Chapter 8: Recognizing Peer Educators

Importance/Relevance

- A well-designed recognition process carries numerous benefits, including retaining your outstanding Peer Educators, boosting their morale, and encouraging them to be invested in your program and improve as educators.
- Additionally, recognizing your Peer Educators serves as way of promoting your program to stakeholders and illustrates that you are invested in your staff.
- Effective implementation requires an understanding of different forms of recognition (internal recognition, external recognition, and promotion) and when to appropriately utilize each one to achieve a particular objective.

Question to Answer/Things to Consider

- What do you want to achieve with the recognition process, and what forms of recognition will enable you to achieve those goals?
- Once you have selected how you wish to recognize your Peer Educators, what processes will you establish to put those plans into action? Who will be involved?
- What criteria will you use to assist in the recognition process?
- What timelines will you put into place regarding the recognition process?
- In terms of external recognition, who do you want to inform regarding your student staff?
- In terms of internal recognition and promotion, how will you communicate the recognition process to your student staff, and how will you catalog their progress?
- If you are connecting financial incentives with the recognition process (e.g., offering pay raises), how will doing so impact your budget?
- How can you use the recognition process as a recruitment tool for potential Peer Educators?

Informational Content

External Recognition

- External recognition consists of sharing the work of outstanding Peer Educators with those outside your program, usually interested stakeholders.
- External recognition is the easiest to implement since you simply consider what aspects of your Peer Educators you wish to recognize (work, academic, or community accomplishments) and share those elements through different information outlets (reports, newsletters, or websites).
- External recognition will serve two goals:
  - It enables you to reward outstanding Peer Educators.
  - It enables you to promote your staff to stakeholders and demonstrate that you have exemplary students working for you.

Internal Recognition

- Internal recognition consists of recognizing the efforts of your student staff within your program.
- Internal recognition enables you to boost the morale of your student staff while communicating to them that you care about their work.
- Internal recognition comes in numerous forms, including internal awards (e.g., Peer Educator of the Month) and celebratory events (e.g., staff appreciation day).
Chapter 8: Recognizing Peer Educators

- Internal recognition can also be utilized to highlight exemplars or role models for your student staff to follow.

Promotion Process

- Although the promotion process is perhaps the most challenging form of recognition to implement, it can be the most rewarding to students. Promotion involves recognizing outstanding Peer Educators and rewarding them with a pay increase, one-time bonus, and/or new responsibilities.

- Consult your budget and program’s financial administrator to see if financial recognitions are feasible and how they will affect your budget. Depending on the structure, amount, and requirements of a proposed financial recognition, also confirm that it aligns with university payroll and HR policies. Many student staff positions are not eligible for traditional merit-based pay increases.

- Next determine how you will decide to award financial recognition. Perhaps you can put a set of criteria into place (work and training attendance, student surveys of the Peer Educator’s work, or completing special projects). Or maybe you can select a set of desirable behaviors (attendance, completing training, or volunteering for extra work) that you can reward with a point system in which at a certain threshold, the student would receive the increase.

- Additionally, you can link the financial recognition to created positions within your student staff (leader or mentor roles). These positions can carry new responsibilities (contributing to training or observing new Peer Educators). You can either award these positions to returning staff or have them apply.

- The promotion process is effective in incentivizing outstanding work. Furthermore, communicating that you have financial incentives and promotional pathways is a good way to recruit new Peer Educators.

Current Implementation Examples

To provide you with an example of what the Peer Educator recognition looks like in a current, well-established peer education program, we are going to look at the Learning Assistance Center.

- The Learning Assistance Center has implemented all three forms of the recognition process in different ways.

  - Externally, the LAC recognizes individual Peer Educators in a “Student Spotlight” portion of their newsletter, and they recognize their collective staff in their annual reports and marketing materials, communicating things such as their GPAs.

  - Internally, they also have a Student Staff Member of the Month Award. They post the winner’s picture and biography outside their office. They also hold special events like “Tutor Appreciation Day,” end of the semester celebrations, and a Valentine’s Day celebration. At this final event, students and staff members write thank you notes to the Peer Educators on paper hearts that are posted in the office.

  - Many LAC programs also have mentor roles for student staff. Additionally, the LAC has utilized a financial incentive system that takes into account time of employment and clear performance metrics.
Chapter 8: Recognizing Peer Educators

Supplemental Documents/Common Forms

- Student Spotlight Example
  
  **Student Spotlight: Shawya Abri**

  Shawya is a fourth-year biology major who aspires to become a doctor. As a doctor, Shawya hopes to help people and provide aid for those who seek it. He enjoys working with students as both an SI leader and SI mentor. As an SI leader, showing others the wonderful world of Organic and Biochemistry has been extremely rewarding. Through his SI mentor position, he looks to share his knowledge about the program and how to better communicate with others to promote collaborative learning. When he is not serving as an SI leader/mentor or student, Shawya enjoys running and playing his piano and saxophone.

- Student of the Month Example
  
  **Student Staff Member of the Month**

  **Logan Borgelt**

  Logan Borgelt is a junior majoring in the field of Mathematics, specifically in Statistics. As a student of the Month, Logan has shown exceptional dedication and commitment to his academic pursuits. He is known for his strong work ethic and tireless efforts in achieving his goals. Logan is also active in various extracurricular activities, contributing to the growth and development of the student body. His leadership qualities and his ability to support and inspire others make him an excellent role model for his peers.

- Coach Mentor Application (housed in Blackboard)
  
  **Preview Upload Assignment: Academic Coach Mentor Application**

  This assignment requires a submission, and your submission will be evaluated.

  1. Assignment Information
     
     Due: February 1, 2016
     
     Please upload the required documents below to submit your Coach Mentor Application:
     
     - Current transcript or degree audit (pdf, jpeg, or other versions are not acceptable)
     
     2. Cover Letter explaining why you want to become an academic coach/mentor
     
     - 3 pages maximum
     
     4. Response to each of the following essay prompts. Word limits are included below:
     
     - Please discuss the most valuable experiences you have gained as an academic coach/mentor (200 words)
     
     - Please discuss the most valuable lesson you have learned from the Academic Coach/mentor program (200 words)
     
     - List any changes you would like to see made to the coaching program. Provide an evidence-based argument for this change, utilizing at least two resources (200 words)

  3. Assignment Submission
     
     *Upload*

     - *Notes:*

   4. Add Comments
      
      *Notes:*


  July 2016, Peer Education Network