Chapter 7: Providing Professional Development Opportunities

Importance/Relevance

- Providing peer educators with various professional development opportunities will help them to grow as individuals and position them for professional progress and success beyond their peer educator role.
- These opportunities can range from experiences that build credentials to offering in-house continuing education programs such as diversity seminars; they can take place during various times throughout the semester or year.

Questions to Answer/Things to Consider

- What resources does your department already have in place?
- Can you develop a partnership with another office or area of development?
- If you are hosting workshops, will your department be facilitating these presentations or will you need to find outside resources?
- Does anyone in your office have recourses that are already used?
- Where on campus can you find resources that already have programs in place?
- How many opportunities will you have in one semester, throughout the year?
- Will it be mandatory for the students to participate? If so, how will you ensure that it fits with everyone’s schedule?

Informational Content

The purpose of this chapter is to raise awareness and to provoke thought about our obligations to tend to the peer educators’ learning needs and opportunities within and beyond the peer educator role, knowing that for some this role is a stepping stone along their career development journey.

Professional Development as Experiential Learning

As a specialized form of experiential learning, the peer educator role is in-and-of-itself a professional development opportunity. For this reason, UC has created the Peer Education course attribute, which can be attached to zero-credit or credit-bearing courses that enroll peer educators. Attaching the attribute provides a way for the university to recognize the educational value that performing the peer educator role provides, and to document this learning experience on students’ academic transcripts. Learning experiences that qualify to hold the Peer Education attribute incorporate the following:

- Defined learning outcomes for peer educators
- Defined learning outcomes for the peer educators’ work with students
- Oversight from professional staff or faculty
- In-depth experience defined by a suggested minimum contribution of approximately 120 hours per semester (average of 8 hours per week)
- Selection of peer educators based on articulated minimum qualifications related to content and context of the experience
- Appropriate preparation and training prior to and/or concurrently with the experience
- Assessment of peer educator capabilities and growth including performance evaluation and feedback
- Assessment of outcomes for the peer educators’ work with students
- Peer educator self-reflection

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To attach the Peer Educator attribute to a course, peer educator administrators and faculty must propose and have the relevant course approved using the e-Curriculum system in accordance with college and university course approval processes.

Professional Development as an Integral Component of Peer Education Program Management
Many programs incorporate a professional development mindset into their training, supervision, or recognition systems for peer educators. For example, programs may build into their standard operating procedures mechanisms for providing peer educators with meaningful and timely feedback, a coaching style of supervision, and peer educator reflection.

Professional Development as Continuing Education
Many programs will offer professional development activities as an additional component of the peer education experience. For example, offering a series of workshops that focus on developing skills, capacities, or networks that will position peer educators for professional success beyond their peer educator role are valuable opportunities. Examples of workshop topics include:

- Resume Development
- Conflict Management
- Dealing with Co-workers
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Finding a mentor
- Student Leadership Certificate FAQs

Promoting opportunities for peer educators to participate in conferences and deliver presentations as part of a relevant campus-based organization or external professional association is another avenue for offering professional development opportunities. For example, UC’s Office of Student Activities and Leadership Development hosts a leadership conference each year where peer educators can submit presentation proposals.

Helping peer educators to connect their current work experience to post-baccalaureate opportunities in graduate school or the workplace is another form of professional development. For example, many peer educator roles will help students to develop credentials and demonstrate their qualifications for opportunities like the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant fellowship, graduate school and related graduate assistant positions, as well as an array of full-time entry-level career positions.

Current Implementation Examples
In the College of Business, student leaders are called PACE Leaders. This term comes from the Lindner program, PACE (Professionalism, Academics, Character, Engagement). The purpose of PACE is to build the ideal candidate for future employers.

- PACE Leaders work with freshmen students in their Learning Communities throughout their freshmen year.
- PACE Leaders are provided opportunities for diversity, inclusion training, and resume building.
- In Lindner, the Diversity and Inclusion team and Career Services office provide professional development seminars.

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- The Diversity and Inclusion team and the PACE leaders discuss ways to spark conversation and learn about students in their Learning Community.
- Career Services and the PACE Leaders discuss how to accurately and succinctly describe their skills on a resume.
  - During this workshop, PACE Leaders bring their own resume, and the Career Services team work with them on ways to make their resume stand out.

Supplemental Documents/Common Forms