Peer Haven Mentoring Program

Katie Johnson  ❖  Psychology/Women’s Studies  ❖  University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
Nicole Schultz, Ph.D.  ❖  Communication & Journalism/Women’s Studies  ❖  Faculty Collaborator
Jeff Goodman, Ph.D.  ❖  Psychology  ❖  Faculty Collaborator

Introduction

- The mission statement of University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire’s (UWEC) Peer Haven-LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) Mentorship Program is “To help students develop a positive LGBTQ identity while successfully adapting to life at UW-Eau Claire.” The first cohort of mentors and mentees for the program began fall semester of the 2012-2013 academic year.
- While broad-based research on mentorship exists in relevant literature (e.g., Durlack, 2011; Russell & Horne, 2009; Knox, Schlosser, Pruitt, & Hill, 2006), previous research on mentorship programs has not been specifically linked to details about the effectiveness of LGBTQ mentorship programs in specific or LGBTQ mentorship programs on university campuses.
- The overarching purpose of this project is to more fully understand what an effective LGBTQ-specific mentor program at a university should consist of.

Method

- Sample Institution Demographics:
  - 4 year comprehensive institutions (n = 9)
  - States included (Wisconsin, Minnesota, Idaho, Kansas, California, Michigan, & Indiana)
  - Institutions ranged from small to metropolitan size
- Data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews with experts across the country that coordinate established LGBTQ peer mentor programs on college campuses, particularly those comparable to the needs and demographics of UWEC.
  - Two guiding research questions:
    1. What does a LGBTQ mentorship program have to have in place to have efficacy on a college campus?
    2. What types of training and developmental support do peer mentors in a LGBTQ mentorship program at a university need to be effective
- As a guiding method for our qualitative approach, we used grounded theory and content analysis to analyze transcript data.
- Charmaz (2000) explains the use of grounded theory as an analytical practice as a process by which scholars “develop analytic interpretations of their data to focus further data collection, which they use in turn to inform and refine their developing theoretical analyses” (p. 509).

Results

- Emergent Themes
  - Most mentoring programs were in the initial stages (pilot year) upon interviewing.
  - Most often coordinated by a university employee and are also supported by student assistants.
- Mentor/Mentee Solicitation
  - Promotional materials were included in student orientation binders.
  - The focus was on incoming students, but do not require the mentees be a new student.
  - Some mentors volunteer to stay and help after graduating.
- Paper applications & Online applications were available.
  - “We did not do electronic last year, only again since we were just a little nervous about how big it was going to be …This year, that is a conversation that we are having, about electronic applications.”
  - Reason for wanting to join, preferred pronouns, orientation, gender, age, interests
- Mentor/Mentor Selection & Pairing
  - All mentors applicants are interviewed, but not all are selected.
  - All mentees are accepted, unless they would not benefit from a mentor (already plugged into campus resources).
  - Determined during initial meeting with the coordinator.
  - No inclusion of heterosexual allies as mentors and/or mentees.
  - There are typically more mentors than mentees.
  - “Our problem is mostly trying to recruit the mentees and try to get them to be more diverse in their identities.”
- Training
  - Inclusion of multiple offices at the university:
    - “The biggest collaboration was counseling and psychological services and they did a lot of expectations setting and boundary conversations, but they were really driven home by counseling and psychological services around no alcohol, no intimate relationships, what is a high level concern in relation to what we think a mentor could handle.”
    - Communication and active listening skills, scenarios, etc.
    - Workshops throughout the year

Discussion

Based on this analysis, recommendations are offered regarding campus LGBTQ Peer Mentoring programs.
- Programs are going to take all forms, shapes, and sizes depending on each individual unique university.
- Gather as much information as possible before creating a program:
  - Current campus climate
  - Things other successful programs have done
  - Make sure those involved in the creation are dedicated.
- Make sure to include a student representative in the whole process.
- Approach programming development with an open mind and be open to suggestions. Things won’t necessarily go exactly as planned.

This study was limited in that participating institutions were, particularly those comparable to the needs and demographics of UWEC. Further research needs to be conducted to generalize results.

References


We thank the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs for supporting and funding this research and Learning & Technology Services for printing this poster.
We seem to be missing direction quotations in our results section, which for qualitative research is important to provide as evidence. In addition, they tend to lend themselves well to discuss in a poster research presentation format so I'd like to see us include some in this column to illustrate findings.

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