Peer mentors are upper-division students from the major or program associated with their particular learning community. They serve as a vital resource to new students, providing transitional support and connecting them to campus and community resources. Peer mentors often organize study groups, social events, and out-of-class activities for learning community participants. Their experience, guidance, and leadership are invaluable to our students. Peer mentors are integral to the success of learning communities at Iowa State University.
A significant aspect of the peer mentor role is providing psychological and emotional support to mentees (Nora & Crisp, 2007). This involves listening, providing moral support, assisting in identifying problems, providing encouragement, and establishing a supportive relationship between student and mentor.

At Iowa State, learning community peer mentors provide care and concern for their mentees through individual and group meetings, making referrals to campus and community resources, facilitating academic and social events, and effective communication.

Survey Findings

Respondents to the Peer Mentor Survey either agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

- **My peer mentor responds in a reasonable time when I express a concern**: 95%
- **I have regular interactions with my peer mentor**: 73%
- **My peer mentor has made an effort to get to know me**: 85%

With [his] help, I’ve easily **adjusted to college life**, something I was always worried about before coming to ISU. Also, his genuine concern for our well-being and success makes me look forward to our classes together.

They’ve given me a sense of security during my transition into college. It’s just comforting to know I have someone to talk to, someone closer to my age and position that I can approach with questions.
Peer mentors often play the role of learning coach, with a significant benefit to mentees of greater academic achievement (Colvin & Ashman, 2010). Mentored students can experience higher GPAs and retention rates compared to those without a mentor (e.g., Campbell & Campbell, 1997).

Learning community peer mentors at Iowa State provide academic support through organizing and encouraging study groups, sharing effective study strategies, reaching out to students who might be struggling, and connecting students with resources such as the Academic Success Center.

**He has helped me better prepare for my classes and exams. He has also helped me visualize my future in [my major].**

**Our small group conversations have been fun and helpful! His interest in my academic performance makes me want to prioritize my own.**

**My discussions with [my peer mentor] directly helped my study habits in my classes. I felt very confident knowing someone who could help me with any problems in my classes or with professors.**

**My peer mentor encourages learning community participants to study together.**

**My peer mentor demonstrates concern about my academic success.**

Respondents to the Peer Mentor Survey either agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

When I needed a tutor for one of my classes, I didn’t know where to go or who to ask about it... my peer mentor helped me navigate where to go to ask for one! I have since had weekly tutoring sessions that have been really beneficial to my academic success.
Survey Findings

Respondents to the Peer Mentor Survey either agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

- **94%** My peer mentor facilitates interactions among learning community participants
- **65%** I have made an effort to get to know my peer mentor
- **93%** My peer mentor is skilled at facilitating discussions

She has helped me immensely getting used to campus, finding resources, and making friends.

Having a peer mentor allows you to feel like you have a connection to ISU. Immediately I felt welcome and a part of the community at ISU.

He’s good at facilitating meeting new people. A lot of my friends in my classes are from my learning community.

I feel connected to the community [in my major] and know I have a support system that wants to see me succeed.
Peer mentors are a connecting link between students and the university and serve as a student advocate (Colvin & Ashman, 2010). They connect their mentees to key resources, help them navigate the university, and can act as liaisons to faculty and staff (Lundsford, Crisp, Dolan, & Wuetherick, 2017).

Learning community peer mentors at Iowa State receive training and information about campus and community resources, involvement opportunities, active and empathetic listening strategies, and how to make effective referrals.

Respondents to the Peer Mentor Survey either agreed or strongly agreed with the following statement:

97%

My peer mentor is knowledgeable about university resources

**He is very helpful with informing me about school resources and activities.** He also makes sure he is helping everyone get situated with classes and the ISU Community.

They’ve helped me with finding resources, getting advice for academic and career fairs, and pointing me in the direction of people or places where I can find answers to questions.

My peer mentor has helped me better understand university resources and has been helpful with the transition as a transfer student.

She helped me to understand and learn about different study opportunities, resources, and activities to get involved in or use when needed that I would not know about otherwise.
GENERAL GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

In addition to specific academic and social support, peer mentors serve as a sounding board for ideas, provide advice based on their experience, and share helpful feedback to students (Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Dziczkowski, 2013). They keep mentees informed about requirements, deadlines, and activities both inside and outside their learning community.

SURVEY Findings

Respondents to the Peer Mentor Survey either agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

- **My peer mentor provides me with useful information**: 97%
- **I have sought out my peer mentor for assistance**: 66%
- **My peer mentor is knowledgeable about the issues discussed in my learning community**: 94%
- **My peer mentor has kept me informed about upcoming learning community activities**: 92%
- **Overall my peer mentor has been helpful**: 97%
- **They truly make it possible for us to feel confident and comfortable in what we are doing.**

It’s nice to have another, more experienced student explain to me many things that are helpful to know and give some tips that they feel were helpful [to them].

I think [he] does a very good job at showing incoming ISU students how college works, how to get adjusted, and where to go if you need help with anything.

Having a peer mentor... allowed me to easily connect to someone who is an experienced ISU student. I was able to ask questions about anything regarding ISU.
The Peer Mentor Survey takes place during weeks six through eight of the fall semester. This survey is designed to gather feedback from learning community (LC) participants about their interactions with peer mentors during the first half of the semester. LC coordinators, the faculty and staff who coordinate the individual LCs, are provided with a unique report link to review responses for their LC(s). They are encouraged to share this feedback with their peer mentors individually in order to identify positive attributes and potential areas for improvement for the remainder of the semester.

This report contains responses from the Peer Mentor Survey run during the fall 2023 semester. The survey is administered through the Qualtrics survey platform via anonymous response link. Item responses ranged from 3,115 to 3,121 (-41 from fall 2022). Respondents were encouraged to complete the survey as many times as necessary to provide feedback for each peer mentor with whom they interacted within the LC. Since responses were anonymous, no demographic data was captured.

A full version of the survey items can be found on the Iowa State Learning Communities website.

References


