Promoting Wellness among College Students with Disabilities through Peer Mentorship

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PROPOSAL + PROGRAM GOALS

Proposal: A peer mentorship program to be housed under USC Disability Services and Programs (DSP) in which students with disabilities (SWDs) will be paired to participate in a mentor-like relationship to promote life balance skills and provide support through the school year.

Program Goals

❖ SWDs will improve life balance, including academia and life as a college student, and self-efficacy with the support of a peer mentor throughout the academic school year.

❖ Mentors, who are also SWDs, will gain leadership experience through the program as they establish relationships with SWDs, promote a balanced lifestyle, and collaborate with the peer mentorship team.

❖ The peer mentorship team will provide support for all participants in the program to ensure the appropriate support and assistance are provided to strengthen the effectiveness of the program.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

❖ **What are the needs of college students with disabilities?**

❖ **How can a mentorship program address these needs?**

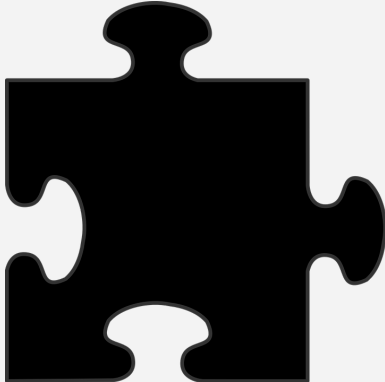❖ **What outcomes can we hope to gain from DSP student mentorship?**

RATIONALE: EVIDENCE FROM LITERATURE

Needs Assessment for SWDs

❖ Support for accessing and navigating campus services

❖ Support and resources for socioemotional needs

❖ Information and training for faculty, students, and staff

Best Practices Key Themes

❖ Social support and services

❖ Occupational therapy and/or related resources

❖ Faculty, student, and staff education on the needs of students with disabilities

RATIONALE: EVIDENCE FROM STAKEHOLDERS

Student Needs

Self-advocacy

Navigating DSP

Program Needs

Mentor training

Mentor support

Appropriate mentor/mentee matches

Accountability and consistency

Outreach

Outcomes

Improved self-advocacy

Ease of navigating DSP

Ease of college transition

Companionship & shared experiences

PROGRAM BREAKDOWN

Personnel Involved:

➢ DSP Staff, OT Students, Mentors, Mentees

Matching Process:

➢ Based on student interests and needs

Time Commitment:

➢ Fall Semester

- 1-2 hours of mentorship per week

- 1-hour biweekly mentor debriefs facilitated by DSP staff or OT FW students

➢ Spring Semester

- 1 hour of mentorship per week

- 1-hour monthly mentor debriefs facilitated by DSP staff or OT FW students

MENTOR TRAINING + DOCUMENTATION

Training

Documentation

- **Safety protocols**
- **Language**
- **Mentorship/leadership strategies**
- **Opportunity for OT**

- **Weekly progress notes**
- **Monthly goal setting**

SUSTAINABILITY

❖ **Funding**

➢ Funding source TBD

❖ **Collaboration with DSP**

➢ Currently assessing feasibility of our program with Student Affairs

❖ **Role of Occupational Therapy in Mentorship Program**

➢ Facilitate mentor trainings and debrief sessions

➢ Potential projects for future OT students: (1) create training modules, (2) create training videos, (3) design debrief session guidelines, (4) improve outreach and recruitment, (5) design surveys to measure program outcomes

CONCLUSION

By utilizing the criteria for a successful mentorship program, it is our hope that the needs of college students with disabilities will be met. We proposed our mentorship program to DSP at USC and are waiting on next steps in terms of funding and implementation. Further research is needed to measure the efficacy and effectiveness of the program once implemented.

NEXT STEPS

Determine feasibility to house mentorship program under DSP

Establish a partnership with a student-run organization to run the program

Create outreach and recruitment materials to recruit mentors and mentees

Create training presentations for the mentors

Develop guidelines for debrief sessions with mentors and mentees

Pilot the program and measure outcomes

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Stakeholders

J. Cannata, personal communication, June 26, 2020.

J. Colbert, personal communication, July 9, 2020.

J.H., personal communication, June 24, 2020.

T. Jalaba, personal communication, June 17, 2020.