic activities that promote the Human Service Program. They designed the program to include five components: a) peer advisor selection, b) orientation and training, c) program identity and service through activity completion, d) self-directed peer advising activities, and e) ongoing improvement through feedback and evaluation. These elements serve as a rudder that allows the director to guide the program.

Peer advising activities are multifaceted. Through the service projects (which affect both the Human Service Program and the community), delivery of academic and personal services to students, and modeling of appropriate program progression, peer advisors are challenged to become service oriented and to develop skills important to professionals in their field of human services. Rather than assign specific tasks, the director often presents problems to peer advisors and encourages them to use creativity and ambition to devise solutions. In addressing the needs presented by the director, peer advisors have the unique opportunity to implement the skills they have learned, such as listening, understanding, and teaching, through courses in their program. Their efforts supplement faculty advising services and provide advisees alternatives so that they can face challenges in the most convenient (e.g., through flexible office hours) or appropriate (e.g., by getting another student's perspective) ways.

Peer advising efforts are chiefly recognized through the activities in which the peer advisors participate and the projects to which they contribute. Example signature events and projects include an open house, celebration for graduating seniors, a newsletter, and a Website.

Faculty members and current peer advisors recruit and select new peer advisors using several methods. They post flyers to solicit students to apply as peer advisors. Program faculty members and current peer advisors recommend outstanding upper-class students for peer advisor positions,

Each applicant provides a current resume, a transcript, and a letter stating the reason(s) he or she is interested in becoming a peer advisor. Minimum qualifications include a 2.0 grade-point average (GPA) overall and a 2.5 GPA in the major. Most applicants exceed the minimum requirements. The director and current peer advisors interview each applicant in a panel format. Applicants are asked to demonstrate knowledge of the Human Service Program, leadership qualities, and objectives for becoming a peer advisor. Interviewers ask questions and observe the candidates' responses to determine an applicant's commitment to the program, time availability, and communication skills. Interviewers rank the applicants, and the director contacts the top candidates by telephone to offer each a peer advisor position. On average, two to three students act as peer advisors each semester. Occasionally, a peer advisor will request to stay in the program for an additional semester. The director may grant this request provided the student was an effective peer advisor during his or her first term.

Those selected to be peer advisors register for independent study credit. Each peer advisor develops a contract with the director for the tasks she or he is to complete and for the number of credit hours. One credit hour per semester is equivalent to 3 hours of peer advising effort per week. Most peer advisors register for one credit hour. If committed to large or to numerous projects that require more time, he or she may register for up to three credits.

Before the first peer advisor meeting, each advisor receives an orientation handbook. Previous peer advisors designed the handbook specifically for future peer advisors. In it, previous peer advisors described activities (i.e., a task analysis of each major activity), supporting documents (e.g., announcement flyers, fund-raising request letters, etc.), semester schedules, and office management information (e.g., file location, computer filing system, E-mail and voice mail pass codes, etc.).

The peer advisors share an office, which provides identity and permanence to the program. Six to eight group meetings are conducted during the semester in which participants plan events, update schedules and solve problems while the director instructs them and monitors peer advisor progress. The peer advising office hosted all group planning meetings. To a large extent, the faculty members developed activities that defined and shaped the peer advising program. Major activities include a) guidance and advising (e.g., provision of resources for course projects, curriculum planning, and information dissemination); b) open house

(e.g., marketing, recruiting, and fund-raising); c) handbook editing and revisions; and d) office management. Each peer advisor chooses one or two activities and becomes the principal coordinator responsible for its successful planning and completion. Concomitantly, each peer advisor donated time and effort to each of the four other activity areas (Diambra, in press).

Peer advisors provide guidance and advising during established office hours. They post an office-hour schedule at the initial meeting each semester. They cover a variety of days and times to increase accessibility to students seeking assistance. They are required to attend to many guidance and advising responsibilities: planning class schedules, resolving obstructions to registration, researching potential internship agencies, accessing on-line course materials, clarifying application deadline dates, and sundry other tasks. Peer advisors refer students to faculty advisors for final approval regarding curriculum planning.

The program developers designed the open house to generate a sense of student-student and faculty-student camaraderie and to fortify program identity to those enrolled in human service courses or majoring in the program. Food, a National Honor Society display, program applications, and a large banner announcing the event (a solicited donation by a large soft drink manufacturer) adds to the welcoming atmosphere. To raise funds, peer advisors solicit donations for a silent auction. In one open house, peer advisors raised over \$500 through the silent auction. After this initial success, the program director opened an account and created a ledger that were both subsequently managed, with supervision, by peer advisors.

Fund-raising efforts expanded into the community when one group of peer advisors sponsored a campus and community event on national Make a Difference Day. One peer advisor adopted the catchphrase, "Change Makes a Difference," to solicit donations of loose pocket change. Peer advisors strategically placed their table on campus before game time on a football Saturday. They collected over \$200 and donated it to a local shelter that serves abused and neglected children. Peer advisors developed and practiced a wealth of professional competencies through this activity. They networked within the local community, identified a need, designed a creative service-learning experience, encouraged collaboration between peers and faculty members and produced funds for a community agency. Peer advisors fashioned a learning experience that enhanced their own professional knowl-

edge and honed skills needed in their future careers as service professionals.

The director encouraged peer advisors to consider new ways to accomplish previously performed tasks. Diambra (in press) reported that peer advisors were excited with this self-directed process and typically improved upon the efforts from the previous semester, putting a unique earmark on the program. New contributions served to supplement and enhance peer advising activities. The director incorporates successful ideas into the program, which are transferred to the next group of peer advisors. Because of ongoing contributions, the handbook requires constant revision. As a result, peer advisors undertake handbook revision as one of the core activities in the program.

One student volunteers (or is selected) to be the office manager each semester. The office manager organizes and maintains order by filing new materials; computing income and expenses; storing voice mail and E-mail records; updating the informational bulletin board; reading, responding to, and distributing incoming mail; purging outdated materials; and other office-management duties.

Through these activities, peer advisors were able to help advisees successfully navigate the major. As a secondary gain, peer advisors developed, practiced, and honed professional competence through their efforts.

Methodology

We focused our study on the peer advising experience of human service majors at The University of Tennessee. We studied 6 female peer advising students, their efforts across two semesters, activities documented in the peer advising journal, written and verbal responses from peer advisors at the close of each semester, and the feedback from three human service faculty members who witnessed these efforts.

During each semester, peer advisors kept a collective journal of activities accomplished; that is, each peer advisor made entries of their daily contributions into the same journal. Although we used the journal as a source for data collection, it was not developed for our purposes: The peer advisors used the journal of compiled activities to communicate and provide documentation of their ongoing tasks and activities.

At the completion of each semester, we sent peer advisors an asynchronous E-mail survey requesting that they respond in writing to seven items:

1. Which peer advising activities were the most beneficial to the students?

2. Which peer advising activities were the most beneficial to the human service program?
3. Which peer advising activities were the most enjoyable to you as a peer advisor?
4. Identify reasons/topics/needs for which students sought help from you as a peer advisor.
5. How were you best prepared to act as a peer advisor?
6. How were you least prepared to act as a peer advisor?
7. Identify human service related skills you were able to develop as a peer advisor.

In addition, at the end of the semester, per the method of Fontana and Frey (2000), the director used a semistructured, formal group interview process to aid peer advisors' recall and to embellish descriptions of peer advising activities. The director printed E-mail responses and wrote notes of oral responses from these peer-advisor debriefing sessions.

The director also requested feedback from program faculty members. On a written survey, three faculty members wrote responses to the following statements:

1. Identify several different ways in which peer advisor activities assisted you as a faculty member.
2. Identify several ways in which peer advising benefited the Human Service Program.
3. Identify any drawbacks to having the peer advisors or the peer advising activities.

We reviewed the peer advisor journal, the director's notes of the peer advisor interviews, and the survey responses from peer advisors and faculty members. With journal text and survey responses, we used open coding, a method whereby the reader pulls together similar and overlapping examples in written text to identify themes. We summarized impressions of journal text and survey responses using a memoing method, called "theory notes" (Ryan & Bernard, 2000), to capture overlapping ideas and implied meaning. In addition, we implemented a constant comparison method and frequency counts to identify activities that demanded the most peer-advisor attention.

Findings and Discussion

The Advising Activity Journal

The collective journal (i.e., the combined entries of individual peer advisors) indicated that most of the advising efforts focused on projects selected for the semester (e.g., open house, senior celebration, silent auction). We found that the journal entries related to project responsibilities outnumbered

those of advising tasks 9 to 1. The lowest activities-advising ratio among individual advisors was 7:2.

Peer advisors logged detailed tasks and expressed surprise at the minutiae required to complete large projects. During the debriefing interview with the director, they corroborated the journal entries by commenting that they had placed significant emphasis on projects other than advising. Their remarks included "I spent almost no time advising" and "Although I was in the [peer advising] office, my 3 hours were spent planning the senior celebration."

In addition to using it for communication and documentation, peer advisors used the journal to reflect on their efforts, delegate tasks to each other, and ensure timely task completion. According to journal comments, more than 75% of academic advising or guidance activities were conducted by peer advisors outside the peer advising office. That is, students approached peer advisors about academic concerns without making an appointment. During the interview, peer advisors indicated that classmates typically approached them when they shared a class together: before class, following class, or during class breaks.

Peer Advisor Responses to the Survey

In survey responses, peer advisors provided additional and substantiating information. Their responses to each item varied from several sentences to several paragraphs.

Which peer advising activities were the most beneficial to the students? Over one half of the peer advisors said that responding and providing answers to curriculum questions was the most beneficial peer advising activity to other students. Sixty-seven percent of peer advisors acknowledged that the open-door policy for advising students, so that advisees could freely contact them during office hours and surrounding scheduled classes, was the most helpful aspect of their service to students.

Although the question was directed to advisee benefits, some peer advisors identified benefits to themselves. Being a peer advisor allowed them to "learn about the behind the scenes part of the program."

Several peer advisors also recognized that the inherent qualities unique to a peer relationship are important. "Peer advisors are able to provide first-hand experience and knowledge to the students." They also acknowledged that keeping updated agency information files (i.e., brochures and business cards) for potential field placements was an added benefit for students needing employment information. According to the journal, peer advisors

spent slightly more than one third of advising-related office appointments reviewing information files to assist students in narrowing down prospective field-placement options. Peer advisors and advisees spent a small portion of this time contacting agency supervisors to set up interviews for internships.

Which peer advising activities were the most beneficial to the Human Service Program? Two peer advisors reported that providing initial academic advising for students helped faculty members use their time efficiently. Four peer advisors mentioned the open house, fund-raising, and recruiting activities as benefits to the program too. Advisors used these activities to increase program visibility and provide monies, enabling the peer advising program to "sustain itself without draining funds from the college."

Which peer advising activities were the most enjoyable to you as a peer advisor? Four of the 6 peer advisors agreed that benevolent fund-raising activities for the community were most enjoyable activities for them. Others enjoyed working with fellow peer advisors, holding office hours, and recruiting activities. One peer advisor commented "It was good for my self-esteem to have people ask me questions that I knew the answers to!"

Identify the top three reasons/topics/needs for which students sought help from you as a peer advisor. Peer advisors provided overlapping responses to the question of advisee needs. The top three needs of students were for field placement information (83%), Human Service Program and curriculum information (50%), and general university information (33%).

How were you best prepared to act as a peer advisor? Peer advisors pointed toward personal experience and observance of exemplary university advisors as two methods of preparation. Four of the 6 peer advisors claimed trials and experiences as a student in the program (e.g., the student-faculty panel interview required to enter the major) and interactions with advising role models were the most influential modes of preparation. One half of the respondents identified the leadership provided by the peer-advisor director as helpful in preparing them for their peer advising roles. Having traversed the program, learning from mistakes, and negotiating successes, they felt that they had gained fruitful and applicable preparation. One peer advisor expressed that peer advisors were given the freedom to develop and own peer advising activities as a group and to mold each activity through partnerships and individual efforts, "[The director] was the

silent partner in the whole program."

How were you least prepared to act as a peer advisor? Three of the 5 first-semester peer advisors (the sixth was serving her second semester as a peer advisor) cited as a hindrance the lack of a current document that detailed peer advising responsibilities and activities. They suggested that the absence of basic information necessary to understand the role of a peer advisor and peer advising activities delayed effective service delivery to students. A peer advisor surveyed at the end of the second semester commented, "To remedy the problem . . . the peer advising handbook was revised."

Two peer advisors expressed another concern related to the two different concentrations within the major: generalist training and interpreting for the deaf. These two advisors pointed out that each peer advisor is intimately familiar with her or his own track but not usually familiar with the unique requirements of the other curriculum. As a result of this unfamiliarity, peer advisors experienced some anxiety when advising students who were in the concentration different from themselves.

Identify human service related skills you were able to develop as a peer advisor. Peer advisors listed active listening, mediating, putting people at ease, instilling client advisee confidence, and brokering as skills developed through the peer advising program. They also noted that participation in a team and increased confidence in leadership skills were also benefits. One advisee alluded to an understanding and application of Maslow's Hierarchy (Maslow, 1970): "Many of the times, students would come into the office for curriculum advising but would digress to personal issues because the student needed to get stuff off her chest. It was more important to discuss something that was bothering the student than to focus on advising because the student will not gain anything from the experience." From a peer advisor perspective, one can see evidence that peer advising efforts benefit the faculty and the program (including students). Through the program, peer advisors were also provided opportunities to develop competencies.

Faculty Responses

In feedback collected from the survey, faculty members suggested that peer advising activities were helpful to both individual faculty members and the Human Service Program. Three of 4 program faculty members were surveyed (the fourth faculty member is the peer advisor director), and all 3 responded to the survey.

Identify several different ways in which peer advisor activities assisted you as a faculty member. One faculty member identified a fundamental task that is critically important to good advising: proper categorization of courses from students' transcripts to a curriculum checklist that indicates that appropriate courses were taken for degree requirements. The faculty member cited an especially important task because an electronic degree auditing requirement system is only in the pilot stages for the Human Service Program, so manual recordkeeping is essential for proper advising. Peer advisors teach students to fill out the academic-record checklists before the advisee meets with his or her faculty advisor. Advisees benefit by learning this empowerment skill because it helps them track their own progress and better understand degree requirements.

Respondents also identified other peer advisor tasks that were helpful to faculty members. They noted that peer advisors recruited new students, provided accessible advising to students, lent a student (or peer) perspective on related issues, and were willing to advise faculty members regarding needed course content.

Identify several ways in which peer advising benefited the Human Service Program. Faculty members noted that the major activities conducted by peer advisors benefited the program. Specifically, they cited the open house, silent auction, and senior celebration activities. One faculty member commented on the sense of security and fun that the peer advisors provide to the department, "[It's] good to have them around, they appear to enjoy it!"

Identify any drawbacks to having the peer advisors or the peer advising activities. Two faculty members provided one survey response each. On a very positive note, one concisely stated "none" and another offered "absolutely none!" However, during the course of one semester, the third faculty member commented to the director that one peer advisor appeared to be spending an inordinate amount of time focused on peer advising activities and that this effort appeared to be interfering with her performance in another course.

Through the survey, faculty members suggested that peer advising benefits the program and faculty members. In fact, responses from peer advisors and faculty members overlapped, indicating that both peer and faculty advisors perceive the attributes of the program in much the same way. Four overlapping and beneficial themes for students and the program emerged from the peer advisor and faculty responses:

1. A shared perspective inherent in a student-student relationship allows for a unique and personal advising relationship.
2. Advising accessibility increases spontaneous advising and was especially noted around shared classes among peer advisors and advisees.
3. Peer advisor responses to student curriculum- and academic-related questions benefit faculty members.
4. Major events (e.g., open house and senior celebration) increase program visibility and camaraderie among faculty members and students.

Insightful peer advisor responses that did not overlap with faculty or fellow peer advisor feedback are worthy of mention. The following phrases obtained from peer advisors did not contribute to identified themes, but they provide provocative groundwork for further investigation: "I learned to be resourceful," and "I was able to arrange logistics involved in event planning and to operate effectively in an organizational structure." One peer advisor identified public speaking, recruiting, and fund-raising skills as tasks learned through her position as an advisor. Another peer advisor reflected that she learned two efficient methods to communicate information to large numbers of students via the program newsletter, *New Horizons*, and the on-campus televised ad. Another peer advisor expressed personal satisfaction about being an approachable resource for students. A third recognized the professional satisfaction she felt by working as part of a team and seeing planning and implementation efforts reach fruition. Still another expressed her enjoyment in being able to contribute and "give back" to the Human Service Program.

Recommendations

Program Recommendations

Based on the results of our study, we offer a number of recommendations for advising offices, advising personnel, and faculty members. First, proper preparation and support is required for peer advisors to be efficient and effective. Peer advising orientation must include written structure and a reflective look into each peer advisor's academic journey. Peer advisors can construct their own handbook during the course of the semester and then subsequent cohorts can revise the handbook as needed. These revisions are based on specific academic successes and failures and identify lessons learned during the passage through academia. They

will heighten peer advisor awareness to the knowledge they have gained along the journey and can subsequently impart to their junior peers. In addition, they provide critical program information that may not be a part of every peer advisor's experience; for example a generalist can glean important information about the curriculum for servicing for the deaf. A prerequisite course for peer advisors must include basic instruction on interviewing and listening skills, as peer advisors indicated many instances in which they practiced these skills.

Second, peer advisors must be ready to address questions at a moment's notice and remain flexible. More than 75% of students made advising inquiries before, during, or after class, so program coordinators should ensure that peer advisors make themselves available during the human service classes that have the largest number of enrolled students. By using an "office in a bag," in which they carry the most popular reference materials, peer advisors can readily respond to students' needs outside of regularly scheduled hours. Based on this study, key information for the office includes an alphabetical list of possible field placements, a matrix to identify advisee characteristics (i.e., age, sex, etc.), agency mission for each placement, curriculum documents specific to the major, and references to general university information.

Third, peer advisors are in a unique position to bridge the gap between students and faculty members. Students do not always fully understand the diverse roles and activities expected of faculty members. Furthermore, they struggle to make clear sense of higher education structure (i.e., the hierarchical relationship and functional dynamics between programs, departments, and colleges). Therefore, some peer advisors enjoy the behind-the-scenes view they gain in the department and play an integral role in the program. The faculty should invite them to be student representatives in different campus forums. By participating in forums, peer advisors experience ongoing systemic learning and build a comprehensive foundation for effective and more complete advising.

Fourth, those implementing a peer advising program should take advantage of the unique communication opportunities peer advising and student-faculty interactions offer. Faculty responses to peer advising were overwhelmingly positive. Based on the responses of advisors and faculty members, we found that advisors and faculty members shared four perceptions of the peer advising program. First, besides creating an enjoyable atmosphere in which to work, peer advisors advocate for

student needs and have the ear of the faculty. Therefore, program planners should encourage peer advisors to identify themes related to student advising needs, programmatic problems, and other advising-related areas. They should be coached to approach faculty members with these concerns in a constructive manner.

In addition, faculty members appreciate the tangible tasks completed by peer advisors. Cumbersome or mundane advising tasks (e.g., revisiting the curriculum planning checklists to ensure the format makes sense to students or transferring transcript information to a curriculum checklist to determine progress toward fulfilling all degree requirements) are ideally suited for peer advisors who practice new skills while contributing to the welfare of the students, program, and faculty.

Fifth, through specially planned activities, peer advisors can help fund the program and increase its visibility. Peer advisors indicated that these activities were especially enjoyable and were mutually beneficial for students, faculty, and the program. They also noted that the activities provided excellent learning opportunities that paralleled professional competencies.

Sixth, directors should be cautious when issuing tasks. They should monitor peer advisor academic performance in other courses throughout the semester. Peer advising activities tend to generate more pursuits and with them more responsibility and tasks to be accomplished. Peer advisors who have difficulty with self-discipline or taking on too much responsibility may find themselves devoting an inordinate amount of time to peer advising tasks and sacrificing academic performance in other courses. A director should implement a clear learning contract at the beginning of the semester, with activities, learning objectives, goals, and outcome measures clearly outlined.

Research Recommendations

Future researchers might consider measuring peer advisor development and effectiveness. Soliciting responses from students who were recipients of services would provide a valuable and objective perspective to peer advisor efficacy. They might use the ACT Survey of Academic Advising to provide an objective and quantitative measure of advisee satisfaction. By collect pre- and post-measures of peer-advising experience, researchers may be able to determine the development of participants.

We investigated one program with only 6 female participants and conducted this study at a 4-year university; however, the majority of human service

programs are offered at 2-year institutions. The director acted in dual roles as peer advisor director and researcher. An inherent bias existed; therefore, objective analysis was compromised. Adaptations to this model, especially in defining "advanced" or "experienced peer advising students may be necessary. These limitations affect external validity and applicability to other programs, including those comprised of male peer advisors. However, despite the limitations of our study, we recommend replication of peer advising programs across different academic programs and encourage others to study their effectiveness in other specific educational environments.

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