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Transfer Student Peer Mentorship Initiative

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TRAM (Transfer Rams)
VCU Transfer Student Mentorship Program
Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute (GEHLI)
VCU Leadership Development Program
“Team Won”

Team Members

Melinda DeBrew
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Project Description

Transfer students have unique needs that differ from those of incoming freshmen. The TRAM Transfer Student Mentorship Program connects incoming transfer students with students who also began their VCU journey as transfer students. Through a one-on-one relationship with a trained mentor, transfer students who participate in this program will access guidance and information to help them navigate the university and its resources, programs, and culture.

Project Goals

To enhance transfer students’ academic experience and personal development at VCU
To foster a sense of community among the transfer student population
To improve transfer students’ academic performance and retention rate
To raise awareness about the unique advantages that VCU offers transfer students

Strategies

After surveying best practices and model mentorship programs within the university, Team Won recruited and trained a pilot cohort of mentors. Incoming transfer students

were placed with the student mentors at the beginning of the Fall 2012 semester. In order to raise awareness, Team Won also worked with VCU Creative Services to produce a video about the resources and opportunities (including TRAM mentorship) that VCU offers transfer students.

Action Steps

Analysis of student survey data collected by VCU Transfer Center
Review best practices (sources include GEHLI mentorship training and materials from the Virginia Mentoring Partnership)
Review model mentorship programs within the university, including those offered through University College
Develop recruitment materials for prospective mentors
Select mentors for pilot cohort
Deliver training session to mentors
Foster ongoing communication and improvement by pairing each student mentor with a mentor from Team Won
Develop recruitment materials for prospective mentees
Promote TRAM mentorship via email, VCU Transfer Center website, and at luncheon for incoming transfer students
Place mentees with trained mentors
Evaluate pilot program through exit interviews with mentors and mentees

Outcomes

The five mentors in the pilot program have been working with their mentees for about a month. While it is too early to assess whether this program will ultimately have the desired impact on transfer student academic success and retention rates, early reports from the mentors and mentees indicate that the program is off to a strong start. On September 23, one of the mentors reported the following, by way of email:

“I met with [my mentee] today at the Student Commons at the Monroe Park campus. I was able to help him out with his pre-calculus homework that he said he's been battling with for two days now. I was also able to show him how to work the problems and most importantly, how to use the calculator to verify his answers. Our meeting was short (45 minutes) because he had to go home and get prepared for his night job. He was REALLY excited that I was able to help him out, since he claims none of his roommates were able to for days now. Before our meeting today, we had already established a means of communication about 2 weeks ago by frequently texting each other almost every 2 days to see how each other is doing. The texting was mutual. We decided to meet again within the week so we could work on more math problems since that's his major hurdle this semester. Will keep you updated as the days go by.”

Following its unveiling at the final presentations of the GEHLI VCU Leadership Development Program (October 4, 2012), the video highlighting VCU Transfer Center resources (including TRAM) will be uploaded to the VCU Transfer Center website.

Resources

Provide mentors with the opportunity to take the UNIV class that other mentors take if they can fit it in their schedules

Recommendations

- 1-We would like to see the program expand to include more mentors and mentees.
- 2-We would like to see if our mentors can receive some type of credit from the university for this work
- 3-We would like to have a follow-up session for mentees and mentors to share progress.
- 4- We want to ensure that mentees have a positive experience so that they can grow into mentors and help ensure a strong program.

Cover what your team would like to see, in terms of next steps, for this project.

Conclusion

The TRAM Mentorship Program draws on a previously untapped resource: Current students, who came to VCU as transfers, who are thriving at VCU and have insights to share as mentors. In so doing, the program reinforces the important message that transfer students are a highly valued part of the VCU community.

The pilot mentors and mentees are already working together to set meaningful academic, social, and personal goals. Working with a mentor is helping transfer students save time and effort as they navigate a new university experience. This program is helping transfer students bond with the VCU community, and feel at home on campus.

By offering incoming transfer students these academic and social benefits of mentorship, the TRAM Mentorship Program supports Theme 1 of the *VCU Quest for Distinction* (Theme 1.A “Recruit and retain talented and diverse students who will graduate at a higher rate and will contribute to a highly skilled workforce.”; Theme 1.C “Engage students, the alumni of tomorrow, in high impact academic and extra-curricular experiences that expand learning, promote civil discourse, and engage students in self-reflection and creative expression.”).

“Team Won”

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Project Advisor: Dr. Daphne Rankin
Associate Vice Provost for Instruction

What’s In Common?




Transfer Rams (TRAM)

VCU Transfer Student
Mentorship Program




What is TRAM?


- VCU Transfer Student Peer Mentorship Program - Transfer RAMS
- Pairs new transfer students with experienced VCU transfer students
- Share experiences and bond with the VCU community



Why TRAM?





- VCU Transfer Center surveys:
 - many feel isolated in their first semester
- Evidence shows peer mentors:
 - help new students connect
 - provide additional support through their transition



Quest for Distinction

Theme I, Goal A.

“Recruit and retain talented and diverse students who will graduate at a higher rate and will contribute to a highly skilled workforce.”


TRAM Mentorship Program Design

- Recruitment and Selection
- Training
- Mentee Placement
- Monitoring




Pilot Mentor Recruitment and Selection

- Recruitment Channels
 - Faculty/Staff Recommendations
 - Self-Selection
- E-mails to Prospective Mentors
- Selection
 - On-line application
 - Interview




Pilot TRAM Mentors

Milissa Barrick, Senior (History)	Andre Enowtaku, Senior (Biology/Pre-Medicine)
Richard Mensah, Senior (Biology/Pre-Medicine)	Lya Roberta Pinheiro, Senior (Biology)
Samantha Schaefer, Senior (Art Education)	
Nathan Stanford, Senior (Mathematical Sciences)	

TRAM Program Expectations

TRAM Mentors will help new transfer students with:

- Goals – Personal and Academic
- Time Management
- Resources
- Classes
- Connection with VCU
- Retention



TRAM Mentor Benefits

- Contribution
- Satisfaction
- Networking
- Leadership
- Resume Building



TRAM Mentor Training Session

- Based on Best Practices
- Set Expectations
- FAQs and Scenarios
- Resources
- Mentor/Leader Partnership



TRAM Mentor Training



TRAM Mentees

- Recruitment
 - Faculty/Staff Recommendations
 - Self Identification
 - Transfer Center Recommendation



Launching the TRAM Pilot

- Transfer Orientation
- Welcome Week Luncheon
- Transfer Center Website



Special Thanks to...

- Dr. Daphne Rankin
- New Student Programs
- Transfer Center Team
- VCU Marketing – Video Unit



TRAM Sustainability

- To be administered by the Transfer Center
- Enhance training and program promotion
- Will add new video to Transfer Student Orientation



Drumroll please...

[Transfer Student Orientation Video](#)



Thank You!



Questions?

