How To Guide: Peer Education

Introduction
The Peer Education Network (PEN) is a university-wide alliance and community of practice that seeks to elevate and streamline peer education efforts at the University of Cincinnati. PEN is UC's centralized resource, information repository, and referral clearinghouse for peer education. PEN has created criteria for consistent quality and practice across UC's network of peer education programs.

This How To Guide provides UC faculty and staff with guidance and resources for implementing processes inherent in administering peer education. The contents are applicable in a variety of peer education settings and structures. The guide offers step-by-step help for the novice as well as tips for the experienced administrator around a comprehensive set of topics ranging from defining the peer educator role to managing the logistics of recruitment, selection and hiring, training and development, supervision, performance and program assessment, publicizing impact, and more. When applicable, sample documents and forms are offered for peer education administrators to adapt and use.

Peer Education at UC
The PEN White Paper outlines UC’s vision for peer education:

Peer education is a process and pedagogy that deploys students to assist in the delivery of teaching or mentorship to each other (Collier, 2015; Ender & Newton, 2000). Peer educators at the University of Cincinnati are student leaders who are specially selected and trained to hold positions with the specific responsibility to facilitate meaningful learning through discussion, instruction, and/or mentorship to their peers, individually or as part of a group. Peer educators instruct students at their own academic level. For instance, undergraduate students might teach other undergraduate students. However, graduate students who teach undergraduate students are not peer educators.

Peer education is a highly effective, cost-efficient tool for increasing learning and sustaining student advancement through graduation. Peer education also contributes to students’ satisfaction with their educational experience. This strategy is particularly well-suited for UC’s mission, experiential learning culture, and student population and therefore has emerged as a vital component in the University of Cincinnati’s student success support structure. Nearly every strategy for enhancing student success incorporates peer education—from faculty-led course redesign efforts to co-curricular programming aimed at developing a culture of student success.

The University of Cincinnati is nationally distinguished by our level of student engagement in Learning with Peers (National Survey of Student, 2015). According to the 2015 National Survey of Student Engagement, UC first-year students are engaged in Learning with Peers, specifically Collaborative Learning, at levels comparable to the top ten percent of all 2014 and 2015 NSSE institutions (2015). UC’s 500 plus peer educators, deployed across four different university divisions—Academic Affairs, Campus Services, Enrollment Management, and Student Affairs—touch well over 10,000 students annually and play a central role in forwarding student success. Documented results include increased student performance and career readiness, higher GPAs, lower DFW rates, increased retention, and increased student satisfaction with their experience at the University of Cincinnati.
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Peer educators are deployed specifically to advance the success of the students they serve. But the peer educators themselves benefit as well. Peers who instruct and/or mentor their peers are engaged in a specialized form of experiential learning. As a result, peer educators gain valuable career-related skills that are transferrable to a variety of professional contexts where effective interpersonal and communication skills, problem-solving and use of good judgement, life-long learning, leadership, and similar skills are valued.

Advancing Peer Education
The Peer Education Network collects examples of how peer education is deployed across the university. Please share your materials, impact data, and other documents that might be useful to UC colleagues with the PEN Coordinating Lead. PEN can also help you connect with colleagues to conduct studies, prepare presentations, apply for grants, work collectively to generate resources, and disseminate information for the advancement of peer education.

Supplemental Documents/Common Forms
PEN White Paper