Mentor Benefits

International Student Mentor Perceptions of Interaction Opportunities from a Broad-Scale Mentoring Program

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Overview

- Introduction/Reasons
- Methods
- Interactive statistics game
- Further research
- Recommendations
- Discussion questions
Introduction

- International Student Experience
  - Lack of interaction with diverse groups of students (Arkoudis et al, 2010; Leask & Carroll, 2011)
  - Improved experience through increased interactions with diverse groups (Lawson, 2012)

- Multicultural campus ≠ Multicultural experience

- Interactions need to be both created and facilitated (Gresham et al, 2013)
Introduction

- **Curtin University Graduate Attributes:**
  - Recognise and apply international perspectives
  - Demonstrate intercultural awareness and understanding

- Interaction with a diverse group of students is important to International students (Chalmers & Volet, 1997; Arkoudis et al., 2010; Leask & Carroll, 2011; Abdullah, Aziz & Ibrahim, 2013)
Curtin’s Mentor Program

- Across all Faculties on Bentley Campus
  Approximately 7000 new first year students (mentees) semester 1
  Semester 1, 2013 = 413 mentors

- Opt-out

- Group program (approx. 15 mentees within course)

- Face to face and email mentoring

- Diverse mentee groups and mentor cohort:
  - International
  - Domestic
  - External
  - Mature Age
  - School leavers
  - Internal
Curtin’s Mentor Program

- Discrepancy between international student percentage across Bentley campus and within mentor cohort

### Percentage International/Domestic Students

- **Curtin Bentley Campus 2012 S1**
  - Domestic 2012 S1: 78.9%
  - International 2012 S1: 21.1%

- **Mentor Program 2012 S1**
  - Domestic 2012 S1: 86.0%
  - International 2012 S1: 14.0%

- **Curtin Bentley Campus 2013 S1**
  - Domestic 2013 S1: 81.4%
  - International 2013 S1: 18.6%

- **Mentor Program 2013 S1**
  - Domestic 2013 S1: 84.0%
  - International 2013 S1: 16.0%
Questions

How do we increase international student representation in mentor cohort?

Are there opportunities as a mentor to mix with a diverse range of students?

Is this important to Curtin’s international student mentors?
Method

- Mentor program evaluation end of every semester 1
- All mentors are required to complete a survey
- Relevant survey responses sorted into categories
## Evaluation Data

What is the most significant way you have benefitted from mentoring?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description/Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Helping others            | Intrinsic feelings of happiness and personal satisfaction that come from helping others  
                           | “Joy expressed by mentee when I am able to help them (sic)”                           |
| Interaction               | Interaction, understanding others, developing networks and connections               
                           | “Getting to meet a whole new batch of first years…and becoming friends with quite a few of them…” |
| Curtin Knowledge          | Learning more about Curtin and the support services and activities available to students  
                           | “I have learnt things about services at Curtin that I didn’t know about before…”       |
| Skills Development        | Developing skills such as leadership, communication, time management, patience and self-reflection  
                           | “I have been able to improve my leadership and communication skills…”                  |
| Confidence                | Developing confidence                                                               
                           | “By being a mentor, I have built up my confidence…”                                  |

(Beltman & Schaeben, 2012)
**Evaluation Data**

What is the most significant way you have benefitted from mentoring?

### International Student Mentors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Average S1 2012 &amp; S1 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helping others</td>
<td>25% 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>37% 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtin Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills Development</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Domestic Student Mentors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Average S1 2012 &amp; S1 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helping others</td>
<td>7% 39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>33% 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtin Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
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What is the most significant way you have benefitted from mentoring?
## Evaluation Data

Do you have any suggestions/comments on how we can improve the Mentor Program?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Role</td>
<td>Tasks mentors undertake, role boundaries, meetings with staff members, support information provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Let mentees know that mentors...don’t help with academic matters ”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Structure</td>
<td>Opt-in instead of opt-out, when and how mentees are assigned to mentors,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mentor/mentee meetings, orientation activities, mentee numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Perhaps providing us access to the students at an earlier date before the beginning of semester started...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Perhaps allocating less mentees to each mentor.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Events</td>
<td>Social and networking events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“A mentor organised dinner with the whole first year and mentors,...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Mentee responses, emails to mentors from mentor coordinator, advertising and PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“At the start of semester get all the new students to send an email to their mentor.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Changes</td>
<td>Changes to the mentor training both face to face and online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Bit more role playing and real life situations in the training.”</td>
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(Beltman & Schaeben, 2012)
Evaluation Data

Do you have any suggestions/comments on how we can improve the Mentor Program?

<table>
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<td>Training Changes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average S1 2012 &amp; S1 2013</strong></td>
<td><strong>Average S1 2012 &amp; S1 2013</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>46%</td>
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<tr>
<td>26%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>28%</td>
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<tr>
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Evaluation Data

Do you have any suggestions/comments on how we can improve the Mentor Program?
Interview Data: International Student Mentors

- International student mentors from Asian, Pacific and African countries responded

- Questions regarding
  - Reasons for mentoring
  - Benefits of mentoring
  - Types of interactions involved in mentoring
  - Value attributed to interactions with diverse range of students

- Only 1 volunteered specifically for the “chance to interact with more domestic and international students”
In your role as a mentor, did you interact with both domestic and international students?

- Yes: 100%
- No: 0%

N=18

Was this interaction valuable to you?

- Yes: 87%
- No: 13%

N=18

“Yes. It is because I learn different cultures from others.”

“Yes - It assisted in improving my interpersonal skills with people of a different background from mine.”

“I met a bigger diversity of friends and friends are the most important people when I am away from my family.”
Interview Data: International Student Mentors

Is interaction with both domestic and international students a valuable part of your university experience?

- 94% Yes
- 6% No

N=18

“Yes, being able to speak to international students, I could relate my experiences to them. Being able to interact with domestic students allows me to learn about their culture and their knowledge.”

“Yes. It was a great experience to meet people from different backgrounds and cultures. I was so glad that we had the chance to share our opinions and learning experiences together.”

“Yes, it is as Australia is a pretty diverse country. So, being at ease with everyone helps me integrate the country better.”
Opportunities for Further Research

- Analyses are very broad

- Differences between academic years, course cohorts, genders and cultural groups could be examined

- Larger interview groups

- Investigate the benefits to domestic students in this area as well as benefits to international students
Conclusions

Are there opportunities as a mentor to mix with a diverse range of students?  

Is this important to Curtin’s international student mentors?  

How do we increase international student representation in mentor cohort?

Promote these results at recruitment
Recommendations

- Incorporate more social events into mentor program
- Promote the interactive opportunities in the mentor program to international students during recruitment
- Utilise the idea of enhancing the international student experience in mentor program reports and funding applications
Discussion Questions

- Do you have a similar experience in your own organisation?

- Could you create opportunities for this sort of interaction between diverse student groups in your own organisation? How would you create and facilitate them?

- How would you promote these interaction opportunities to your students?
References


Thanks to Kate Gresham, Mentor Program Coordinator and Ebonee Lynch, Senior Mentor Program Coordinator, Curtin University for their support and guidance.