

Management and Assessment of a Successful Peer Mentor Program for Increasing Freshmen Retention

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1.0 Abstract

There is no single magic bullet for the retention of freshman engineering students upon entrance into a rigorous course of study required of today's engineering curriculum. Rather it is a multi-faceted approach of strategies each designed to aid the transition from an often-times easy high school experience to one in which a student is overwhelmed with the difficulty and responsibilities of a full-time student.

One such strategy that has been implemented at LeTourneau University is a peer mentoring program which pairs small groups of 5-9 "first time in any college" (FTIC) students with an upper classmen of like major who has successfully navigated the first year. While a peer mentoring program is not ground-breaking in itself, several successful techniques for management and assessment of the mentors have been developed which may benefit other institutions that are seeking to implement or may be struggling to manage similar programs. The peer mentoring program is one aspect of an overall greater effort started in 2010 aimed at retention and supported by a 5-year project funded by NSF-STEP. Three years of this project have yielded significant improvements in the one-year and two-year retention rates. While the peer mentor program can be credited with some of these improvements other new retention initiatives include:

- A faculty mentor program for FTIC students
- An industrial mentor program for FTIC students
- Two completely redesigned multi-disciplinary first-year engineering practice courses designed to answer the question "What do engineers do?"

This paper will seek to detail how the institution implements the peer mentor program. It begins with a rigorous selection process that attempts to promote the most qualified candidates for the role of mentor. The program is structured to provide as many tools and support as necessary for the mentors to perform their assigned tasks of helping the freshmen student survive and thrive. Leadership development is at the core and several layers of accountability are built in to provide the requisite support.

In addition, this paper seeks to provide insight on several challenges of a peer mentor program. For example, how can existing institutional resources be leveraged to provide a structured program required for mentors to effectively perform their assigned tasks. Or, what motivations are present within the program for an upper-classmen to desire enrolling as a mentor in the program? Finally, what advantages can be gained by successful retention of peer mentors to serve a second year?

2.0 Introduction

The following introductory information has been presented in various forms in previous ASEE papers^{1,2,3} that address other aspects of this project. It is updated and included here to provide context for the peer mentoring program discussed in this paper.

2.1 Background

Characteristics of LeTourneau University

LeTourneau University is a private faith-based university offering over 60 academic programs, including engineering and engineering technology, the aeronautical sciences, business, education, the liberal arts, and sciences. The School of Engineering and Engineering Technology (SEET) is the largest of the five academic divisions of the university. Of the 1400 undergraduate students on the campus, over 550 of them are matriculated in the SEET, which offers two undergraduate Bachelor of Science degrees: Engineering and Engineering Technology. The Engineering degree provides six concentrations: *biomedical, civil, computer, electrical, materials joining, and mechanical*, while the Engineering Technology degree provides five concentrations, *aeronautical-electrical, aeronautical-mechanical, electrical, materials joining, and mechanical*. All of these concentrations build upon a common core of general education and technical coursework.

First-Year Initiatives for Retention Enhancement (FIRE)

Our school engineering graduation rates have been declining despite steadily increasing enrollment. Retention and graduation rates declined to significantly subpar levels, motivating an internal study³ of underlying causes. Analyses of performance and predictor data, as well as surveys of the literature and of non-retained SEET students, produced several recommended actions based on documented best practices. An ensuing NSF STEP grant was obtained to aid in the implementation of these initiatives. The primary goal of *First-Year Initiatives for Retention Enhancement (FIRE)* is to increase the school's graduation rate from its recent five-year average of 42% to an improved five-year average of 65%. This will put us above the average graduation rates of undergraduate engineering programs across the nation. Reported numbers vary from one source to another, but a national average of about 55% is in reasonable agreement with the sources identified.^{4,5,6,7}

All of our approximately 140 "First time in any college" (FTIAC) freshmen are the focus of the SEET's retention improvement efforts. The SEET's multifaceted initiatives for improving retention include several best-practice components, namely:

- 1) exposure to engineering practice through two new courses employing multidisciplinary projects⁸, *presentations by practicing engineers*, presentations by students involved in co-op education, and presentations by senior capstone design project students;
- 2) the development of the faculty mentoring program for first-year students;
- 3) the development of a *peer mentoring program* for first-year students;
- 4) the development of an industrial mentoring program for first-year students.

We are implementing all four initiatives, and this paper focuses on initiative #3, peer mentoring.

2.1.1 Mentoring Group Organization (Figure 1)

Each first-year transition class of ~24 students from similar majors has three sub-groups of 6-12 students each termed “First-year Interest Groups” (FIGs). Each FIG group has a faculty mentor and a peer mentor (referred to as peer *advisors* by the university). The faculty mentor is also the academic advisor of the FIG group. One of the engineering faculty mentors teaches the first-year transition class intended to foster intellectual, spiritual, and social development, along with “survival” topics such as time tracking and study skills. The peer mentors (PM) are carefully recruited, screened, and trained by the campus achievement center (AC) to catalyze intensive relationship-building with and among the FIG group. PMs are compensated for 6-8 hours per week, averaging \$2,000 each in yearly wages including overhead. FIG participants meet with their PM every week alternating between individual and group meetings. Each first-year transition class has a local practicing engineer who serves in the capacity of an industrial mentor to the three FIG groups within the class.

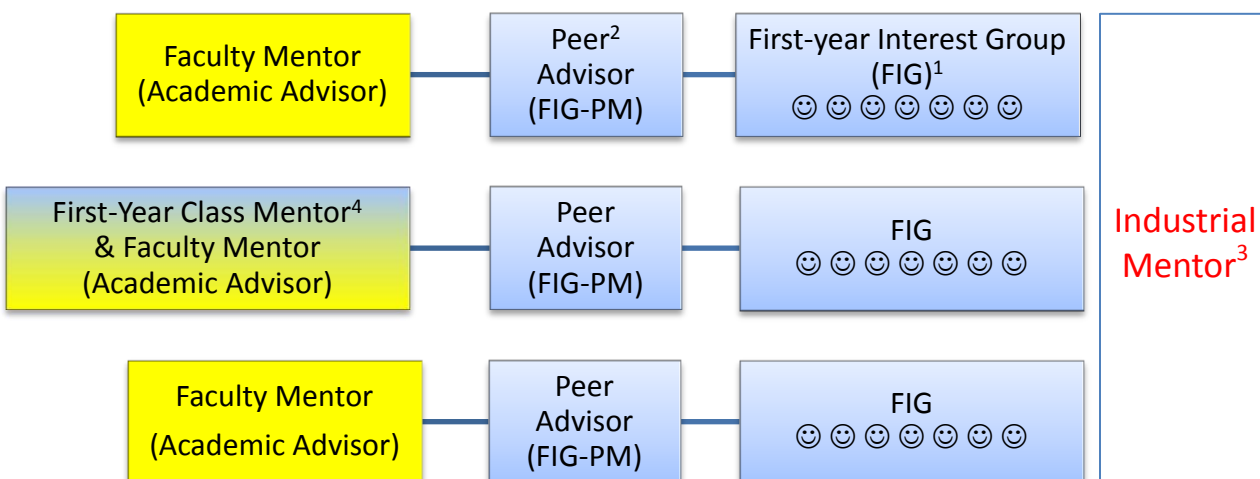


Figure 1: Three “First-Year Interest Groups (FIGs)” in each First-Year Transition Class of ~24 Students.

[1:FIGs are 6 to 8 students, 2:FIG Peer Mentors are older students,

3:FIG Industrial Mentors are local practicing engineers linked to one first-year transition class Section.]

Additional FIG Components

In the fall, as part of the engineering version of the University’s first-year transition course, the FIG activities are launched with a DVD seminar entitled Success4Students.⁹ The 3+ hour seminar has six segments that address the following topics:

- Select your destination (where do you want to be in five years?)
- Determine your path (focusing on goal setting for the semester)
- Planning to succeed (emphasizing the importance of planning your schedule for the week each Sunday and then following it like a compass through the week)
- Maximizing your in-class learning
- Speed Reading and Learning to triple your reading speed with better comprehension
- Creative note taking and memory skills

A fifty-page workbook complements the video presentation with application activities that are completed at the end of each segment.

Each of the FIG groups are also clustered into the Intro to Engineering Practice I courses.¹⁰ The FIGs are also clustered into the engineering version of the University's first-year transition course.

3.0 Defining Success

Since its inception the managers of the program have conducted focus groups and surveys of the PMs to assess the viability and effectiveness from their perspective. The PM's have repeatedly endorsed the program as evidenced through the retention rate of PM's who continue in the program. This section will provide data illustrating the success of the PM program as a piece of the overall retention initiatives.

3.1 Overall Retention and Graduation Rates

The one-, two- and three-year retention rates are shown in Figure 2. After the first 3 years of the project the retention rates have increased for "first time in college" (FTIC) students in the School of Engineering & Engineering Technology. As seen in graph, the current trend indicates an increasing retention over the historic SEET baseline suggesting positive project impact. While we cannot link the increase directly to the efforts of this project, there is a strong correlation between the beginning of the project (2010) and increase in retention numbers. This increase is plausibly due in part to the mentoring initiatives implemented in this project.

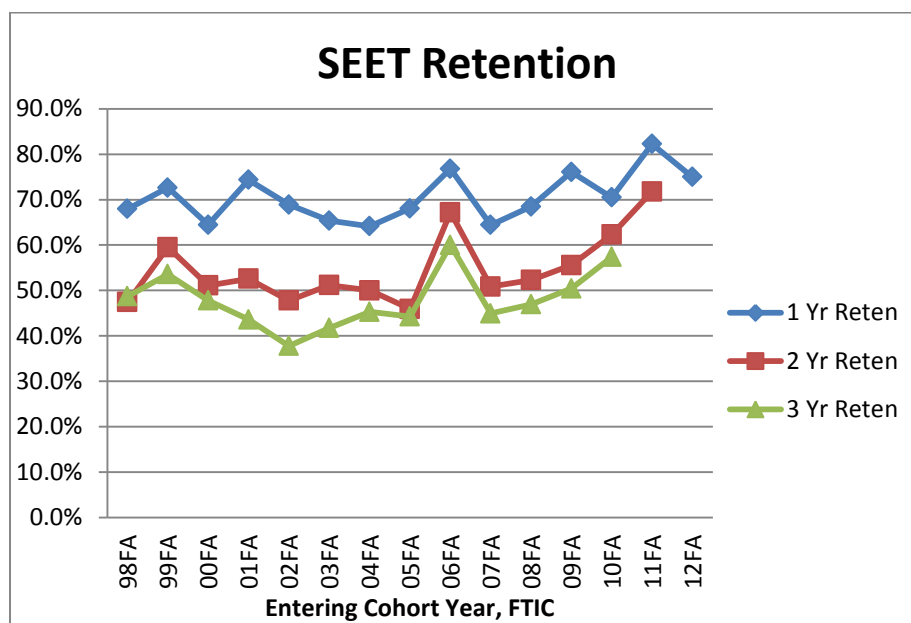


Figure 2. Retention in Engineering and Engineering Technology (FA = Fall semester)

We do not yet have 6-year graduation rate results, but we anticipate that we will reach our long-term goal of 65%. The project seems to be already having at least an indirect impact in improving graduation rates as seen in Figure 3. Since the time of submitting the FIRE proposal (2009), the graduation rate has increased from 33% to 53%. It is possible that awareness of our retention and graduation rate problem, is contributing to the change of course that is shown in the graph since that time.

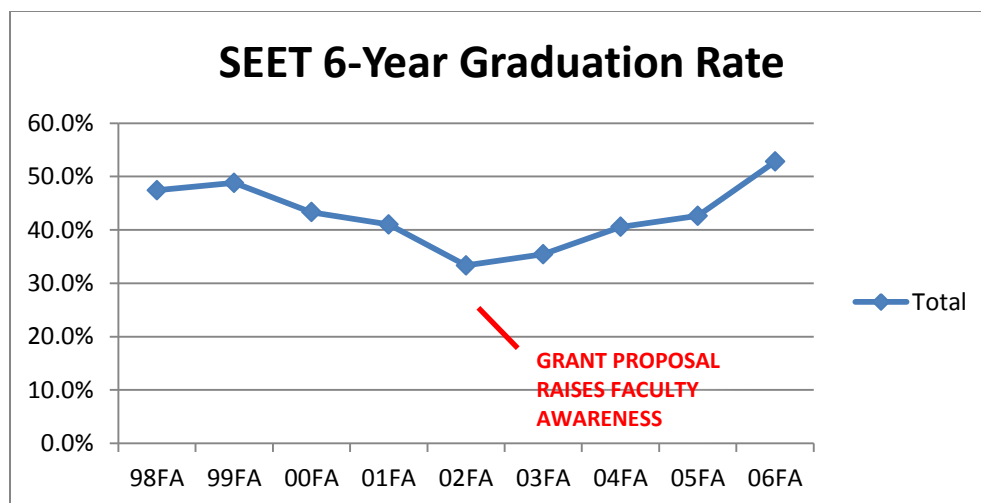


Figure 3. Graduation Rates by Cohort Year (FA = Fall semester)

3.2 Assessment Instruments

The PM program is partially funded by an NSF STEP grant and due to the yearly reporting requirements assessment instruments have been numerous and varied to track the overall health of the program initiatives. This section provides a summary of some of these instruments as well as some specific data useful to the focus of this paper.

3.2.1 Surveys

The following surveys have been deployed each semester since the beginning of the project in 2011-12:

- Intro to Engineering Class Pre and Post Survey: this is intended to gauge the student's attitudes towards the engineering profession at beginning and end of the fall semester's first year intro course (only deployed in the fall semester)
- FIG Student Survey: Asks questions specific towards the students' experience with the first-year-interest groups
- PM Survey: Seeks to gauge the mentor's overall attitude about the PM program.
- Faculty Mentor (FM) survey: Seeks to gauge the faculty mentor's attitudes and experience in the PM program.
- Industrial Mentor (IM) survey: Seeks to gauge the IM's attitude and experience with their involvement in the program

Table 1 highlights some data extracted from the 2013 FIG student survey that is useful in analyzing the attitude of the first-year students towards the peer mentor experience (note that data from years 2011 and 2012 are similar and thus data has not been aggregated). While it is difficult to isolate the effect of the FIG program from the global retention initiatives the amount of students that either strongly agree or agree with the statements is significant and it can be deduced with relative certainty that the mentor program has an overall positive effect.

Table 1. Select questions from Fall 2013FIG Student Survey [%SA/A = percentage of students who either agreed or strongly agreed; %N = neutral; %D/SD = percentage of students who either disagreed or strongly disagreed; %NoAn = no answer]

Q#	Question	Avg*	STDEV		%SA/A	%N	%D/SD	%NoAn
7	FIGs have helped me develop valuable connections with students in my own major.	3.73	0.97		61%	25%	13%	2%
11	My peer advisor (PA) has been a source of positive support this semester.	4.35	0.70		86%	13%	0%	2%
14	My faculty mentor (academic advisor) has been influential in my success at LETU.	3.44	0.98		52%	30%	16%	2%

* :Averages based upon %SA=5, %A=4, %N=3, %D=2 and %SD=1.

Additionally some of the students from the above referenced survey added these comments:

Q#7 FIGs have helped me develop valuable connections with students in my own major.

- My best friends and accountability partners have come from fig groups.
- I have made some good friendships and connections via the FIG group and am glad to know some people with my same major.
- I am now connected with a small group of freshman biomed majors, though I have not spent much time with upperclassmen in this field.
- I met people who are now my friends.

Q#11 My peer advisor (PA) has been a source of positive support this semester.

- My PA is the only good thing about the FIG groups. John is very enthusiastic and encouraging. It's a pleasure to know him, and I'm glad he's my PA.
- It was very nice to get advice from an upperclassman.
- I really liked my peer advisor. I enjoyed the times he came to my room for a chat, and he did offer me some helpful advice.
- Has great understanding of the classes and gives great advice.

3.2.2 Focus Groups

PM focus groups were conducted at the end of the fall and spring semesters to assess the success of the project's third year. A FIG student focus group was also conducted in spring to gain an insight into the average FTIC students' perspective on the overall program. Feedback from these groups provided valuable insight to the components that were most effective, as well as areas for improvement.

3.2.2.1 Peer Mentor Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted in three separate group meetings at the end of both the fall and spring semesters. The mentors provided feedback regarding the FIG individual meetings, FIG group meetings, and industrial mentor meetings. Each group was told that the goal of the FIG is to help students survive and thrive academically, socially, and spiritually. This goal is a

restatement of the desired short-term project goal of providing an effective support system for first-year SEET students, and increasing motivation to study (engineering).

Individual Meetings

Each semester, students are asked to participate in one-on-one meetings with their assigned PM. Peer mentors commented on the importance of these meetings at the beginning of the semester, especially the first 6 weeks. Then, meetings may be more beneficial bi-weekly or monthly. Comments made by the PMs suggested that emphasis should be placed on meeting individually with students who are not participating as effectively, and with those who express a need for more direct intervention. Additionally, meetings could become more informal (“Hey, want to grab lunch?”).

Group Meetings

PMs seemed to agree that the group meetings tended to be utilized more for social interaction than for homework. However, some groups worked well as study groups and were very productive with school-related activities. PMs emphasize the importance of discussing academics, but that group meetings “can have academic focus without it being a study session or homework party.” One PM stated that the group meetings “...need to be fun. They [the students] enjoy food...!” PMs suggested that having a fun, enjoyable time was more important than structuring the sessions and attempting to force students to do homework. PMs recommended getting feedback from the freshmen, regarding how they would benefit most from the group meetings.

Industrial Mentor Meetings

The PMs whose groups participated in the industrial mentor (IM) meetings saw the meetings as beneficial. These meetings appeared to promote good conversations between students and professionals, though attendance was better in the fall semester. The PMs were discouraged at the level of effort to organize a meeting for their FIG group only to have 2 or 3 actually attend and suggested incorporating a presentation and question time for the IM within the first-year transition course curriculum.

3.2.2.2 FIG Student Focus Groups

In order to gauge the FTIC students’ perception of the FIG experience apart from the standard survey, a focus group was conducted in spring 2013. The emphasis of the questioning was to determine what has worked well in helping them with the transition to college. A summary of their thoughts is provided below.

FIG Individual Meetings

Students were asked to describe their experience concerning the FIG program and they expressed overall positive sentiment about the program. Most of the PA’s were reported as having offered encouragement and direction. Some pointed out how beneficial it was that the PA’s who are mostly sophomore level had connections with juniors and seniors in the same major and helped them see what the future would be like if they could grind out the first couple of years. The benefit of having FIG groups identify with and even volunteer some time helping out a senior design (capstone) project was mentioned as an excellent benefit derived from the FIG program.

Industrial Mentor Program

While some students acknowledged the benefits of the industrial mentor program others had difficulty connecting or even taking the time to attend meetings or events with the mentor. One student stated “It was really beneficial, it helped me see the end goal of what I am going for; when you are only focusing on classwork and not seeing where you are going you lose motivation. The IM meeting definitely motivated me.” One suggestion that arose out of this focus group and was incorporated the following semester was to bring the industrial mentor directly into the first-year transitions course and have them speak about their career and the joys of engineering.

First Year Transition Course

The students were asked how well the FIG experience was incorporated within the first year transition course. Most mentioned that they had a positive experience and it motivated them to apply to be a peer mentor to help other students in the same manner. The class seems to work better when the PM’s are enthusiastic about the course material and active participants within the class helping to lead discussion times and offering their experiences.

4.0 Managing Program

One of the most important aspects of the peer mentoring program is the partnership with the institution’s Achievement Center (AC) which is part of the quality control department .The AC participates with a larger group from student life and is tasked with recruiting and hiring all student leaders such as resident assistants, floor chaplains, PMs as well as student assistants and tutors for supplemental instruction sessions. This office already has a pulse on the student population in addition to the expertise to identify and supervise students. The AC is also a key resource aiding all students in areas such as supplemental instruction, tutoring, academic interventions and a writing center. This section will detail the process by which the AC in partnership with the SEET recruits, hires, trains and manages the PM’s.

4.1 Management Structure

One thing that we have heard from the mentors is the importance of accountability and fellowship between this select group of influencers. During a Fall 2013 series of focus groups among PMs the question was asked “what do you think are keys to a successful mentoring program?” and what was repeated again and again was the importance of meeting and coordinating with others, accountability with other PM’s and having a supportive organizational structure with dedicated individuals to help supervise and keep everyone on track. This is primarily accomplished through the use of training, bi-weekly update meetings and a collaborative management structure between the AC and SEET.

The primary role of recruiting, hiring and managing the PMs is handled by the AC with support from the SEET. This is a major advantage as the AC is already established as a student support service and therefore has the existing structure, experience and mentality to manage PMs. The school of engineering’s primary focus is on instruction and lacks many resources that would be beneficial for this task. The SEET’s role in the management of PM’s is one of consultation

primarily through the FIG Director and not a direct supervisory role as shown on the organizational chart in Figure 4.

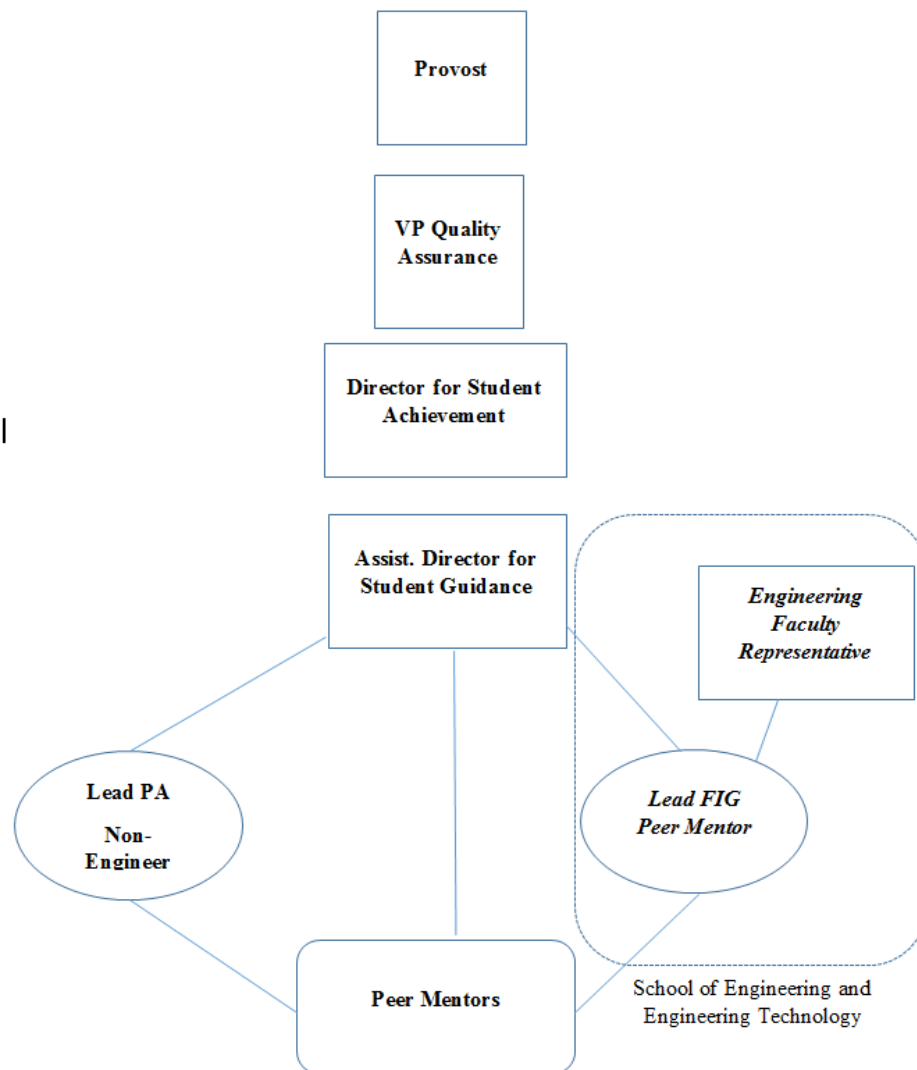


Figure 4. Achievement Center (AC) Organizational Chart

4.1.1 Creation and Structure of First-Year Interest Groups (FIGs)

The PI assists the FIG Director in placing all incoming first-year SEET students into first-year interest groups (FIGs) consisting of 6-12 freshmen, a PM, a faculty mentor, and shared access to an industrial mentor.¹¹ The number of participants can be seen in Table 2. Note that the external industry mentor component (i.e., a locally-practicing engineer) was not implemented during the first year. The groups are discipline-specific, with some considerations for gender and ethnicity given during their creation.¹²

Table 2. FIG Mentoring Participation

Entering Year	SEET FTIC*			
	Freshman	PMs	Faculty Mentors	Industrial Mentors
2010	112	15	15	0
2011	124	17	17	9
2012	153	18	17	13
2013	138	20	20	7

*First Time In College

The purpose of the FIG is threefold. First, it creates a support network to help first-year students successfully transition from high school to university life by providing them an opportunity to experience community with others in their own major. Second, it establishes early mentoring connections between each freshman and his/her faculty advisor (mentor), as well as provides the support of an upperclassman (PM) in the same field of study. Third, it provides a clearer vision of the opportunities in the field of engineering through the input of a practicing engineer (industry mentor).

Activities of the key positions are as follows:

Assistant Director for Student Guidance

- Responsible for the day-to-day supervisory responsibility of all PMs. Approves timesheets on a biweekly basis.
- Participates with recruitment and hiring of PMs
- Participates with the rest of the AC in training all PMs
- Meets with PMs as a group biweekly for updates, general communication and encouragement
- Performs yearly performance appraisals of PM's and makes recommendations to those qualified to continue more than one year in program

FIG Director

- This is the Co-PI of the project, with course release-time for director duties.
- Reports FIG progress to the FIRE Project Committee on a bi-weekly basis.
- Oversees the creation of the FIGs.
- Leads the Success4Students seminar at the beginning of the fall semester.
- Trains the PMs with assistance from the Director of Student Achievement.
- Trains faculty mentors at the fall SEET retreat and subsequent SEET meetings.
- Recruits and trains industrial mentors.
- Meets with the PMs (which are divided into three groups) biweekly to provide direction, support, and encouragement.
- Assists the Director of Student Achievement in recruiting the PMs.

Faculty Mentor

- This is the first-year student's academic advisor. Most SEET faculty members participate in this aspect of the program as seen in Table 1.
- Recommends a PM from his or her upper-classman advisees.
- Host the Success4Students seminar (4 hour workshop) with the FIG members during the beginning of the fall semester.

- Meets with the FIG group (including the PM) in an informal (preferably off-campus) setting, twice during the semester – once at the very beginning with a get-to-know-each-other focus, and then again during the second half for further relationship building.
- Meets with the PM bi-weekly to monitor progress of FIG members and intervenes as needed to guide and encourage group members.
- Maintains the role of academic advisor throughout the entire first year and will continue through the academic career of each FIG member in most cases (unless they change major).

Peer Mentor

- PMs (locally called peer advisors) are selected by the faculty mentors, FIG Director, and the Director of Student Achievement.
- Each PM is compensated for about 5 hours/week for FIG work.
- Attends the Success4Students seminar with the FIG members.
- Meets with the FIG group once a week to facilitate accountability in the areas of class attendance, homework completion and time management.
- Provides homework and study group assistance to FIG members at least once during the week.
- Meets with the faculty mentor regularly to report progress of FIG members.
- Meets with the FIG director and other PMs bi-weekly for reporting and encouragement.
- Builds community and camaraderie among the FIG freshmen by attending social and professional society events together at least once a month.

Industrial Mentor (Started in year two)

- Industrial mentors are recruited from local industry by the FIG director with input from the faculty mentor.
- Meets with the FIG approximately two times during the semester.
- Provides a mechanism for exposure of first-year SEET students to “real world” engineering practice either through discussion, presentation, or a plant visit during the first half of the fall semester.
- Provides a role model to first-year students as an engineering graduate (most are alumni).

4.2 Recruiting and Hiring

Hiring quality PM's is integral to the success of a retention program, however, starting a program from the ground up poses a daunting task. Fortunately many institutions may already have an existing network designed to hire and train student leaders in other areas of campus. By utilizing these existing resources to hire and train PM's it greatly reduces the learning curve associated with starting a mentor program. The following section details how the PM candidates are selected.

4.2.1 Advertisement and Identifying Potential PM Candidates

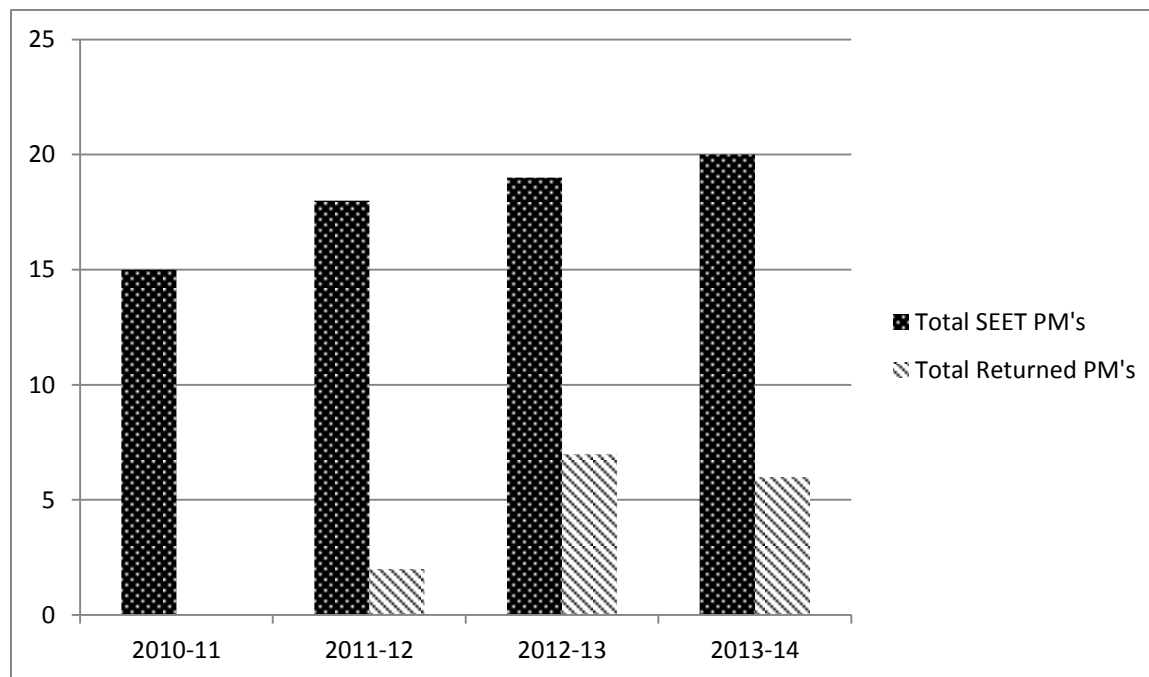
Students interested in becoming a PM apply through a campus organization known as I.M.P.A.C.T. (Influencing Many People as Christ Taught). IMPACT Student Leadership allows students to apply for many leadership roles. Students complete one application for all of the areas of leadership they wish to serve (a sample of the application is included in appendix A). The application asks students biographical information, academic major and GPA, extra-curricular

activities and past leadership positions. Additionally, the student must identify the leadership position he or she is interested and allows them to evaluate themselves on characteristics of a leader. The student has an opportunity to explain why they are choosing the leadership role, what is intriguing about the role and what apprehensions they may have.

In the SEET, PM's are often identified by their instructors through excellent performance in their first-year transition course. This course is taught by SEET faculty and top performers are often recommended to the AC for a leadership position. The program's success is one of the best advertisements for recruitment. Many of the PM's indicate the reason for applying was because of their having benefitted from the program and the opportunity this position provides to benefit others. In addition the program offers leadership and relational experiences that are sure to benefit PM's in their lives.

Table 3 illustrates the success in retaining PM's to return a second year. While momentum for the program took a couple of years to build (note that 2010-11 was the first year of the program) since 2012-13 we have seen approximately 1/3 of the PM's choose to continue for a second year. PM's are asked not to continue a third year as typically schedule conflicts and time commitments related to their senior year erode into their capability to perform all their responsibilities. The retention of PM's is seen as a crucial piece for the long-term success of the program as their influence and experience is of great value to the new PM's each year.

Table 3. Retention of SEET PM's



4.2.2 Interview and Selection Process

Once the SEET has made recommendations for candidates to be PM's, their involvement with selection ends and the AC follows through with the remainder of the hiring. The AC has a structured process of filtering out PM candidates that are not qualified. Ultimately the process

examines the leadership capabilities, character and communication of the candidates through a series of interviews (a sample of the types of questions during these interviews is included in appendix A). This process happens in the spring semester for new PM's to begin the following Fall.

Group Interview

Students having completed the application and desiring to continue pursuing a leadership role are asked to participate in a group style interview with other students. The students are asked to problem solve as a group on different scenarios. The selection committee members are able to examine how students interact with one another and certain candidates stand out as capable leaders.

Peer Mentor Interview

Students that have gone through the application and group interview process continue to a personal interview with their respective potential supervisor. This interview keys in on the specifics of the PMs role including job requirements, expectations of actions and benefits of the leadership role. Candidates have an opportunity to share the skills they have that will support the position.

Selection Process

Ultimately students are chosen as PMs based upon their ability to effectively communicate, show academic responsibility, and to articulate the specifics of being a college student. The PM program partners with a first year transition course that helps first time students navigate the university and help build their base of knowledge and skills required to be successful during the challenging first year.

4.2.3 Training

Leadership Retreats

Once selected, PMs are invited to be a part of a larger influential group of student leaders in IMPACT. All of these students have the opportunity to work and grow together during a retreat offered in the spring after the selection process. This retreat acts as a celebration and a welcoming to the organization and allows all the leaders to meet each other and prepare them for the opportunity they will each embark in the fall semester. All IMPACT leaders will attend a second retreat and training session approximately 1-week before new students arrive in the fall semester. This fall retreat focuses on leadership training and specifically prepares them for the task in front of them (a sample of the agenda for this training is included in appendix A).

Training

After the fall IMPACT retreat, each group of student leaders is separated to their respective group and they have training to plan out the upcoming semester. PM's are required to attend an extensive two-day training period. The training provides the mentors with the tools to effectively communicate, deal with emotional issues, and provide ways to meet the needs of their group of students they will be mentoring. This training also reviews specifics of the job including pay, first-year transition course involvement, supervisor meetings, and administrative duties. PM's are paid at the rate of \$9.25 per hour and during the fall semester average 6-7 hours per week and

5-6 hours per week in the spring. The average week during the fall semester for a PM would include 30 minutes of administrative tasks, 2.5 hours of student interaction time, 2 hours for attending and prepping for the first-year transition class, and 45 minutes for a weekly meeting with their immediate supervisor. During the spring semester time is reduced due to not participating in the first-year transition course and having fewer bi-weekly meetings with their supervisor.

4.2.4 Advantages of Becoming a Peer Mentor

Existing research has already shown the advantages of being a mentor in a well-structured program^{13, 14}. We also examined this aspect of our program in order to seek insight on what drives a student to dedicate their precious time in assisting first-time students' transition to college. In a recent focus group with all PMs conducted in fall 2013 the questions of motivation and overall benefits were asked. A summary of the responses is listed below:

What motivated you to become a PM?

- Wanted to work with people and improve interpersonal relationship skills.
- Program helped me survive my first year, wanted to help others in the same fashion.
- Develop deeper friendships with other PM's and new students
- Desired leadership experience

What do you see as the greatest benefit of being a PM?

- Strengthen leadership and relational skills because the program forces interaction with others.
- Developing deeper bonds with faculty
- Forces better behavior and skills since they are now seen as good examples
- Early registration (covered in more detail below)

In addition to the focus group a survey was given and answered by all 20 of the PMs in the fall 2013 Semester. Table 4 contains some select questions from this survey.

Table 4. Select questions from Fall 2013FIG PM Survey [%SA/A = percentage of students who either agreed or strongly agreed; %N = neutral; %D/SD = percentage of students who either disagreed or strongly disagreed; %NoAn = no answer]

Q#:	N=15	Avg *	STDEV		%SA/A	%N	%D/SD	%NoAn
1	My overall experience as a FIG Peer Adviser has been positive (all questions apply to this semester only.)	4.65	0.49		100%	0%	0%	0%
2	I have seen evidence that the FIG has helped students gain a more accurate understanding of the field of engineering.	4.05	0.60		85%	15%	0%	0%
3	Evidence suggests that the FIG has helped students develop successful life skills and study habits.	3.90	0.55		80%	20%	0%	0%
4	INDIVIDUAL meetings with me benefited my FIG students, and I recommend continuing them in future years.	4.55	0.60		95%	5%	0%	0%
7	I have developed a good relationship with the FIG faculty mentor.	4.05	1.00		80%	15%	5%	0%
8	GROUP meetings with me benefited my FIG students, and I recommend continuing them in future years.	4.15	0.81		85%	10%	5%	0%
13	INDUSTRIAL MENTOR (practicing engineer) meetings benefited my FIG (if no industrial mentor, please select "No Answer.")	3.94	0.94		60%	25%	5%	10%

* :Averages based upon %SA=5, %A=4, %N=3, %D=2 and %SD=1.

The data from both the focus group and survey clearly illustrate that the mentors are fully engaged in the program and are benefitting through leadership and interpersonal skills development. One benefit that was repeatedly brought up by the PM's in the focus groups was that of early registration. The institution practices a stepped semester registration system based upon class rank (ie seniors are able to register beginning on a Monday, juniors on Tuesday etc). The school allows all PMs to register a full week before the rest of students on campus. This has proven to be a very popular perk among mentors.

5.0 Summary and Conclusions

Implementing a successful peer mentor program is a process requiring extensive resources and the proper management structure to maintain a thriving program. The SEET has been able to leverage an existing department with the expertise to provide the PMs with the required support allowing them to perform their responsibilities. Positive responses from both the FIG students' perspective and the PM on numerous surveys and focus groups indicate overall satisfaction with the support system provided to freshmen in the difficult transition to college.

An institution desiring to implement a similar program needs to carefully examine all the requisite components of a successful program. It cannot simply be an add-on program filling spots with any warm bodies willing to make friends with the incoming class. Adequate resources and a focused commitment to long-term success of the program need to be present from the beginning. At a minimum a successful program should include:

- A structured administrative support system which encourages mentors while at the same time holding them accountable for performing their responsibilities.

- A focus on hiring quality individuals to work as PMs. Potential candidates should demonstrate high character, strong academics, confidence, outgoing personality and preferably be a product of the program themselves. The institution needs to place the appropriate amount of resources into this valuable process of identifying and filtering through a sea of candidates in order to place the students with the proper skillset to mentor the next incoming class.
- Adequate training for the PM's and incorporation of returning PM's to help mentor, and encourage the rookies.
- Proper assessment instruments to constantly evaluate all aspects of the program and determine what is working and what may need to be adjusted.

Finally, a PM program needs to build momentum. Immediate results may not be realized and this program even suffered in recruiting PM's the first two years as many potential candidates did not realize the benefit the program provided to the school or the avenues it provided for leadership and social development.

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Appendix A

Peer mentor recruiting/hiring Documents:

- Sample of IMPACT application
- PA advisor interview
- PA agreement

Peer mentor training documents:

- Example of agenda for fall training workshop
- Fact Sheet (PM expectations)
- What does a peer advisor do?
- FERPA basics for peer advisors
- Peer advisor small group meeting format
- Communication with your mentees

Thank you for your interest in an IMPACT student leadership role at LETU.

To be considered in the IMPACT Application Process, this application, your recommendations forms, and your interview times must be submitted by ****FRIDAY, JANUARY 31, 2014 by Noon****

If you are currently employed, one of your recommendations must be from your current supervisor.
Other permissible evaluators include: pastor, faculty member or advisor, an administrative staff member, or a past employer. *Please do not select a relative or a peer to complete the recommendation.*

There are 39 questions in this survey

Demographics

1 [FIRST]First Name: *

Please write your answer here:

2 [LAST]Last Name: *

Please write your answer here:

3 [GENDER]Gender: *

Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐ Female

☐ Male

4 [MOPH]Mobile Phone:

Please write your answer here:

5 [CPO]CPO Address: *

Please write your answer here:

6 [SHIRT]What is your t-shirt size? *

Please choose **only one** of the following:

☐ Men's XS

- ☐ Men's S
- ☐ Men's M
- ☐ Men's L
- ☐ Men's XL
- ☐ Men's XXL
- ☐ Men's 3XL

7 [WHALL]Current Campus Residence:

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Female' at question '3 [GENDER]' (Gender:)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Commuter
- ☐ Apts - Delta Omega Kappa
- ☐ Apts - Women
- ☐ Apts - Married Students
- ☐ Carpenter House - (Quad 2)
- ☐ Howe House - (Quad 3)
- ☐ Davis Hall - First Floor
- ☐ Davis Hall - Third Floor
- ☐ ELH - First Floor
- ☐ ELH - Second Floor
- ☐ ELH - Third Floor
- ☐ Gilbert Hall - First Floor
- ☐ Gilbert Hall - Second Floor
- ☐ Gilbert Hall - Third Floor
- ☐ South Hall - Second Floor East
- ☐ South Hall - Second Floor West

8 [MHALL]Current Campus Residence:

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

° Answer was 'Male' at question '3 [GENDER]' (Gender:)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Commuter
- ☐ Alpha Omega
- ☐ Kappa Zeta Chi
- ☐ Lambda Alpha Sigma

- ☐ Apts - Men
- ☐ Apts - Married Students
- ☐ Davis Hall - First Floor (Honors Commons)
- ☐ Davis Hall - Second Floor
- ☐ Durham House (Quad 1)
- ☐ McKinley House (Quad 4)
- ☐ Mabee Hall - First Floor
- ☐ Mabee Hall - Dorm 4 (2nd)
- ☐ Mabee Hall - Dorm 4 (3rd)
- ☐ Penn Hall - First Floor
- ☐ Penn Hall - Second Floor
- ☐ Penn Hall - Third Floor
- ☐ South Hall - First Floor East
- ☐ South Hall - First Floor West
- ☐ Thomas Hall - First Floor
- ☐ Thomas Hall - 41
- ☐ Thomas Hall - Third Floor
- ☐ Tyler East - 1B
- ☐ Tyler East - Club
- ☐ Tyler East - 3B
- ☐ Tyler East - 4B
- ☐ Tyler West - 1A
- ☐ Tyler West - 2A
- ☐ Tyler West - Flooders

9 [MOVE] If requested, would you be willing to move to a different floor or living area as part of a leadership role?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

10 [EMAIL]LETU Email Address: *

Please write your answer here:

11 [BDAY]Birthdate (month/day/year): *

Please enter a date:

12 [GRAD]Anticipated Graduation Month/Year: *

Please write your answer here:

A horizontal number line with 11 equally spaced tick marks. The first tick mark on the left is labeled '0', and each subsequent tick mark to the right is labeled with an integer from 1 to 10.

13 [MAJOR]What is your academic major? (Please, no abbreviations): *

Please write your answer here:

A horizontal number line with 11 equally spaced tick marks. The first tick mark on the left is labeled '0', and each subsequent tick mark to the right is labeled with an integer from 1 to 10.

14 [CLASS]Classification for Fall 2014: *

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Freshman
- ☐ Sophomore
- ☐ Junior
- ☐ Senior
- ☐ Super Senior

15 [FGPA]Fall 2013 GPA: *

Please write your answer here:

16 [CGPA]Cumulative GPA: *

Please write your answer here:

17 [CRED1]Intended Number of Credits for Fall 2014: *

Please write your answer here:

18 [CRED2]Intended Number of Credits for Spring 2015: *

Please write your answer here:

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Experience

19 [INVOLVE]Please list all of the involvements you are considering for next year (work, church, service, athletics, clubs, etc.): *

Please write your answer here:

20 [PAST]Please list past leadership positions you have held and awards you have received: *

Please write your answer here:

21 [LETU]Please list all past and present LETU campus jobs and supervisors: *

Please write your answer here:

22 [COLLEGE]Please list any other colleges or universities you have attended: *

Please write your answer here:

Interest

23 [INTEREST]Please place a check in the box next to each position for which you are interested in applying and interviewing: *

Please choose **all** that apply:

- ☐ Chaplain Intern
- ☐ Intramural Coordinator
- ☐ LeTourneau Student Ministries (LSM Cabinet)
- ☐ Mosaic (InterCultural Leadership)
- ☐ Peer Advisor
- ☐ Resident Assistant
- ☐ Student Government Executive Cabinet
- ☐ Student Senate
- ☐ Student Publications Editor
- ☐ YellowJacket Activities Council Coordinator
- ☐ Worship Leader

24 [num1]***ANSWERS TO THIS QUESTION WILL NOT HELP OR HINDER YOUR CHANCES TO RECEIVE ANY POSITION FOR WHICH YOU APPLY***

Of the positions that you've selected above, which would be your highest priority?

Please write your answer here:

Statement of Faith and Behavior

25 [FAITH]

As a student leader, you may be entrusted to mentor, disciple, and model the Gospel of Jesus Christ to our campus community. Please select "yes" if you have read and are able to affirm the [LETU Statement of Faith](#). If you have concerns or questions about any portion, please select "no" and use the space below to share those ideas. *

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

26 [CONCERN] Use this space--if necessary--to outline any questions, comments, or concerns regarding the LETU Statement of Faith:

Please write your answer here:

--

27 [BEHAVE]By checking "yes" below, you affirm that you have read, commit to abide by, and will promote the behavior guidelines outlined in the [LETU Student Handbook](#). *

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Evaluation

28 [ADMIN]ADMINISTRATION - Please rank the following traits as they describe you (1 = most like you through 7 = least like you): *

Please number each box in order of preference from 1 to 7

-
- Uses Good Judgment
-
-
- Dependability
-
-
- Detail-Oriented
-
-
- Follows Deadlines
-
-
- Organized
-
-
- Creativity
-
-
- Financially Responsible

29 [ADMINREPLY]ADMINISTRATION - Please comment on why you ranked yourself the way you did on your highest AND your lowest-ranked traits: *

Please write your answer here:

30 [XIANCHAR]CHRISTIAN CHARACTER - Please rank the following traits as they describe you (1 = most like you through 7 = least like you): *

Please number each box in order of preference from 1 to 7

-
- Practices Spiritual Disciplines
-
-
- Excellent Chapel/Class Attendance
-
-
- Participates in a Local Church Body
-
-
- Lives Obediently to the Spirit
-
-
- Sacrificial Servant Attitude
-
-
- Mature, Eternal Perspective
-
-
- Helps Others Grow in their Faith

31 [XIANREPLY]CHRISTIAN CHARACTER - Please comment on why you ranked yourself the way you did on your highest AND your lowest-ranked traits: *

Please write your answer here:

32 [COMMSKILLS]COMMUNICATION SKILLS - Please rank the following traits as they describe you (1 = most like you through 7 = least like you): *

Please number each box in order of preference from 1 to 7

- Active Listening Skills
- Relates to a Variety of People
- Mediates Concerns
- Unswervingly Maintains Confidentiality
- Openly Shares with Others
- Articulate and Dynamic Public Speaker
- Regularly Encourages Others

33 [COMMREPLY]COMMUNICATION SKILLS - Please comment on why you ranked yourself the way you did on your highest AND your lowest-ranked traits: *

Please write your answer here:

34 [POLICYINTEG]POLICY INTEGRITY - Please rank the following traits as they describe you (1 = most like you through 7 = least like you): *

Please number each box in order of preference from 1 to 7

- Ability to Cope with Dual Staff/Student Role
- Assertiveness
- Willing to Confront in Love
- Commitment to Live by LETU Lifestyle Standards
- Ability to Uphold LETU Standards among Peers
- Consistency in Your Treatment of All People
- Positive Attitude toward the University and Others

35 [INTEGREPLY]POLICY INTEGRITY - Please comment on why you ranked yourself the way you did on your highest AND your lowest-ranked traits: *

Please write your answer here:

36 [PERSONAL]PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS - Please rank the following traits as they describe you (1 = most like you through 10 = least like you): *

Please number each box in order of preference from 1 to 10

- Positive Attitude
- Maturity
- Emotional Stability
- Physical Health/Endurance
- Teachable, Humble Spirit
- Sense of Life Goals and Purpose
- Balanced Life

Confidence

Awareness

Eternal Perspective

37 [CHARREPLY]PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS - Please comment on why you ranked yourself the way you did on your highest AND your lowest-ranked traits: *

Please write your answer here:

Essay Questions

38 [WHY]1 - Why are you applying for this leadership position? What intrigues/excites you about leadership at LeTourneau University, and what areas cause concern? *

Please write your answer here:

39 [GOD]2 - What has God done in your life within the past year? Also, describe your current relationship with Him. What are you hopeful for? *

Please write your answer here:

Thank you for taking the first step and applying for a position in IMPACT! It is a wonderful thing for you to make yourself available for this kind of service for the Lord and to the community.

Please don't forget to visit the Office of Student Affairs to sign up for your interview time(s) by Friday, January 31 at Noon if you haven't done so already.

****ALSO NOTE:** Your application packet is not complete until we receive **two recommendation forms**.

If you are currently employed, one recommendation must be from your current supervisor. Other permissible evaluators include: pastor, faculty member or advisor, an administrative/staff member, or a past employer. *Please do not select a relative or a peer to complete the recommendation.***

Thank you!

Corey Ross, Dean of Students

Please submit by 03-16-2014 – 00:00

Submit your survey.

Thank you for completing this survey.

Peer Advisor Interview

Candidate:

Rater: _____

Date: _____

Major: _____

What is your perception of the role of a Peer Advisor?

(Fact sheet will be presented and program explained) Questions?

What skills and gifts do you think you bring to the group of Peer Advisors that contribute to the success of the whole group?

What do you see as the most challenging part of being a PA and how do you feel like the Lord has equipped you to deal with it?

(Go over qualification Sheet) Is there anything on this list that you would not be able to fulfill?

A Peer Advisor serves as an academic advisor, a spiritual mentor and as a navigator; how do you see yourself in these roles?

What positions have you applied for: _____ which one is your #1 choice?

Rate this candidate: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not a
good candidate

Potentially a
candidate

Excellent
candidate

NOTES:

Because the role of Peer Advisor is an important opportunity for student leadership at LeTourneau University, the following outline is intended to contribute to the success of all involved.

I, _____, accept the appointment of Peer Advisor at LeTourneau University for the 2013-14 academic year. I understand that I will receive the hourly rate of \$9.25, in keeping with the estimated timeframes and responsibilities on the PA Fact Sheet, and will be required to log my hours on a timecard.

By accepting the role of Peer Advisor, I agree to do the following unless special exception is granted by the Coordinator for Student Guidance.

- Return on campus early for FALL IMPACT leadership training.
- Invitation to all IMPACT leadership training at no cost.
- Maintain positive, healthy relationships with advisees based on appropriate boundaries of leadership.
- Develop relationships with new students to support their successful transition to university life.
- Meet with Coordinator for Student Guidance or designee as directed.
- Exemplify conduct that would meet University standards.
- Maintain a minimum 2.5 GPA.
- Fulfill chapel attendance requirements.
- Leave Tuesday or Thursday from 1:30-2:50 open for Cornerstones in the Fall
- Ensure that ALL student information and data, available in my role as peer advisor, remains confidential.
- Refrain from posting information, photos and comments on social media websites that is contrary to the spirit and values of the University.

I accept the position of Peer Advisor at LeTourneau University and I agree to the expectations stated above. I understand that continuing in this student employee/leadership position is dependent upon my fulfilling the expectations of the role, as defined in the position description. I also understand that I am agreeing to a full year commitment.

Peer Advisor

Date

Coordinator for Student Guidance

Date

PEER ADVISOR TRAINING SCHEDULE - 2013			
Retreat	*Ice Breakers *Bring schedules *Student list	Lauren John and Jovita	Camp Bethany Shreveport, LA
Day 1	August 19th - Monday		
Time	Event	Leader	Location
9:30-9:45 AM	Activity	John and Jovita	Steudler Lounge
9:45-10:30 AM	New PAs-What is a PA	Lauren	Steudler Lounge
10:30-10:40 AM	Break		
10:40- 11:30 AM	New Employee Paperwork and FERPA	Annette Kendall	Steudler Lounge
11:30-12:00 PM	Copying Employee Documents	Annette Kendall	Achievement Center
12:00-1:30 PM	Lunch		MSC 3/Cafe
1:30-2:30 PM	Cornerstones Training	Dr. Jacobs and Lauren	
2:30-2:40 PM	Break		
2:40-3:30 PM	All PAs-Jeopardy	Lauren	Steudler Lounge
3:30-3:40 PM	Break		
3:40-4:40 PM	Folders	Lauren	Steudler Lounge
4:40 PM	PA Pictures		LeTourneau Sign
Day 2	August 20th - Tuesday		
Time	Event	Leader	Location
9:30-9:45 AM	Activity	John and Jovita	Steudler Lounge
9:45-10:00AM	Orientation	Steve Conn	Steudler Lounge
10:00-10:30 AM	PA Fact Sheet	Lauren	Steudler Lounge
10:30-11:00 AM	Time Clock	Annette Kendall	Steudler Lounge
11:00-11:10 AM	Break		
11:10-11:30 AM	Tutor Trac	Lauren	Steudler Lounge
11:30-12:00 PM	Interventions	Brooke Kincade	Steudler Lounge
12:00-1:30 PM	Lunch		Corner Café
1:30-3:00 PM	Student Interactions Planning; Q&A; Goals	John and Jovita	Steudler Lounge
3:00-3:10 PM	Break		

3:10-4:00 PM	Meetings Signups	John and Jovita	Steudler Lounge
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Peer Advisor Fact Sheet | 2013-2014

Events	Description	Amount of Hours
Cornerstones Activities	These hours should not be exceeded without prior approval from Assistant Director for Student Guidance.	• 10.0
Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA Training (New PAs) • (Returning PAs) • New Student Convocation • School Specific Orientation • Chapel • Service Project w/Cornerstones • The Games • Dessert w/Faculty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12.0 • 9.5 • 1.5 • 3.5 • 1.0 • 3.0 • 2.0 • 1.5
IMPACT Invitation - As part of LeTourneau's leadership team you are invited to attend all IMPACT leadership opportunities at no cost. Please plan to calendar these events.		
Cornerstones Class Preparations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with Mentor • Class Attendance • Success4Students Workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.5 hr/wk (FA) • 0.5 hr/mnth (SP) • 1.5 hr/wk (FA) • 4 hrs (FA)
Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with Lauren Gentry (FIGS meet with Dr. Johnson) • PA Group Meeting (11:05-11:50/Tuesdays) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.5 hr/wk (FA/SP) • 0.5 hr/wk (FA/SP) • 45 min. weekly (FA) • 45 min. biweekly (SP)
Student Interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly Student Time (Group + Individual) *FIG Industrial Mentor 2/semester • Weekly Admin (e-mail, text, grading, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.5 hr/wk • 0.5 hr/wk
Average Hours to anticipate:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended hours for Orientation • 6-7 (FA) per week • 5-6 (SP) per week

Peer Advisor Fact Sheet:

Please consider this 'Fact Sheet' as a guide to help you anticipate the responsibilities associated to this position. However, we reserve the right to make adjustments.

What does a Peer Advisor do?

There are lots of different roles a Peer Advisor can assume. Which role a PA assumes depends on the needs of the advisee. On any given day, the PA may perform one or all of the roles.

Trusted Friend

The first role you must establish with your advisees is that of trusted friend. Your advisees will be more likely to listen to you if they know that they can trust you and rely on you. Once you are a friend, you will know enough about your advisees to help them with their transition to college. Developing trust takes time and patience. You really can't get to know someone through just an email or text. Take the time to meet with your advisees in person.

Strategies: be available spend time with your advisees, clarify their expectations, establish and maintain boundaries, keep things confidential, be empathetic

Teacher

As a teacher you will be expected to share your knowledge of the ins and outs of being a LETU student. You may want to teach your advisees how to use MyLETU and how to read a course syllabus. Share what you have learned from your mistakes or blunders. It will help your advisees to realize that no one is perfect. Some students are interested in "just the facts". They want explicit instructions and details. A teacher can help introduce students to tutors to help them with academic issues.

Strategies: facilitate study groups; demonstrate effective study strategies, set learning goals, share personal experiences

Counselor

The role of counselor requires the Peer Advisor to establish a lasting and open relationship. In order to create a trusting relationship, the PA needs to stress confidentiality and show respect for the advisee. A PA can promote confidentiality by not disclosing personal information that the advisee shares. The PA should always show respect by listening carefully and attentively to the advisee and by not interrupting the advisee while they speak.

Strategies: practice active listening skills

Motivator

You may need to motivate your advisees to help them succeed at their job of being a college student. The best way to motivate someone is to provide them with frequent, positive feedback. Positive feedback can be a great morale booster. It helps to remove self-doubt and to increase self-esteem. You may find after the initial month of school that your advisees start to question why they are here, their confidence in their study skills, their previous friendships, etc. Just a simple "Hey, I notice you are working through some stuff and you'll make it through" can go miles with your advisees.

Strategies: provide opportunities for your advisees to motivate their peers, encourage them to lead a study group, role model positive and hopeful behavior

Sponsor

A sponsor creates opportunities for their advisees—opportunities that may not otherwise be made available. New opportunities can increase the visibility of the advisees, but PAs must be careful in selecting these opportunities. You don't want to set your advisees up for failure.

Strategies: help students identify what activities they might find interesting, know what activities are available, attend campus events with your advisees, show enthusiasm

Coach

Coaching your advisees might be the single most difficult role to master. There are times in a mentoring relationship where sensitively delivered honest feedback and assessment, rather than passivity, will help an advisee grow. When giving constructive feedback, the PA should be descriptive about the behavior and not use labels, such as "immature" or "lame". The PA should neither exaggerate, nor be judgmental, and should phrase the issue as a statement, not a question. Think of providing constructive criticism via the "sandwich" technique.

Step 1: Think of what you want to say and why you want to say it.

Step 2: Build the person up. Highlight some of the things that they are doing really well.

Step 3: Now it's time to bring your concerns to the table. Do it clearly/concisely.

Step 4: Build the person up again.

Step 5: Follow up in a couple of days to see how they are doing.

Role Model

Think of yourself as a living, breathing human representation of the values and ethics of LeTourneau University. Most advisees, in time, will imitate their PA. Leading by example is going to be your most powerful tool. You can help model problem solving, involvement, empathy, and academic integrity. Keep in mind that you are being watched. Even your own missteps can be excellent lessons for your advisees. A good role model needs to be honest, but not perfect. Be as open and honest as you feel comfortable with your own life and experiences. Honesty allows you to be an authentic person who does not pretend to be something he or she is not.

Strategies: be authentic, be a positive influence, encourage your advisees to work together, show initiative

Referral Agent

Sometimes a situation with your advisees may be more than you can handle. This is when your knowledge of university resources comes into play. Knowing where to send a student and when is hugely helpful. When in doubt, you may always call Lauren for suggestions.

Strategies: know people and services on campus that help with 1st year issues, advocate for the student and their rights, practice ethical behavior

Door Opener

Think of all the things that you are involved with in your life. How did you get there? Was it through a chance meeting, did someone introduce you to someone else? As a Peer Advisor you can introduce advisees to your own network of friends, support persons, faculty, etc... Invite your advisees to have lunch with you and your favorite faculty member, or introduce them to your favorite academic advisor. Sometimes these seemingly random encounters can open up a whole new world for a student.

F.E.R.P.A. BASICS for PEER ADVISORS

The Essence:

- * Law passed in 1974 – The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- * Federal law designed to protect the privacy of education records. It also provides guidelines for appropriately using and releasing student education records.
- * It is intended that students' rights be broadly defined and applied. Therefore, consider the student as the “owner” of his or her education record, and the institution as the “custodian” of that record.

Why the government instituted FERPA:

- * To protect the rights of each student from unlawful gathering of information.
- * To give the student control over the information that he/she wished to become available to others.

Information that Cannot be Shared:

- * Any information about the student that does not show in the student directory, the student can ask for their directory information to be removed, so if it's not in the directory, it cannot be shared.
- * Grades, struggles, psychological issues, medical records, quiz grades, homework grades, and parental financial status
- * *IF YOU THINK something might be protected by FERPA, then always guess that it is until you ask someone for clarification.*

Penalties for FERPA Violation:

Any FERPA violation can cause the school to lose its ability to lend students government backed loans, meaning almost all of LeTourneau's financial aid for students would be lost.

FERPA violations are also punishable as a 1st degree misdemeanor, which could result in a \$1,000 dollar fine and/or 6 months in prison.

Remember:

Even parents, spouses, siblings, guardians, or any other relation, friend, or family member is not entitled to any information we have about any student unless that student presents us a photo ID and a signed statement saying we can distribute. **Parents are not allowed to know any information the university has about their students under the law of FERPA.**

Never give academic information over the phone!

If you do not see a photo ID, you may not give out any academic information.

When in doubt, don't give it out!

Conviction for violation of this statute is a first degree misdemeanor
(up to 6 month imprisonment and/or \$1,000 fine).

PA Small Group Meetings Format

Guidelines for Weekly Meetings:

1. Groups remain consistent for the semester
2. Establish a consistent meeting place – (please see Annette to reserve a room)
3. At least 2 small group meetings a month and at least 2 individual meetings (per person) per month. (You will be challenged in both; we want you to choose the format that works best for you.)
4. Meetings can last at most 2 hours
5. Keep an account of who attends meetings, so you can visit individually with those who are not responding.
6. Feel free to invite your Mentors if you wish (maybe once a semester)
7. Feel free to also invite Advisees to PA worship time as well

Purpose of Weekly Meetings:

1. Support Advisees academically
2. Spiritual opportunities with Advisees
3. Mentor Advisees throughout their first year

Things to consider during small group time:

1. Prayer request and prayer
2. Devotion
3. Occasional getting to know you games, especially at the beginning
4. Study-be specific, bring in tutors when necessary. Most of your students will be in some of the same classes
5. Attend some YAC and Athletic events, join another group
6. Most of all come with a plan and don't waste their time
7. Don't be afraid to let your advisee lead the group time or lead prayer

Ideas:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Communication with your Mentees...

Contact your mentees by phone as soon as you receive your mentee list during the summer. Introduce yourself and share some basic information (like you major or what groups you are involved in). Explain that you are their peer mentor and tell them a bit about the Leeds Peer2Peer Mentoring program (some students may not remember that they signed up for this program or may have had their parents sign them up for the program). Answer any questions they may have. Remind them to sign up for an orientation session, if they haven't already.

Mentees are likely to be shy in the beginning. Try to get them talking by asking lots of open ended questions. Here are some sample questions to help break the ice.

- Where are you from? What is your hometown like?
- What did you do over the summer?
- What made you decide to come to CU? Leeds? What other schools were you considering?
- Did other students from your high school come to CU/Leeds this fall?
- What was your favorite subject in high school?
- What kind of music do you listen to?
- What is your favorite movie of all time?
- What aspect of college are you most excited about? Most concerned with?
- What are your expectations for the mentor program?
- What kind of activities would you like to do this term?

Have your first face to face meeting in a location that is comfortable for you both, like the UMC or Starbucks. Scheduling your first meeting in an unfamiliar setting for your mentee, like your fraternity house, isn't a great idea. Taking your mentee group on an informal campus tour is a great way to break the ice and introduce them to CU.

Listen: Participate in the conversation by being an active listener and then ask questions to get more information

Communicate Clearly: Be clear about the facts, your opinions, and expectations.

Let the student solve the problem: In most cases the student already knows the answer and is merely looking for someone to ask the right questions and support them in coming to a decision. Avoid statements such as "you should"; you can direct the student to the appropriate resource and then let them solve the problem

Use your resources: We don't expect you to know the answer to every question out there; however we do expect you to use your resources you have been provided with. It's OK to make a mistake. That is how you learn and become better. However, don't answer a question unless you are willing to take responsibility for the answer you give.

Use self-disclosure: As long as you think it's helpful you should feel free to share experiences with your students. You should, however, avoid unhelpful statements such as "I had that problem and no one helped me".