

Peer Advisor Experience Annotated Bibliography

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This annotated bibliography is meant to provide insight into theoretical foundations of peer advising, particularly with regard to the peer advisor experience. The academic articles analyzed in this bibliography are some of the most recent and renowned pieces of literature covering the following topics:

- the role of peer advising and particularly peer advisors ([Colvin & Ashman, 2010](#); [Keup, 2016](#); [Shook & Keup, 2012](#))
- practical considerations regarding the peer advisor's responsibilities and tasks ([Hill & Reddy, 2007](#); [Keup, 2016](#); [Rosenthal & Shinebarger, 2010](#); [Smith, 2004](#); [Swisher, 2013](#); [Young & Keup, 2018](#))
- communication techniques and gaps in peer advising ([Colgan, 2017](#); [Washburn, 2015](#))
- peer advisor's role in multicultural and diverse settings ([Frisz, 1999](#); [Keller, Logan, Lindwall, and Beals, 2017](#))

Colgan, A.L. (2017). "That's not what I said:" Communication gaps in advising. The Mentor - An Academic Advising Journal, 19. Retrieved from <https://dus.psu.edu/mentor/2017/10/that%E2%80%99s-not-what-i-said-communication-gaps-in-advising/>

This article refers to the ability of advisers to **detect and resolve miscommunication** with their advisees. It relies heavily on the theoretical **aspect of communication between advisors and advisees**. Yet, there are several reported experiences of different advisors and their way of detecting and responding to the misunderstandings of their advisees. At the beginning of higher education experience, many students are getting accustomed to the jargon of higher education and to the ways of communicating different crucial information. For that reason, they are often faced with information they cannot fully understand or whose importance they cannot grasp entirely. While this can lead to some funny situations, as the authors of this article claim, it can also lead to missing important deadlines, not attending mandatory lectures etc. The role of advisers is, therefore, partly to make sure that receipt of information went well with their advisees. Moreover, they have the responsibility to help students develop the skills necessary for the correct interpretation and application of constructive information.

This article covers **the theoretical foundations of avoiding and solving communication gaps**, mainly **based on the experiences of the advisors**. The content of the article covers an important aspect of advising, which often requires more attention than it receives from the advisors. In that sense, it

represents an interesting source for CREATES toolkit. However, its **focus on academic advising** makes this article less useful to the peer mentoring program development.

Colvin, J. W., & Ashman, M. (2010). Roles, risks and benefits of peer mentoring relationships in higher education. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 18, 121-134. Retrieved from https://www.essr.net/~jafundo/mestrado_material_itgjkhnld/IV/Mentoring%20and%20tutoring.pdf

This study demonstrates that students, instructors, and mentors all have **different perspectives of a mentor's role** and how that role should be enacted. Connecting link, peer leader, learning coach, student advocate, and trusted friend were identified as predominant roles enacted by mentors. In the context of CREATES, clarification for all parties could help establish **the adviser's role** more clearly and alleviate confusion. The definition of peer mentors/tutors made in the article may vary a little from the peer advising as it is understood in CREATES, as it also includes e.g. tutoring in the classroom.

Unlike other studies, this article emphasizes potential risks and benefits for being or having a peer mentor. **Risks** were identified concerning time and other commitments (trying to do too much), favouritism, students being too dependent on the mentor or, conversely, not accepting the mentor. Additionally, the nature of the relationship, mentor and mentee, reflects **hierarchical ordering**. Thus help, power, and resources tend to flow in one direction, creating the possibility for misunderstanding or misuse of such power and resources and leading to challenges and resistance. However, almost all participants indicated some sort of **benefit to both sides of a peer mentor relationship**, for example individual attention, new friendships, retention benefits or a better connection to the campus.

- Clarification of the mentor's role beforehand alleviates confusion.
- Besides enormous benefits, Peer Advising might also bear some risks.
- "Interestingly, when comments about benefits are broken down by gender, the majority of women's comments (38 of 51) focused on relationships, and the majority of men's (20 of 26) noted improved grades and overall academic performance, not just for the students they worked with but also for themselves." (p. 128)

Hill, R., & Reddy, P. (2007). Undergraduate peer mentoring: An investigation into processes, activities, and outcomes. *Psychology Learning & Teaching*, 6, 98-103. <https://doi.org/10.2304/plat.2007.6.2.98>

This article presents a **qualitative study of the expectations and experiences of a group of undergraduate student mentors and mentees** participating in a pilot mentoring scheme in a psychology department of a UK university. To clarify the aims of this study, the authors relate to further literature that shows the benefits of peer advising in higher education and the difficulties in definition because of the diversity of peer mentoring programs.

In order to find out why students choose to have or to become a mentor, the participants recorded their **expectations and experiences** on an audiotape. As the authors see **peer advising as a tool for aiding transition to university**, the first-year students were offered to request a mentor who volunteered for this position. Based on matched gender, ethnicity and maturity, the study brought 32 mentor-mentee-pairs together which experienced a win-win situation.

The authors noticed **difficulties to arrange the first meeting** and suggested it to be centrally organized. They discuss the relevance of different topics that came up in the peer advising (they didn't instruct the mentors intensively). Some mentors conclude that they would consider caring about a group of

mentees instead of just one person to be more satisfying for them. Finally, there was the expectation of mentees as students who are less able or confident. As a result, the authors suggest automatically **including all first-year students with a provision for opting out.**

- The first meeting might be centrally organized.
- The peer advising could include all first-year students with provision for opting out.
- Mentoring a group of students was considered to be more satisfying for the mentor than one-on-one mentoring.

Frisz, R. H. (1999). Multicultural peer counselling: Counselling the multicultural student. *Journal of Adolescence*, 22(4), 515–526.
<https://doi.org/10.1006/jado.1999.0245>

The author uses **the model of multicultural peer counselling** at Queens College in New York in combination with relevant literature in order to analyse the **drawbacks and possible improvement area** in the multicultural peer counselling process. The focus of the article is mainly on **the methods of recruitment, selection and training of the future peer advisors**. The author critically assesses and tries to acknowledge the limitations of the counselling program suitable for those universities that deal with a large cultural variety of students. The stance of the author is that peer advisors, particularly those working with multicultural students, represent **a substantial and beneficial addition to the core services of the universities.**

The paper provides an insightful, yet an encompassing overview of the peer counselling program that has been successfully established as a permanent university service over the course of more than 25 years. In that sense, it is a great source of ideas for the creation of a unique general peer advising toolkit in the CREATES project.

Keller, TE, K Logan, J Lindwall, and C Beals. (2017) “Peer mentoring for undergraduates in a research-focused diversity initiative.” *Metrop Univ.* 2017 Summer; 28(3): 50–66. Retrieved from:
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5796667/>

This article reports the outcome of a program which paired undergraduates pursuing research-focused careers with three advisors: a research mentor, a career mentor, and a peer mentor. While it comes to **no definitive conclusions about the effects of peer mentoring**, it explains the **challenges of the program in its first year** and the changes they made as a result. Challenges included finding times to meet with peer mentors and with navigating and maintaining relationships with three different mentors. What is most useful about this article is that it contains an **illustrative table of goals** which compares the activity domains for peer advising from the staff side as opposed to the aims from the side of the peer mentors, showing differences.

Keup, J. Peer leadership as an emerging high-impact practice: An exploratory study of the American experience. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa | Volume 4(1) 2016, 33-52 | 2307-6267 | DOI: 10.14426/jsaa.v4i1.143*

This paper analyses data from 1 942 students from 142 institutions in the **United States** who responded to a **national survey** of peer leaders administered by the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition in 2009 and as such represents the first US-American portrait of peer-leader programs. Jennifer Keup analyses the diverse different roles of peer leaders in higher

education in which peer advising, as understood in CREATES, is just one program among others. Thereby she focuses on the peer leaders as they gain as much, if not more, value from the experience as the students they serve. After evaluating the quantitative data on the number of peer leader positions of each student, the measure of compensation, the provision of training and the self-reported gains, the **study aims to find relations between certain structural characteristics of peer-leader experiences and self-rated outcomes.**

Given the exploratory nature of this study, it is not representative, and one needs to be cautious about the issue of directionality when interpreting some of the shown correlations. Nevertheless, this paper matters for developing peer advising in the context of CREATES because it can help to rationally answer **the questions of compensation** of the advisers and **the organization of training.**

- “Students who receive payment for their service as a peer leader may feel a greater obligation to demonstrate proficiency [...]” (p.44)
- “Those students who reported receiving course credit were more likely to report gains in academic skills, written communication, presentation skills and meaningful interaction with faculty.” (p.44)

Marter, A. (2016). Peer Advising 101: A Training Workshop For Peer Advisors In Study Abroad.

The author created a **peer advising training workshop** and documented the format, structure, and a manual for other institutions to use and improve upon. The training workshop created and described by the author has been **successfully used at the Susquehanna University (SU) liberal arts college in the US.** It is a training workshop based on the up-to-date research and literature on peer advising programs. Moreover, feedback from the peer advisor journal entries, workshop evaluations and observations, as well as the assessment of advising needs of students of that particular college are taken into account for modifications of the training.

Peer advisors employed in this program receive financial **compensation and study credits**, as their work is seen as **an internship.** They work with fellow students mainly on resolving issues and concerns regarding the mandatory study abroad period at the SU. Even though this peer advising program is focused on going abroad, the analysis and instructions provided by the author are quite broad and helpful for peer advising programs in any setting. Furthermore, the training workshop comprises four sections focused on different learning objectives and, as such, enhances comprehensive understanding of the study program and required peer advising skills. Thus, it has the potential to be adapted to e.g. UCF’s preparation/training meetings with prospective peer advisors.

Rosenthal, K. I., & Shinebarger, S. H. (2010). Peer mentors: Helping bridge the advising gap. *About Campus*, 15(1), 24–27. <https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.20012>

This article reports on **the initial development and success of a peer mentoring program** created for the needs of Union College (UC), New York. One can get an overview of how this program works through the description of the selection and training process at UC, as well as the subsequent evaluation and training. This particular program receives **large funding** for the further development of peer advising at UC, whereas the program keeps growing and enhancing the working conditions of peer mentors. It is meant to **bridge the gap between academic advising and the advising that reaches out of the academic realm, by connecting students to peer mentors.** Mentoring is individual (one-to-one), yet combined with a diverse set of workshops meant to bring students together and help them overcome issues such as time management, stress etc. Mentors go through **extensive training**

beforehand, but their progress remains supervised and evaluated throughout their mentoring term. Moreover, the program itself is evaluated constantly through various means, such as weekly meetings, individual case reports, workshop attendance and evaluation etc. The program cooperates with experts in order to provide mentors with how-to knowledge related to specific mentoring situations. **One-to-one mentoring** is exclusively done by peers; however, the workshops are a result of peer mentors and faculty members working closely together.

The authors managed to capture the essential parts and successful mechanisms of the peer mentoring program at UC, which makes this article significant for CREATES attempts to create a universal toolkit through learning from various institutions.

Shook, J. L., & Keup, J. R. (2012). The benefits of peer leader programs: An overview from the literature. In J. R. Keup (Ed.), *New Directions for Higher Education: No. 157. Peer leadership in higher education* (pp. 5-16). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Retrieved from https://www.wellesley.edu/sites/default/files/assets/departments/pltc/files/faculty/shook_keup_2012_benefits_of_peer_leader_programs.pdf

This chapter provides a **review of the literature on peer leadership** with specific emphasis on the **benefits of these programs to the students being served, to those who engage as peer leaders, and to the institution**. Although peer leaders are understood on a more general scale, the text provides a useful overview with numerous evidences. The last part in this triangular analysis which deals with benefits for the institution itself can be considered of utmost importance in this chapter as it differs from most literature.

According to the text, peer advisors provide **a cost-efficient and yet high-quality alternative to better accommodate the large number of students who need services**. They enable the faculty staff to connect with both, advanced and beginning students. Furthermore, institutions can improve their work due to the **evaluative feedback** regarding students' perceptions of the services in question that can be generated in peer advising sessions. Additionally, it is said that when peer leaders graduate, they are likely to be engaged alumni and to contribute to the institution through service and financial contributions.

Smith, L. W. (2004, April 2004). "PAT on the back": Developing and implementing a peer advising team. *The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*, 6. Retrieved from <https://dus.psu.edu/mentor/old/articles/040421ls.htm>.

This article summarized the concept of peer advising and the process of developing such a program at a high education institution. It tackles some of the main aspects of a peer mentoring program, in a summarized version, as many of the previously analyzed articles do. It does not provide any new input, even though it seems like some of the conclusions are drawn from practice. However, no reference to a specific peer mentoring program is provided. The authors do not offer anything substantially different or innovative, as the paper is **a summary of peer mentoring based on some other canonical pieces**.

Swisher, E. E. (2013). Practical Considerations in Developing Peer Advising Programs. *The Mentor - An Academic Advising Journal*, 15. Retrieved from <https://dus.psu.edu/mentor/2013/03/considerations-peer-advising-programs/>

The article tries to present an **all-encompassing image of peer advising programs**, taking into account both its beneficial aspects, as well as the problematic ones. Author points out that peer advising does not replace academic advising, but rather complements it. As the **advantageous aspects of peer advising**, the author names a few: flexibility in delivery methods, peer-to-peer interaction, development of peer advisers, as well as financial benefits. The author also acknowledges that the peer advising as a concept brings certain **concerns** to the surface, such as: ethical and legal issues, time and energy required, and turnover of peer advisers.

In theoretical sense, the article provides a summarized and insightful overview of benefits and potential concerns resulting from peer advising programs. However, its content did not prove to be particularly valuable for the development of the CREATES toolkit.

Washburn, M. (2015). Peer Mentors Use Narrative Storytelling as an Advising Tool to Facilitate Major/Career Exploration with First-Year Students. *The Mentor - An Academic Advising Journal*, 17. Retrieved from <https://dus.psu.edu/mentor/2015/10/peer-mentors-storytelling-majorcareer-exploration/>

The author analyses **the implications and effectiveness of narrative storytelling** as a method used by senior students in the peer-advising process of first-year students. Moreover, the author explores how this method can be further developed and improved, through an extensive investigation of peer support programs. **Peer advising through narrative storytelling** is, in this case, focused on the choice of major and career exploration of first-year students. According to the author, sharing narratives is meant to be carried out in the classroom setting, whereas pairs of two mentors are presenting together. The optimal option is to pair mentors with different majors and very distinct experiences. The goal is to elicit that first-year students look up to the positive examples from their university, and at the same time understand that their feeling of confusion is normal. Moreover, these meetings even have a further effect, as they show the first-years that the student advisors can be trusted, and a great source of support and information.

The article provides a distinctive approach towards establishing confidence in peer mentors, as well as promoting student counselling within the groups of first-years. Furthermore, it offers suggestions with regard to mentor selection and training process that can also be used for the CREATES toolkit.

Young, D. G., & Keup, J. R. (2018). To Pay or Not to Pay: The Influence of Compensation as an External Reward on Learning Outcomes of Peer Leaders. *Journal of College Student Development*, 59(2), 159–176. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2018.0015>

This paper reports **the findings of a quantitative study** involving more than 4,000 peer leaders at more than 40 different educational institutions in the US. This article acknowledges the value and importance of introducing peer educators to leadership roles in the university setting, as they have proven to be much more accessible than the faculty and staff. The engaged students report increases in personal growth, factual knowledge, and soft skills through extensive peer leadership. Still, there are indicators coming from the peer leaders themselves and the authors in this field that a kind of compensation can instigate substantial improvements in the performance of peer mentors.

This study seeks to understand how different kinds of rewards and compensations affect the entire peer leader experience and performance. The data was collected through students self-reported survey, which is seen as a limitation of the obtained results. As reported, the most common type of compensation is financial compensation, followed by course credits. However, the majority of students still reported peer leadership experiences without any compensation. Five outcomes of peer leader experiences were taken into account: skills development, academic success, employability, institutional interaction and academic commitment. The results are surprising, as the financial compensation, as well as volunteering, did not show a particularly statistically significant positive relationship with any of the outcomes. On the other hand, **the most consistent positive impact on the outcomes was noted with the course credits as a means of compensation.**

This study is significant for the CREATES project, as it clearly shows that **financial compensation is not necessarily the right solution for solving the challenges of peer mentoring.** It also points out that future research should be aimed at better understanding how to make volunteering peer leader experiences increasingly enhancing for the relevant outcomes.