Chapter 6
Understanding Mentoring in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

There is no rapid formula for student success in higher education. Understanding student development theories and leading contributions to student success can be helpful in creating a success plan for students of all demographics. Research indicates that mentoring can significantly increase student retention and their ability to develop as a person and as a student. Mentoring programs can also be focused on specific demographics of students, such as race or ethnicity. Other mentoring programs are designed around different student populations, such as first-generation students, by classification, or separated by majors. Due to the diversity of mentoring programs, a mentor can come from multiple roles within the institution, including counselor, therapist, academic advisor, dean of students, professor, financial aid counselor, or success coach. Essentially anyone at the institution could be a mentor.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine it's late at night, and you have found yourself on a cold, dreary, and spooky drive on the interstate. With a goal of just getting home safely, fog sets in and the road ahead becomes increasingly difficult to see. As you pass by several exits, your

check engine light and fuel light illuminate your dash and you wonder if returning home is even attainable. Although you have roadside assistance, and the ability to phone a friend, it would be difficult to describe where you are, and the best action steps for anyone that could support you to find you. Unsure of which exit to take and what to do next, you pull over to assess your next course of action.

Consider this analogy as you conceptualize the undergraduate student experience in 2022-2023 and beyond. Consider that many if not most students are committed to navigating their academic journey, and are determined to move forward, but many students may not understand what academic or university resources exist that could move them along further or more efficiently. Many other students may also not know who or what could help them in a time of need or offer social or emotional support. Not every car on the highway is in need of roadside assistance or immediate intervention; just as not every student will be at risk for retention, but still may benefit from knowing useful resources that can be used for academic and social, and emotional support - Just as every driver can benefit from turning on their high beams to see more clearly. Consider mentoring as a student's high beam lights to increase their vision and ability to stay within their lanes.

The formula for student success is calibrated differently for every student, no matter the institution. Creating a playbook for an institution's approach toward student success requires data, research, and understanding of the trends of the institution and higher education as a whole. Increasing student success has always been the role of the institution's administration and remains one of the administration's biggest hurdles from year to year (Crisp, 2010). Mentoring can look very different depending on the institution and the student's experience. Also, the institutions can create many different mentoring programs and avenues that can lead to higher retention rates and graduation rates and positively impact academic success (Collier, 2017). Douglas (2017) stated that students from first-generation backgrounds report lower levels of self-efficacy than students whose families have prior generations of college graduates. However, DeFreitas & Bravo (2012) found that mentoring can significantly increase student success and student retention because mentoring can be both formal and informal which can lead to student self-efficacy. Moreover, since mentoring leads to student success and retention for the universities it could also enhance college completion rates.

Although mentoring programs look different, Paulus (2015) defines a mentor as "a member of the college community who is committed to student success through structured dialogue and reflection with individual students." Booker and Brevard, Jr. (2017) define mentoring as "the process of a knowledgeable person facilitating the growth, maturation, and development of another person of lesser experience." Lund and colleagues (2019) stated that mentoring relationships have been defined as connections between more experienced individuals and less experienced (often

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