



# Professional Development: Implementing a Tutor-Mentor Program



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## Introduction

When beginning a new job, there is always a period of time where one must learn which method is best to tackle a problem at hand in any particular situation. The assistance of someone who has done that same job and who is more experienced in which method works best with a particular issue may be helpful in decreasing the time of transition and limit the mistakes that could possibly be made by a new employee. As a result, the improvement goal selected is to implement a Tutor-Mentor Program for tutors working with college level students in a high stakes, tightly monitored environment.

The environment this program will be implemented in requires tutors to comply with rules of a governing association that include specific processes that differ with each situation the student is in. The current orientation for new and returning tutors is a meeting at the beginning of the school year which reviews rules and regulations, etiquette of a one-on-one tutor/student session, and additional information helpful to the newcomers. The problem that arises from this situation is that tutors come in and out continuously throughout the school year leaving new tutors without the essential information to function in their new workspace most efficiently.

Finding the right mentors could greatly benefit the program as a whole. It has been stated that "successful mentors have many important aptitudes, but above all they are exceptional educators with a track record of fostering significant student learning gains in diverse settings (Barlin, 2010)." The outcome of this program, if implemented correctly, will benefit the organizations, the new tutor, the mentor tutor, and most importantly, the students.

## Goal and Justification of Program

Alternatives to the proposed Tutor-Mentor Program include the current orientation that occurs once each year in September prior to the fall academic term. A positive aspect of this event is that it is a fairly comprehensive day full of useful information. A negative aspect is that there is no application of the material learned until the tutor is on their own with the student. Furthermore, another alternative may be additional professional development throughout the academic term. Professional development is currently on the agenda but is done on an inconsistent basis and only provided, on average, once per academic term. Additional training will be useful.

The purpose of implementing this Tutor-Mentor Program is to provide beginning tutors the resource of an experienced colleague to guide new tutors through their first and second term with students. The experienced tutor will provide their knowledge as well as examples of effective prior experiences to improve the overall effectiveness of all tutors in the building and therefore passing on the benefits to the students.

Justification for the implementation of the proposed Tutor-Mentor Program comes from the success of the popular Teacher-Mentor Programs to aid young teachers in the transition to the classroom, to reduce teacher turnover, and to increase work satisfaction (Barrera, et al., 2010). The benefits of these programs are transferrable into the tutoring program of college students in providing knowledgeable and more experienced tutors that have the resources in colleagues to improve their experience with the college students.

Largely, the goal of the program is to aid tutors in their transition into the organization as well as to increase satisfaction of both tutors and the students they work with. Ultimately, the organization would benefit from this program through the increase in academic success of the students receiving the tutoring services.

## Plan of Implementation

The three factors of implementation for a successful mentor program are outlined by Barlin (2010) to include: finding the right tutors to become mentors, aligning instructional-support efforts, and partnering with the organization.

1) The first step of implementation is connecting incoming tutors with the right mentor. Through evaluation of the experienced tutors focusing on observation by organization staff and evaluation by student's on their experience, a mentor must be nominated by a staff member to ensure quality of tutor-mentor interaction. In connecting a mentor with an incoming tutor, defined as a tutor in their first or second term, the organization will match similar subjects, personality and teaching style of tutors, and level of experience.

2) In the second step of implementation, the instructional support must align with the organizations goals. The mentors will be trained by organization administration in information that must be shared with incoming tutors, how to best evaluate one-on-one tutor sessions, and scheduling small leadership groups for further professional

Figure A. Overview of Roles of Involved Parties

Roles	Mentor	Tutor	Organization
Connection of Mentor and Tutor	Accept opportunity to work additional hours to be included in program. Provide list of interest and preferred teaching style for best connection with tutors.	Provide personal information, topics of interest, experience, preferred teaching style for best connection with mentor.	Nomination of experienced tutors through student evaluations and observations by organization staff. Connection of mentor and tutor based on the requirements outlined.
Instructional and Support Efforts	Schedule and provide guidance to incoming tutors through weekly small group leadership meetings with all mentees to act as a problem solver and teacher where all new tutors can learn. Schedule bi-weekly evaluations where observation of a one-on-one session between tutor and student, providing immediate feedback and constructive criticism. Be available to incoming tutors regularly. Report to organization administration feedback on tutor progress.	Attend small group leadership meetings weekly, maintain contact with mentor regarding progress in implementing new teaching/learning methods, ensure bi-weekly evaluations are complete and feedback is provided. Implement learned theory and development through sessions with students. Provide feedback for mentors on a term-by-term basis for improvement of program.	Provide a guideline to mentors of what is expected of them in the program, including relaying rules of program, expectations of program, and review of the process that occurs within the building. Provide resources for mentors to answer questions the incoming tutors may have. Provide space and time for required meetings to take place. Have an evaluation system in place based on mentee experiences to provide feedback for improvement of the Tutor-Mentor Program.
Partnership with Organization	Work with Learning Specialists on professional development issues that can be passed onto partner tutor.	Work with mentor on the development of theory and practice as well as attend professional development workshops provided.	Provide professional development for mentors and tutors to aid the continuous improvement of all parties. Provide availability for questions and concerns.

## Resource Impact

The impact of budget resources to implement this program will be very little. Taking away the fall orientation will reduce cost of having all tutors in the office for eight hours will leave funds that will become available for the program. The additional time required by both mentors and incoming tutors will need to be covered by the organization.

Staffing resources will not be impacted as the organization will be using the services of existing tutors by increasing hours worked and duties performed. Scheduling will be minimally impacted as it will be the responsibility of the mentor to schedule evaluations and small group meetings with incoming tutors.

The organization is provided with a decent-sized budget that will allow them to provide these additional resources in order for students to succeed. An initial and continuing investment is needed to provide the best outcome for students in the organization.

development. Once trained, the mentor must establish a relationship with their assigned tutors, schedule weekly small group leadership meetings, and establish a schedule of bi-weekly observations for immediate feedback. Ensure that the transition into the job is smooth with availability to resources necessary for improvement and growth. To replace the large group orientation that currently exists, the mentor will meet with their small group of incoming tutors to relay any required information including rules that are set for the job, introduction to staff, and to go through the process of reporting on one-on-one tutor sessions. The mentor will stay with the incoming tutors through two terms when the tutor will be released to continue working with the tools provided including the option to continue to use the resources of the mentor or any other staff in the building.

3) Finally, the administration in the building must be available for partnership with the mentors. It is vital that the learning specialists, academic advisors, and office managers provide effective leadership in implementing this Mentor-Tutor Program. Time and space must be made available for small group leadership meetings and they must be available for addressing any problems a mentor may have.

## References

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## Projected Outcomes

### Tutor Outcomes:

The intended outcome of this program would be to improve the overall effectiveness of tutors from the beginning of their employment as most tutors are employed a short period of time while they are enrolled as students themselves. In a study done on a comparable Teacher-Mentor Program, results showed that the benefits of the tutor, in this case, would include "improvements in teacher style, improvements in their ability to address [student's] needs, and increases in their own professional growth and development (Grisham, et al. 2004)." These are results that will benefit the tutor in their current role as well as roles in future employment opportunities.

### Organization Outcomes:

The main focus of this organization is to provide academic support for a special group of college students. This organization ensures that every student who has ever been involved receives the best opportunity to accomplish their academic goals and receive a degree. Furthermore, the results of increased student learning may lead to a decrease in need of continuous tutoring, directly effecting the amount of dollars on tutors in addition to increased student achievement.

### Mentor Outcomes:

The mentors "are encouraged to become agents of their own growth (Hanson, 2010)." The outcome of this program should provide mentors with "professional renewal, enhanced self-esteem, more reflective practices, and leadership skills (Hanson, 2010)." If even one of these outcomes exist once the Tutor-Mentor Program is implemented, let alone all, the mentor should come out with a positive experience being a member and contributor to this program.

### Student Outcomes:

The student outcomes are the main focus of this potential program. As has been addressed in the Tutor outcomes, with the hopes that each Tutor benefits in a similar way, the student will be the recipient of a higher level of instruction and practice than what is currently available. Another projected outcome of this program would be a decrease in the number of students requiring continuous tutor sessions as a result of the more effective quality within each session.

### Outcomes from Mentor Program similar to that projected:

Assessment rating is based on scale range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

Question	Mentor Mean	New Tutor Mean
Overall, the mentoring experience helped me get acquainted with the program.	4.42	4.44
My experiences in the mentoring program assisted me in learning how to find answer to my questions about the program.	4.28	4.54
Overall, how would you rate the mentoring experience?	4.25	4.47

Source: (Hughes, et al. 2009)

## Contact Information

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