

Mentorship and 21st Century Student Success Strategies

- Series Overview -



Navigating the expanse of student success research can be overwhelming. In this series, Shearwater investigates the research behind mentorship, student success, and retention. Key questions addressed:

- How can universities incorporate mentoring into their student success strategy?
- What role does social capital play in student success?
- How can universities develop help-seeking behavior in their at-risk populations?
- How can universities scale their peer-to-peer support systems?

This is **Part 1** of Shearwater's series on mentorship and student success. Contact Shearwater to receive the full series, including:

- ✓ Running An Effective Mentorship Program
- ✓ Mentorship for Women in STEM
- ✓ Keeping Volunteer Mentors Engaged
- ✓ And more.

Why do schools need a strategy?

The transition to college can represent a significant challenge for all students and when a strategy is not in place, sizable achievement gaps can form.

We found the following themes in our primary and secondary research:

- During orientation, new students are overwhelmed with logistics and struggle to internalize important information¹
- Most institutions spend less than 5% of their resources on social-emotional support
- Many international, low-income, and first generation students arrive with a shaken sense of well-being and unsure sense of belonging²



How are schools supporting new students?



Orientation

Excellent for logistics, but one week of orientation can be overwhelming when students are jetlagged or facing anxiety about their new environment and community.



Advising

Students often report that advising relationships, while essential to an effective strategy, tend to be impersonal due to an academics focus and a high advisor-advisee ratio.



Data

Risk-analysis software platforms provide an essential diagnostic layer, but do not deliver needed interventions to students.



Sources

- 1 The College Application Gauntlet: A Systematic Analysis of the Steps to Four-Year College Enrollment Author(s): Daniel Klasik Source: Research in Higher Education, Vol. 53, No. 5 (AUGUST 2012), pp. 506-549
- 2 Primary Research.
- 3 Blum, R. W. (2005). A case for school connectedness. Educational Leadership, 62(7), 16-20.
- 4 Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J. H., & WhiE, E. J. (2005). Assessing conditions to enhance educational effectiveness: The inventory for student engagement and success. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- 5 Freeman, J. P., Hall, E. E., & Bresciani, M. J. (2007). What leads students to have thoughts, talk to someone about, and take steps to leave their institution? College Student Journal, 41(4), 755-770.



Where can mentorship fit into an institutional strategy?

Pre-arrival support: Ensures new students are prepared for the transition, and have a close friend before arriving on campus.

New student integration: Bridges the culture gap by engaging alumni or upperclassmen as mentors, leading to faster acclimation.

Shaping the first year experience: Integrating mentorship into a FYE course can provide a channel for delivering support for all students.

When delivered effectively, mentorship can lead to the following: ^{3, 4, 5}

- o Higher GPAs
- o Increased sense of belonging
- o Increased retention rates and graduate rates
- o Lower incidents of academic probation