FIRST-YEAR MINORITY STUDENT MENTORING PROGRAMS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF FIRST-YEAR MENTORING ON SECOND-YEAR RETENTION

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Abstract

The number of minority undergraduate students seeking the opportunity to attain higher education in the United States is ever growing. While options such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU’s) may appeal to some minority students, many decide to pursue their education at Predominately White Institutions (PWI’s). PWI’s are then faced with a scenario that calls for them to respond to the change in campus demographics. While these changing demographics may show a change numerically, there are other cultural and organizational factors that impact the success and progression of a PWI. This research study will investigate the viability of first-year mentoring programs geared toward the transition and retention of minority students. The researcher will also discuss the higher education environments that undergraduate minorities are exposed to and steps that a PWI can take, through the vessel of mentoring, to create an environment that is inclusive of ethnic minority students.

Keywords: ethnic minority students, mentoring, diversity, diversity initiatives, Predominately White Institutions (PWI’s), inclusion, engagement
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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to my father. He never knew the joy of participating in higher education, but understood the value of it. I miss you dearly and although I wanted to quit many times during this process, I always heard your voice telling me to keep going. I wish you were here with me in person to celebrate this accomplishment but I know you are here in spirit. I love you and miss you.
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Chapter I: Introduction

The concept of first-year mentoring programs and their impact on the retention of college students is still being assessed and while a clear definition may seem allusive, mentoring programs whether formal or informal have been implemented with the purpose of assisting students in their college transition. However, although minorities cannot be considered a homogenous group, several studies of college persistence have suggested that minority students, in general, encounter common experiences that are different than those of non-minority students (Eimers and Pike, 1997).

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, the total fall 2011 undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting institutions, by control and level of institution, level of enrollment, and race/ethnicity of student showed the following: 14.9% Black, 14.9% Hispanic, 5.6% Asian, .3% Pacific Islander, .9% American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 2.2% are two or more races (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). The percentage of American college students who are Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Black has been increasing. From 1976 to 2010, the percentage of Hispanic students rose from 3 percent to 13 percent, the percentage of Asian/Pacific Islander students rose from 2 percent to 6 percent, and the percentage of Black students rose from 9 percent to 14 percent. During the same period, the percentage of White students fell from 83 percent to 61 percent. Race/ethnicity is not reported for nonresident aliens, who made up 2 percent and 3 percent of total enrollment in 1976 and 2010, respectively. (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014). Seeing this increase in minority students in higher education, the engagement of these students has become increasingly important as Chan (2005) states, “while diversity was not originally considered with the context
of higher education and participating rates, the issue of diversity has emerged as important when
the goals of access and inclusion to higher education programs are articulated (p.132). This is a
paradigm that has impacted the operational philosophy of PWI’s as resources are not only
needed to solicit students who are part of these ethnic groups, but to sustain an environment
where these students feel welcomed.

Conversely, minority students are not graduating from colleges and universities anywhere
close to the rate that they are enrolling. According to the National Center for Education
Statistics (NCES), minority students who have attained either a bachelors or associates degree
beginning their postsecondary journey during the 2003-04 year and attaining their degree by
2009 show as the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Attained bachelor’s degree</th>
<th>Attained associates degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American Males</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American Females</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino Males</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino Females</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Males</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Females</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/More Than One Race Male</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/More Than One Race Female</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(NCES,2014)

To focus on student engagement, while more minorities are matriculating into higher
education, perception of their experience and the inclusiveness of the campus climate play a
major role in whether or not students decide to return to an institution for their sophomore year. Engberg (2004) articulates that, “a central problem facing higher education today is how to move from a status of desegregation, in which psychological effects threaten the success of underrepresented students, to a more integrated community, characterized by positive intergroup relations (p.474). The low six-year degree attainment rates for most minority groups could be an indicator that early student engagement can play a major factor in minority student retention and persistence. This study focuses on the impacts that first-year mentoring programs have on student first-year to second-year retention.

**Statement of the Problem**

Pewewardy and Frey (2002) found that there is “evidence that intolerance and exclusion are too often the experience of students of color—even on a campus that is ethnically and racially diverse” (p.89). While creating a culturally diverse campus through the recruitment of minorities has become a well-intentioned effort by many institutions, “the best hope for institutional change lies in the possibility that individual members of a campus community will transfer their learning to their contexts within the institution” (Bensimon, 2004). In order for colleges and universities to truly provide an environment that embraces diversity and inclusion, development of a sustainable first-year mentoring program for minority students is paramount to building a bridge as a segue between existing members of a college or university and the first-year minority students who are experiencing those challenges which come with transitioning to an environment that may seem unfamiliar and somewhat intimidating.
First-year minority student retention can be impacted by the student’s ability, or inability, to effectively transition to a Predominately White Institution. Fischer (2007) states that the fact that minorities were more inclined to perceive a negative racial climate and that this perception had a negative impact on college satisfaction and increased the likelihood of leaving school suggests that this factor should be of real concern to campuses hoping to retain these students (p.148). Some institutions are trying to find creative ways of addressing minority student retention issues. For example, there are instances where institutions figure if they merely offer courses on diversity, hire a few faculty of color, assign these faculty to cover committee assignments, work with students of color, serve as role models, and offer helpful suggestions on how to be a more user-friendly institution to all students, including the ones of color (Brayboy, 2003). This study researches the impact that first-year minority student mentoring programs have on the first to second-year retention of these students at a Predominately White Institution (PWI).

Significance of Research Problem

Researchers who have examined minority student retention focused their studies on the environmental challenges that these students have faced in their respective college experiences. Scholars such as Maldonado and Kuh discuss topics regarding student stressors and student engagement. Kuh et. al (2008) conducted a study to determine the relationships between key student behaviors and institutional practices and conditions that foster student success (p.542). Denson and Chang (2009) articulate that, “there are positive benefits students accrue by being in an environment where other students have higher levels of engagement with racial diversity, either through curricular activities or cross-racial interaction” (p.341). In reviewing the 2013
National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the focus of a supportive environment was highlighted and identified as a “Supportive Environment” Engagement Indicator (2013). This indicator assesses student perceptions of how much their institution emphasized various programs and activities that support student learning and persistence (NSSE, 2013). A Supportive Environment was also identified by NSSE (2013) as a high-impact practice (HIP) for first-year students (p.20). The report also shows that first-year students who participated in at least one HIP and seniors who participated in at least two reported greater gains in their knowledge, skills, and personal development, were more satisfied with their entire educational experience, and were more likely to return to the same institution if they were to start all over again (NSSE, 2013). This study aimed to examine student engagement through the lens of mentoring as an institutional practice in order to examine minority student first-year to second-year retention.

Positionality Statement

Lewis, Chesler & Forman (2000) state that, “in the early to mid-1990’s, greater attention was devoted to planning for and debating the merits of diversity and multiculturalism” (p. 74). My interest in this study is sparked by my disciplinary background and the current work that I do in higher education. I am a diversity educator and administrator for a small non-profit college in south central Pennsylvania. I have had the opportunity to not only teach diversity courses but also implement diversity programming on a Predominately White campus.

While our campus is becoming more diverse, first-year students of color are finding their transition to my institution challenging. During the process of researching this topic to accumulate the data that formulates the foundation for my dissertation, I find that it is important
to manage my personal feelings and professional initiatives. In this, the concept of being an effective scholar-practitioner, whose research will provide a design for other diversity administrators, is the key in order to fully engage my subject matter while providing research that is salient. Jenlink (2005) states that “the scholar-practitioner sees the context in which s/he works as complex and unpredictable, dynamic in its nature and social actions,” (p.5) and this point absolutely resonates with me as I feel my research should not only align with my career goals, but how I intend to impact the educational landscape in my respective discipline. This study will assist in finding whether or not first-year minority student mentoring programs serve as a viable initiative to retain minority students from their first to their second year.

Definitions

**Minority students:** African American, Hispanic/Latino American, Asian/Pacific Islander American, and Native/Eskimo/Inuit American

**First-year mentoring programs:** Programs that aid in the academic and social transition and development of first year students

**Retention:** For the purpose of the study, the number of students that attend the same institution from freshman to sophomore year

**Student Success:** Students who are in good academic and social standing with the institution
Research question(s)

- **How important are first-year minority mentoring programs in students’ decisions to return to the same institution for a second-year of study?**
  - How are first-year minority students’ perceptions of their institution impacted by the mentor/mentee relationship?

Theoretical Framework

*Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) Model*

The Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) model provides an alternative theoretical approach to student engagement as it relates to the institutional experiences of minority students. According to the creator, Dr. Samuel Museus, the CECE model (See figure 1 below) posits that a variety of external influences (i.e., finances, employment, family influences) shape individual influences (i.e., sense of belonging, academic dispositions, and academic performance) and success among racially diverse college student populations (Museus, 2014). Through a more granular lens, the model views external influences and pre-college inputs as major impacts on minority student persistence at higher education institutions. Dr. Museus’ research regarding minority student engagement follows nine elements as they relate to minority student campus engagement. This theoretical model (1) takes critiques of Tinto’s theory into account, (2) provides an alternative theoretical explanatory model for understanding diverse students’ success that is independent of Tinto’s theory, (3) is derived from existing research on both White students and students of color in college, and (4) offers a theoretical model that can be tested for its applicability to racially diverse college student populations, examined for its...
Figure 1. The Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) Model of College Success

Culturally Engaging Campus Environments
(Epistemological Connections, Transformational Connections, Collectivist Orientation, Cultural Validation, Common Ground, Humanized Educational Experience, Proactive Philosophies, Holistic Support, Climate for Cross-Cultural Engagement)

Individual Influences

Pre-College Inputs
(Demographics, Initial Academic Dispositions, Academic Preparation)

Sense of Belonging

Academic Dispositions
(Academic Self-Efficacy, Academic Motivation, Intent to Persist)

Academic Performance

College Success Outcomes
(Persistence and Degree Completion)

External Influences
(Financial Influences, Employment Influences, Family Influences)
power to explain college success, and (in) validated (Museus, 2014). The nine elements of the CECE model include:

- **Epistemological Cultural Connections**-The CECE Model suggests that campuses that provide opportunities for students to develop, maintain, and strengthen *epistemological cultural connections* to their home communities can positively influence their experiences and success.

- **Transformational Cultural Connections**-The CECE Model posits that *transformational cultural connections* can positively influence the experiences and outcomes of racially diverse populations.

- **Collective Cultural Orientations**-The CECE Model suggests the environments with more *collective cultural orientations*, in contrast to more individualistic ones, are more conducive to positive college experiences and success among racially diverse students.

- **Cultural Validation**-The CECE Model posits that *cultural validation* is positively associated with success.

- **Common Ground**-The CECE Model postulates that the extent to which undergraduates are able to connect with faculty, staff, and peers with whom they share common ground is positively related to their success in college.

- **Humanized Educational Experience**-The CECE Model posits that the extent to which campuses provide a *humanized educational experience* is positively related to college experiences and success.
• **Proactive Philosophies**- The CECE Model suggests that the extent to which *proactive philosophies* exist on college campuses can partially determine the likelihood of success among racially diverse student populations on those campuses.

• **Holistic Support**- The CECE Model refers to the extent to which students have access to faculty or staff member that they are confident will provide the information they needed, offer the help that they seek, or connect them with the information or support that they require.

• **Cultures for Cross-Cultural Engagement**- The CECE Model suggests that *climates for cross-cultural engagement* positively influence success among racially diverse student populations (Musues, 2014).

The aim is to hone in on minority student experiences while acknowledging that while the study is focusing on a specific group of students, we must also maintain that they are a part of the complete student body and there may be experiences that occur absent the student’s race. When students are faced with practices that hinder them from being socially integrated or feeling fully supported by their institutions, some students may withdraw into themselves or share their feelings with family, friends or peers (Robinson, 1999). This study concludes that mentoring programs geared toward first-year minority students assist in the social integration of minority students, therefore having a direct impact on minority student retention at colleges and universities.
Chapter II: Literature Review

When students are faced with practices that hinder them from being socially integrated or feeling fully supported by the institution, some students may withdraw into themselves or share their feelings with family, friends, or peers (Robinson, 1999). To combat some of those early feelings regarding a college experience, mentoring programs have been seen as a means of being major vessels of the transition, retention and success of minority students. The number of minority students attending Predominately White Institutions has increased tremendously over the last two decades, and according to the National Center for Education Statistics whereas of the Fall of 2010 almost forty-percent (38.5%) of minority students were enrolled in Predominately White degree-granting institutions. The ethnic composition of these students include: Black/African-American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, two or more races, and non-resident alien. With this increase in minority populations, institutions are faced with the challenge of making sure that these students transition successfully into their institutions and are engaged during their time there as research shows that, “for all of the minority groups, those who are more involved in formal social activities are significantly less likely to leave” (Fischer, 2007). While admissions representatives put forward their best face when trying to recruit minorities, with regard to academics and campus resources, scholars articulate that, “the way minority students adjust to campus life is also influenced by structural and environmental aspect of the campus” (Fischer, 2007), meaning that minority students are influenced by the campus climate and their ability to thrive in said climate.
Context of the Review

This review also takes a look at how mentoring programs for undergraduate minority students lead to success. In this, the definition of minority groups is centered on ethnic minorities, which for this study include students who are: Black/African-American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaska Native. Mentoring programs are defined as the relationship between a mentor and a mentee/protégé within a higher education structure. Mentoring consists of activities and interactions that may be related to work, skill acquisition, and a social or emotional aspect of the mentor or protégé. Through this lens the discussion of mentoring programs for minority students at Predominately White Institutions provides the reader with the opportunity to review how these programs provide minority students an opportunity to develop while being in potentially non-inclusive environments (Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001).

Discovery Argument

There are variations of the definition for mentoring that are lobbed from scholar to scholar. In this, Jacobi (1991) laments that, “of major concern is the absence of a widely accepted operational definition of mentoring” (p.505). To avoid ambiguity the review discusses mentoring in the context where undergraduate mentoring programs serve as a tool or vessel to engage students who may be experiencing difficulty transitioning into college life or are looking for another avenue to enhance their level of engagement. Some institutions identify their audiences based on what they may deem to be at-risk where, “students have even less connection to the academic community and neither the experience nor the confidence to attempt to mimic its conventions” (Maloney, 2003). These identifiers include but are not limited to race, gender,
socio-economic status, academic standing or class status. Once identified, an institution will select or solicit the student to be a part of a mentoring program, which could be formal or informal, where the student is matched with a mentor who will provide them development assistance. As Laden (1999) further describes the relationship, many mentoring programs refer to the individual being mentored as a mentee, some use the term protégé, and still others use the terms interchangeably. Furthermore, it is important to note that a mentoring relationship is one that is agreed to by the two individuals who enter into the relationship by mutual choice (p.58).

For the sake of this study, the focus on the mentorship structure to address minority students who are suffering from an overall disengagement from their respective campuses.

The marriage between mentoring and diversity cannot be understated or undervalued when it comes to supporting an increasingly diverse population on a college campus. In a study conducted by Davidson and Foster-Johnson (2001), researchers found that, “mentoring and diversity ally focused on achievement or acquisition of knowledge between the mentor and the protégé” (p.550). The relationship of diversity and mentoring focuses on the understanding that both the mentor and protégé, or mentee, in this process must communicate and share experiences so that there is an understanding of one another’s culture and how that will impact the mentoring relationship. In this it is believed that mentoring consists of three broad components: emotional and psychological support, direct assistance with career and professional development, and role modeling (Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001). Given the expectations and engagement in one another’s life, it is imperative to establish a solid foundation free of challenges to mentor/protégé diversity, that will allow for a fluid and productive relationship that will lead to the effective transition and retention of the first-year minority student.
Advocacy Argument

Kartje (1996) describes mentoring as a “valuing, transforming relationship in which the mentor is actively invested in and aware of the responsibilities he or she assumes for shaping the protégé’s knowledge, perceptions, and behaviors” (p.114). Mentoring programs aimed at cultivating promising minority students at Predominately White Institutions provide an environment that shows the institution is serious about all student success and take the time to identify areas where deficiencies exist, and proactively address those deficiencies. These programs also communicate that the institution is serious about the diversity on its campus and is looking for effective ways to create an inclusive environment for students who may already be experiencing a level of anxiety not because they are at a geographic location that is foreign to them but because the demographics of the institution do not parallel the socialization experiences that they find comfortable. This shows an institution’s ability to acknowledged that, “through interactions in the social and academic realms, students either reaffirm or reevaluate their initial goals and commitments” (Fischer, 2007), especially as it relates to their choice in institution.

In looking at the major factors that impact minority student anxiety in transitioning to a PWI, the overarching theme deals with minority stressors regarding their ability and performance in an institution of higher education. Smedley, Myers & Harrell’s (1993) research on Minority Status Stresses (MSS) lead to five factors they said impacted minority student performance at PWI’s. These included: social-climate stresses, interracial stresses, racism and discrimination stresses, within-group stresses and achievement stresses. The most telling result from their research was that minority students’ status-related pressures are experienced as heightened concerns over their academic preparedness, questions about their legitimacy as students at the
university, perceptions of negative expectations from White peers and from the faculty concerns over parental/family expectations and lack of understanding of the peculiar demands of attending a highly competitive university. Minority students’ ability to get acclimated to the culture and achieve in a setting where they feel like they are equals ultimately becomes the telling tale of minority student success.

*The Mentoring Structure*

Mentoring programs are developed with the best intentions and are created with the basic philosophical belief of reaching the respective audience that an institution seeks to engage. Haring (1999) gives a basic philosophic overall of a mentoring program where:

a. There is a notion that mentoring is “good” as assigned mentors are generally helpful.

b. An assumption that the mentor is in a superior position within the organization and is motivated to assist an at-risk protégé who needs the mentor’s help to be successful.

c. The belief that mentors and protégés can be matched to capture the chemistry and benefits of naturally occurring mentoring relationships that develop spontaneously outside of formal mentoring programs.

d. The assumption that programmatic support for critical functions can be assigned to a staff member, perhaps with some clerical support (p.6).

Through this basic belief expectations are set as to what a mentor and mentee should expect from the relationship. Haring (1999) also goes on to discuss that this philosophy can be enhanced by designing through a conceptual base by (a) building on a strong and explicit definition of mentoring, (b) addressing a myriad of mentoring roles that have been identified in the literature,
and (c) building on an articulated model of mentoring that is consistent with the goals of the program (p.6).

While the above structure provides a preliminary shell for how mentoring programs can be established, in some cases taking that structure to a micro level in order to effectively meet the needs of a specific student population is definitely needed. Obler et.al conducted a study at Brooklyn College on academically deficient college freshman that an effective mentoring program consisted of some form of counseling, classroom instruction and peer mentoring. This specific structure for the college found that the integrations of student services with classroom instruction appears to be a successful model for absorbing under prepared high school students into college (Obler et.al, 1977).

Faculty/Administrative Mentor Role

In order to create and sustain a strong student mentoring program, a faculty or administrative mentor has to be involved in the peer mentor relationship for it to get the necessary support that will result in a healthy environment for the first-year mentee. Given the demographics of many PWI’s who are looking to diversify their campuses, they may be situations where the faculty or administrator may be of a different race or ethnicity than the mentee or even the peer mentor. However, this should not create an impediment to the success of the mentoring program. In a study conducted by Cole (2007), he found that minority students were more likely than their White peers to report successful interactions across racial lines and participating in diversity-related functions; while for many White students at PWIs, interracial
interactions could be avoided (p.274). This is encouraging for institutions looking to utilize a mentoring program as a means of retaining its minority students.

Since many minority students entering higher education environments may find themselves in a demographic territory that is unfamiliar to them, how the faculty/administrative mentor applies their role could enhance or undermine the mentoring relationship. Minority students will often have expectations of faculty/administrative mentors being student-centered and focused on their development as success, at least initially. In a study done by Guiffrida (2005) on the advising of African-American undergraduate students, he found that African-American students expected their faculty advisors to provide advice in selecting courses and in planning programs of study, guidance that, overall, those students described as lacking in their relationships with faculty. However, student-centered faculty took a much more holistic approach to their career advising that went beyond simply giving students advice regarding course selections; instead, they invested time, patiently listening to students to understand their professional fears, dreams, and goals (p.708). While this study focused on the advising relationship, it really examined what came to be called “other-mothering” by faculty. The expectations of other-mothering from students as far as the level of engagement included students expecting their advisors to not only to provide them with academic support, but with student life support that included emotional and psychosocial development. Guiffrida (2005) states that, “some students in this study arrived expecting that faculty would provide them with extensive academic, career, and personal advising; that they would advocate for them at the university and at home; and that they would push them to excel in their classes” (p.717). While this level of engagement may seem unrealistic for a faculty/administrative advisor to take on,
given the diverse cultural backgrounds of students entering higher education and the potentially
diverse familial structures of these students, there may be a need for mentors to see their role
almost in a paternal sense in order to assist with the transition of first-year minority students.

In the mentoring relationship, the role of the mentor is key in cultivating minority
students at Predominately White Institutions. Mentors can come in the form of a faculty member
mentor relationship or student-peer mentor relationship. In an instance where a faculty member
decides to take up the mantle of mentor, a study done by the American Association of University
Professors (1991) discusses the following ways that faculty can engage in student mentoring
relationship:

a. In large and commuter institutions, where many minority undergraduates are
enrolled, faculty need to offer a level of individual academic encouragement,
guidance, and support not normally found; faculty should promote office visits,
facilitate and assist group study sessions, participate in workshops or laboratories,
involve students in their research, participate in summer study and research
programs, and work with student organizations to design peer mentoring and
group support networks.

b. In small group settings and classes, faculty should provide minority students the
opportunity to pursue studies and activities which reflect and enhance the
dialectic between the academic culture and their own.
c. Faculty should identify minority students with whom they can develop sustained relationships, including directing these students to other faculty colleagues for support.

d. In institutions relying on formal programs to provide the advising, instructions service, extracurricular academic culture, counseling and career opportunities offered by faculty members in the past, faculty should work to link these programs to their academic disciplines, to demonstrate a personal academic commitment and to provide examples of benefits or opportunities accrued from academic experiences.

e. Faculty should encourage minority students to consider graduate work.

These types of efforts by faculty can provide minority students with the support they need to thrive in a higher education environment.

With regard to student peer-mentors for minority students, Good, Halpin & Halpin (2000) conducted a study of a minority engineering program mentors and mentees which examined the success of peer-mentor relationships. In this study they found that both mentees and mentors experienced academic growth stating that, “the mentors were motivated to succeed academically by refining their own study habits and problem solving techniques and honing their own cognitive skills in order to illustrate effective strategies to their mentees” (Good, Halpin & Halpin, 2000). There was also an interpersonal gain from the relationship as mentors and mentees sought out opportunities to network with one another. These factors also lead to greater
Mentor retention as a large percentage of the mentors in the program remained in the engineering discipline.

*Mentoring Program Expectations*

For minority students, their challenges to transitioning and succeeding in a higher education environment where, “the period of transition to university represents a separation from patterns and norms associated with previous experiences (Milem and Berger 1997, in Ramsay & Jones & Barker, 2007), lays the foundation for mentoring program expectations. Also, most minority students who are transitioning to a PWI are most likely unfamiliar with the heterogeneous institutional environments creating a basis for anxious feelings that “may include moving from an educational setting where theirs is the majority culture to one in which they are a small percentage of the institution’s population and their culture is poorly understood or accepted (Haring, 1999). This can be disarming to a minority student who is not only focusing on being academically successfully but also focusing on how to assimilate into an institutional culture that may initially appear to be socially daunting. The role of the mentor in making this cultural shift palatable is the grand scheme of the transition. In a study done by Jordan-Zachary (2004), a retired professor who remains anonymous provided five guidelines that would be beneficial for a mentor participating in a program as described above (p.876). These guidelines include:

a. Mentoring is a multidimensional endeavor. It is not effective if it does not address the whole person. One cannot start with academics alone; you must address the whole person.
b. Must be an equal opportunity process. One has to be open to diverse populations—across genders and races.

c. Find ways to be supportive, motivational and confidence building of students while at the same time being candid and hones in the assessment of the student’s potential

d. Advise and counsel, but do not demand.

e. Respect the mentee as a peer in the academic process. “[One] can’t succeed unless the person trying to move moves” (Jordan-Zachary, 2004).

These guidelines provide a solid foundation in how to genuinely engage minority students who have high expectations of a mentoring program and value the impact the relationship has on their academic future.

Tierney (1999) acknowledges that “A panoply of services at colleges and universities has been aimed at increasing retention of all students, and in particular, students of color” (p.88) and for most mentoring programs this is usually the premise for the development of mentoring programs for minorities. While retention is often equated with success, there are other factors that actually determine success for minority students at Predominately White Institutions especially in instances, “when students are faced with practices that hinder them from being socially integrated or feeling fully supported by their institutions, some students may withdraw into themselves or share their feelings with family, friends or peers (Robinson, 1999).

Developing mentoring programs that satiate retention numbers, academic achievement and student-life engagement is the best recipe for defining the success of minority mentoring programs. While these programs may not be able to change institutional culture, they will at
least provide students with a safe space to matriculate through their higher education students and attain a college degree.

**Student Affairs Role in Institutional Diversity Initiatives**

The major emphasis of a student affairs professional’s career is to ensure the development of all students but in the instance where a PWI is experiencing an increase in the number of ethnic minorities, “student affairs professionals also carry most of the responsibility for adapting the social environment to lessen the impact of cultural isolation and limit the negative effects of racism” (Richardson and Skinner, 1990). This creates a situation where a delicate balance is needed to ensure that the environment outside of the classroom is one that is educationally developmental but also socially engaging and “students learn how to work effectively with others and how to participate actively and contribute to a democratic society” (Umbach and Kuh, 2006). From this perspective if a PWI has the resources to create an office with a mission to engage and support ethnic minorities, then it provides an easier path to implementing diversity initiatives under the student affairs umbrella. If a PWI does not have the resources to create one specific office, then the student affairs division has to progress creative programmatic ways of engaging ethnic minorities and White students alike through the use of other offices, for example, through a residence life office and the vessel of a living/learning community. These programs should focus on student development with the intent of increasing interaction among students as Denson and Chang (2009) found that, “students who attended institutions where students as a whole were more engaged with diversity tended to also report higher levels of self-change in knowledge of and ability to get along with people of different races or cultures, independent of their own personal involvements and interactions” (p.339).
Along with student affairs specific programming, it is also effective for student affairs professionals to partner with their faculty counterparts in an effort to provide a collaborative learning environment related to diversity. With regard to collaborative institutional efforts, Brayboy (2003) believes that, “unless we are committed—as unified faculty and administration—to changing the institution structure, implementation will merely maintain and strengthen the status quo that marginalizes diversity” (p.86), so showing institutional solidarity in engaging ethnic minorities can provide systematic support for these diversity initiatives. This definitely speaks to the need for student affairs to have an intimate relationship with the formal mentoring program as a means of strategically supporting students as well as assessing the effectiveness of these types of programs on the retention of minority students as it relates to their transition to the respective institution.

**A Snapshot of First-Year Mentoring and Minority Students**

One example of successful first-year mentoring comes out of the Pennsylvania ACT 101 program, executed through West Chester University’s Academic Development Program. The Academic Development Program is a special admissions program for students that do not meet current admissions criteria but still show the potential to succeed in college (West Chester University of PA, 2014). What makes the Academic Development Program unique is the mentoring program structure in place to assist these students during their first-year of college. The peer mentoring structure includes peer assistants and peer groups who begin their relationship with the students during a summer program and then continue their relationship through the first-year. Peer Assistants serve as mentors, role models, and resident assistants to students and form links between the students, the Academic Development Program, and other
resources within the University (West Chester University of Pa, 2014). Under their mentoring descriptions, the peer assistant and group responsibilities include:

Peer Assistants

- Are undergraduate student leaders
- Are Mentors & Role Models
- Live with students in the residence hall
- Facilitate events and activities
- Help students acclimate to campus life

Peer Groups

- Live in close proximity to their Peer Assistant and Peer Group members in the residence hall
- Meet weekly as a group to discuss academic, social, and personal progress
- Meet individually with their Peer Assistant to discuss academic, social, and personal progress
- Participate in events and activities as a group or within the larger ADP class (West Chester University of PA, 2014).

While this program is not designated specifically for minority students, there are minority students participants and the peer assistant/peer group structure seems to provide a solid foundation for students during their first-year of college.

An Example of Minority Success Through Mentoring

In meeting the needs of minority students, “mentoring must be personally valued and personally espoused; it cannot be dictated or prescribed” (Crawford & Smith, 2005), as most minority students come from environments where personal relationships, especially when it comes to meeting developmental needs, are held in high regard and require a high level of trust. Mentoring programs at PWI’s have to come across as being stable and genuine in order to receive the level of engagement from students needed to meet the overall goals of the program.
Some minority students engage the environment at a PWI with a sense of hesitancy because of prior incidents. As Suarez-Balcazar et. al., (2003) state, “these types of incidents include differential treatment and stereotyping by fellow students, faculty members, campus policy, teaching assistance, administrators, and staff” (p.428). These types of situations can outright ruin a higher education experience for a minority student, leaving them to either suffer what they may deem as a miserable existence or push them to move on to another institution with an appealing environment.

In developing a minority student mentoring program, it is essential for the mentoring program to be grounded on a solid foundation that is student focused. The mentoring program should also clearly define who they deem as a minority and to do this effectively, a school must first understand who its students are, what they are prepared to do academically, and what they expect of the institution and themselves (Kuh et. al., 2008). Knowing what student audience actually needs mentoring will help an institution better address the needs of that audience. To parallel there is also research that exists showing that students would be receptive to mentoring programs. A study done by Lee (1999) on African-American students who were part of The North Carolina State University-University Transition Program (UTP) indicated that having a mentor would be a tremendous help to their academic and professional development (p.36). While institutions can identify students they feel may need mentoring, it is also valuable to know that these students are open to being part of a mentoring program.

Upon review of the literature, there was one distinct program that showed the need and impact that a mentoring program can have on undergraduate minority students. Laden (1999)
conducted a quantitative study on California’s Puente Project, which is a national award-winning program that for more than 25 years has improved the college-going rate of tens of thousands of California’s educationally-underrepresented students. Its mission is to increase the number of educationally-disadvantaged students who enroll in four-year colleges and universities, earn college degrees and return to the community as mentors and leaders to future generations. Felix Galaviz and Patricia McGrath, both at Chabot College in Hayward, found that there was a low rate of achievement among their Mexican-American and Latino Students so the program is interdisciplinary in its approach was created with writing, counseling and mentoring components to provide a foundational learning structure. They also found that students were avoiding academic counseling, students were not enrolling in college-level writing courses, and students were the first in their families to attend college (Puente Project, 2012).

According to Laden (1999) the students in the Puente Project were labeled as non-traditional, meaning that they were more likely to be first-generation college students, academically underprepared, older, female, racially and ethnically diverse, disabled and from low-income households (p.55). Laden shares that the Puente Project was created in the shadow of what Van Maanen (1984, in Laden 1999) calls celebratory socialization, which creates a welcoming and confirming approach that eases the transition of newcomers to the new setting and builds on preserving their heterogeneity (p.60). This philosophy helps to student transition into the college setting with a feeling value and ownership as they are encouraged to not assimilate to the institutional culture but to add value to it. This philosophy also operates in a way that builds student self-esteem, leading to increased opportunity for success in the college environment. The key that also makes the Puente Project exceptional is the central concept of the
bridging between the cultural context of the students and the academic environments of the Puente Project and the larger organization as a whole (Laden, 1999).

The mentoring component in the Puente Project is on a volunteer basis and mentors and protégés meet regularly which can mean scheduled one on one’s or attending campus events together. Mentors are expected to sign on for a least one academic year and counselors facilitate the mentor/protégé relationship, providing genuine opportunities for the mentor and protégé to get to know one another. At the time that the research was completed, Laden (1999) found that the program had a ninety-seven percent retention rate, forty-eight percent of the students transferred to one of the eight University of California campuses (p.68). The program continues to grow and since the study has expanded into Texas. The program also boasts an impressive eighty-one percent increase between Fall 2008 Fall 2009 in college persistence rates of all California Community College students (Puente Project, 2012). This program not only identified the need for mentorship for their students but is showing the impact that mentoring programs can have to minority college student matriculation and success.

*Mentoring and the Impact on Minority Student Retention*

While mentoring is a good asset to higher education institutions that wish to engage their students through the use of faculty/administrative relationships as well as peer-to-peer student relationships; one of the goals, if not the main goal, of mentoring programs is to increase the retention of the students participating in the program. The relationship must be such that the student is able to discuss problems and ask questions without fear, and not hesitate to take the initiative to meet with the mentor whenever the student is in need; the student also must be receptive to the mentor's recommendations (Abdullahi, 1992). This will help in the development
of the student, at the institution, and provide a level of growth where the student will feel comfortable pursuing a higher education degree at that particular institution. When it comes to minority student retention Abdullahi (1992) states that, “the issues of recruitment and mentoring of minority students are very complex” (p.310), calling for a need for institutions to have a salient plan in order to make sure these students can be kept. Abdullahi (1992) outlines that institutions should develop a mentoring structure underwritten by support services in order to aid in the retention of minority students with the understanding that:

1. Faculty and staff of the school must be encouraged to be more sensitive to the needs of minority students;
2. Additional minority faculty members should be added to the faculty;
3. General support services such as counseling, guidance, and tutoring should be available to assist in the transition to and successful completion of their studies (p.309).

Having a mentoring program for minority students can seem to positively impact institutional retention of these students if the proper support services are in place to assist with the transition and progression of their college careers.

**Summation**

It is no secret that minority students face a host of challenges in attending a Predominately White Institutions where they find themselves seeking a holistic college experience potentially carrying a lifetime of negative experiences, including teacher and peer expectations for their failure, intergroup conflicts, racist policies and practices of school districts,
and culturally insensitive curricula in attempting to be academically successful while being engaged in student-life experiences. Some of these students enter their institutions carrying with them similar experiences as noted by Freeman (1999) in researching high-achieving African-American students. He discovered that, “regardless of how they began, students found the relationships important to their initial adjustment to their institution, in their stay there, and in their transition from their institution to graduate school or to the work environment” (p.20), and articulated that minority students put great emphasis on their relationships, hence the impact that mentoring programs have on minority students. Providing these students with a faculty member or a peer-mentor, in a structured relationship, has been shown to lead not only to academic success but student success in higher education environments.

In researching this topic, I found that there was a limited amount of information that discussed overall mentoring programs for minority students as a standalone positive initiative and more information on mentoring as a response to hostile educational environments where minorities were trying to find their path and mentoring programs laid that path for them. While I see that reactive programming fulfill a need, in researching this topic, I thought I would have found the initiative for minority-mentoring programs to be the creation of inclusive environments for ever-growing diverse campus populations. It would seem that in an ever expanding higher education landscape, that is becoming globally competitive, the notion of proactive minority mentoring programs could open a level of engagement for minority students that directly impacts retention, therefore impacting the bottom line. Also, information regarding the use of minority alumni to supplement the efforts of a minority student mentoring program was as well limited.
There are other areas related to first-year minority mentoring programs that can be investigated further. First, while there is a surplus of information regarding Black and Hispanic students, there is a limited amount of research regarding first-year minority student mentoring programs for Asian/Pacific Islanders or American Indian/Alaska Native. Actually, during the review of the literature, mentoring programs for the American Indian/Alaska Native population seemed to be lacking completely. Second, there was some literature that discussed post-secondary mentoring in the context of minority students seeking a masters or Ph.D. level. This research viewed the need for a mentor at the level given the rigor and the small number of minorities seeking those types of degrees. There was also literature on lateral mentoring for the sake of either growing minority professionals in a certain area or retaining them. Lastly, there was literature focused on minority student mentoring programs specifically in the science, technology, engineering and medical (STEM) fields. There is also room for growth in the discussion of assessing minority student mentoring programs. While institutions can take pride in their ability to retain minority students through the use of mentoring programs, measuring things such as mentor competency and alumni engagement could also be key indicators in examining the success of the programs.

Chapter III: Methodology

For this study I investigated of first-year minority mentoring programs and their impact on second-year retention through the use of an ethnographic method. As stated above the research questions are:
• How important are first-year minority mentoring programs in students’ decisions to return to the same institution for a second-year of study?

  o How are first-year minority students’ perceptions of their institution impacted by the mentor/mentee relationship?

Studying ethnic minority students in a mentoring program using ethnography is appropriate if the needs are to describe how a cultural group works and to explore the beliefs, language, behaviors and issues such as power, resistance, and dominance (Creswell, 2007). Also, use of the ethnographic approach in this study allowed for the examination of the participants, which included certain ethnic groups, experiences in a mentoring program geared towards minorities and how their experiences in the program impacted their decision to return to their institution. Creswell (2007) states that in using an ethnography to study a group, “typically, this group is one that has been together for an extended period of time, so that their shared language, patterns of behavior, and attitudes have merged into a discernable pattern” (p.71). While these participants may not share a language, their behavior patterns and attitudes may be shaped through their participation in this program, impacting their decision to return. Creswell (2007) also states that, “this may also be a group that has been marginalized by society” (p.71), which would fit for minority students attending a Predominately White Institution.

Research Design

For the purpose of the study a qualitative research design was used. Heyink and Tymstra (1993) state that, “when using qualitative research one enters the periphery of science: one has to make due with ‘soft’ date and, inevitably, it will be difficult to prevent vagueness in the
descriptions of one’s findings (p.291). However, the reason the qualitative research design was used to capture the experiences of the first-year minority student and how their experience in the mentoring programs impacted their decision to return to the same institution for a second year and given the specificity of the topic, there is doubt that the findings will be vague. Heyink and Tymstra (1993) map out the use of qualitative research data techniques by the following:

1. In the first stage of research of qualitative techniques are often applied in order to explore the subject of research: variables are identified, provisional hypotheses formulated.

2. Qualitative research is pre-eminently appropriate if one is interested in the respondents’ own interpretation and wording with respect to their behavior, their motives, emotions and experiences in the past and the present.

3. Qualitative interviews are also appropriate, in the case of delicate topics or situations that are very emotional for the respondent.

4. Qualitative research is also indicated when a research group is so small, that quantification does not make sense.

5. Practical considerations too may lead to the preference for qualitative research methods.

(p.301)

According to Creswell (2007), as it relates to qualitative research, “researchers bring their own worldviews, paradigms, or sets of belief to the research project, and these inform the conduct and writing of the qualitative study” (p.15). Butin (2010) states that when well done, a dissertation will have allowed one to practice developing a clear and answerable question, research in-depth the literature available, analyze and apply such literature, conduct and analyze empirical research, and, ultimately, draw supportable and relevant conclusions from such
research—all on a single, specific topic (p.41). Given the research topic and the need to truly study the experiences of the participants, pursuing a qualitative study appeared to be the best approach in producing a thorough study.

Research Tradition

After further review of this project, I decided to pursue an ethnographic design and more specifically an ethnographic case study. Per Creswell (2012) an ethnographic case study is, “a case analysis of a person, event, activity, or process set within a cultural perspective” (p.464). The research approach for this study was an ethnography. "Ethnography" literally means "writing about the nations"; "graphy" from the Greek verb "to write" and "ethno" from the Greek noun ethnos, usually translated in an English dictionary as "nation" or "tribe" or "people." A more refined definition of ethnos is found in Liddell and Scott's Greek Lexicon: A number of people accustomed to live together, a company, a body of men (Erickson, 1984). An ethnography studies a cultural group and involves extended observations of the group, most often through participant observation, in which the researcher is immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people and observes and interviews the group participants (Creswell, 2007). This study attempted to extract data related to the experiences of the participants in a first-year mentoring program for minority students and how their experiences in the program impacted their decision to return to their institution after their first year; and an ethnography is appropriate if the needs are to describe how a cultural group works and to explore the beliefs, language, behaviors and issues such as power, resistance, and dominance (Creswell, 2007). Since this group was made up of first-year students, all first-year students who fall under one of the aforementioned
minority groups, they were to be looked at as a culture sharing group since the mentoring program is exclusively for minority students.

Role of the Researcher

Given the nature of studying student retention, an ethnography allows for cultural immersion into the experiences of these students, providing the opportunity to study the actual impact mentoring programs have on minority student retention. According to Wilson (1977), the qualitative researcher learns of some of these perspectives by hearing participants express them in the flow of events. To learn of others, the researcher must ask the participants questions and become acquainted with "emic" (actor-relevant) categories that are rarely expressed (p.252).

Participants

According to Creswell (2007), “ethnographers rely on their judgment to select members of the subculture or unit based on their research questions” (p.128) and the participants of this study will included minority students that participated in the institution’s first-year mentoring program. One of the critical decisions in a qualitative study is whom or what to include in the sample-whom to interview, whom to observe, what texts to analyze (Kuper et.al., 2008). For the study participants were male and female and include the following ethnic groups: African-American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific-Islander and Native-American/Eskimo/Inuit. The sample size was determined by the number of participants that are part of the mentoring program during their first-year of enrollment. The participants were also be traditional students (between the ages of 18-22) who are pursuing a four-year degree with the institution and preferably housed on campus. The reason that residential students are preferred over commuter students is due to
the level of engagement resident students would have with the college environment and the breadth of experiences they could have. The research questions are meant to specifically examine the experience of the first-year minority students in this program.

**Recruitment and Access**

Access for this study was gained through an institution that I was affiliated with but used the pseudonym The State University. The institution, which is a four-year public institution in the State of Pennsylvania with a total enrolment of approximately 15,000 with 18 percent of that population classified as minority students. This institution currently has a mentoring program for first-year minority students that is administered through its Office of Multicultural Affairs, and I have a professional relationship with the current director for the office. I also have personal experience with this program, having served as a peer mentor during the 1997-1998 academic year.

The recruitment of these students was done in partnership with the University’s Office of Multicultural Affairs. The researcher began by working through the director in order to solicit participation in face to face interview process, and the researcher will physically stayed at the research site as a way of effectively collecting data.

**Data Collection**

Data was collected through the use of personal face-to-face interviews. The purpose of the face-to-face interviews was to get information regarding the participants’ experiences during their first-year of school and their experiences in the mentoring program during that time. The
interviews were standardized and the interviewer may be seen as the yard stick: he is anonymous, “exchangeable”; his personal influence on the course of the conversation is restricted to a minimum (Heyink & Tymstra, 1993). Institutional student data was also be used to investigate other factors that may have impacted minority student retention.

The key to ascertaining data was the in-depth the face-to-face semistructured interviews with the participants. In the semistructured interview, the researcher has a specific topic to learn about, prepares a limited number of questions in advance, and plans to ask follow up questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Given the type of information that is being sought for this study, the semi-structured interviews also included the components of a cultural interview. The objective was to map out (changes in) the respondent’s subjective perception of the environment, and that in his own terminology (Heyink & Tymstra, 1993). In cultural interviews, the researcher tries to understand the norms, rules, and values that underlie people’s behavior, their sense of ethics, and/or their traditions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In most institutions of higher education, minority students are grouped together and support services and programs are provided underwritten by a certain mission and vision that develops particular norms and values for these students. Given this, the cultural interviews serve as valuable as they often have an exploratory quality, as researchers look for terms, phrases, behaviors, or choices that reflect the norms and values and then discuss what they have found with their conversational partners (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Data Storage Management

Data was stored electronically using an external hard drive and audio files are stored in the care of the researcher. Each audio file was identified by the use of their research designation in order to maintain order and organization of the items but maintain anonymity. After the
transcripts the dissertation process is completed, the audio records were purged but the transcripts will be maintained for future research.

**Data Analysis**

The data was analyzed by using the In Vivo approach for coding and data analysis. According to Saldana (2009), In Vivo Coding is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies, but particularly for beginning qualitative researchers learning how to code data, and studies that prioritize and honor the participant’s voice. In Vivo Coding is particularly useful in educational ethnographies with youth (p.74). Data was stored electronically using an external hard drive and either digital recording apparatus or audio cassettes, and is stored in the care of the researcher, only to be shared for the purposes of the research. After the transcription process was completed, the audio records were purged but the transcripts are maintained for future research. Data will be coded and analyzed manually by the researcher using the In Vivo Coding method. This approach helped the researcher become more familiar with the data during the analysis process.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

According to Creswell (2102), “it is important to protect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals who participate in the study” (p.148). The researcher protected the human subjects by collecting demographic data and assigning a temporary identification number that is only associated with this study. The temporary ID did not include any demographic data in order to maintain the utmost privacy for the volunteers of the study. Along with the protection of the participants, the researcher also used pseudonyms for the institution in order to limit the ability to
identify participants given the specificity of the participants. Initially this was not a consideration and created quite a quagmire as omitting such findings may result in an invalid report, and including them may leave you open to criticism or, in the worst case, a lawsuit (Morse & Richards, 2002). However, the research discussed with the research site the intentions of the study, the impacts to the institution and the pros and cons of disclosing the research site. Morse & Richards (2002) state that, “sometimes, however, authorities at research sites agree or request to have their sites named in final reports and in publications; if this is the case in your research, be sure to obtain this agreement or request in writing” (p.190). This agreement was discussed with the Director of Multicultural Affairs, who runs the program at the research site, and the Vice President of Student Affairs, who is the senior manager of the program area.

**Trustworthiness**

According to Morse & Richards (2002), “any study (qualitative or quantitative) is only as good as the researcher” (p.168), and the researcher to date, following the guidance of his advisor, has took the proper steps in order to make sure that the area of study is relevant in the higher education discipline, the literature sufficiently supports the need to conduct the study, and the execution of the study can be done in a way that is academic and ethical. Morse & Richards (2002) also give a solid outline for assuring that research can be done in a way that is adequately rigorous and salient which includes: appropriate review of the literature, thinking qualitatively, working inductively, using appropriate methods and design, using appropriate sampling techniques, responsiveness to strategies that are not working, appropriate pacing of the project, coding reliably, comparing and fitting findings into the literature, and reaffirming legitimacy
following completion (pgs. 168-178). Taking these steps as outlined by the aforementioned authors provided a blueprint for validity and trustworthiness for this study.

Quantitative analysis warrant claims that observations made for a set of individuals generalize to “all students like these” by distinguishing between “true effect” (or relationships) in the population as a whole and the normal (and approximately normally distributed) random variations among individuals (Shaffer & Serlin, 2004). As of right now, follow-up sessions and member check-ins, may be the most viable way of confirming the validity and trustworthiness of the study.
Chapter IV: Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact that first-year mentoring programs for minority students have on their second year retention rates at the same institution. The analysis of the data produced three themes which were: 1) mentees connection with their peer mentor and faculty/staff mentor, 2) mentees connection to the campus, and 3) mentees viewpoint of the mentoring programs impact on their decision to return for the fall semester. This chapter presents the findings that emerged from data analysis which included: face-to-face interviews of first-year minority students completing the mentoring program, review of The State University Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) website, review of the OMA statistical program data, review of the OMA mentoring program guide, and review of the OMA multicultural initiative for Leadership & Excellence Passport. The findings for this study will be delivered in two sections which include; 1) data and documents retrieved from the OMA and 2) emerging thematic findings from each participant in the study.

There were seven first-year minority students that participated in face to face interviews. Participants were asked eleven questions regarding their experiences in the program, relationship with mentors, transition to the university and impact on their decision to return to the institution. In some cases, depending on the direction of the answer of a question, participants were asked follow up questions as a means of expanding the initial answer and enhancing the discussion. The OMA was able to provide a limited amount of documentation used for the purpose of the program. Unfortunately, the OMA does not keep an extensive amount of data on the students involved in the program and the impact that the mentoring program has on the retention of the students it serves. This study attempted to provide the office with data that will assist in better
serving the students they solicit for this program and provide synergistic experience for these students.

The Mentoring Program Structure

The mentoring program for first-year minority students recruits upperclassmen to become mentors for the incoming fall class of mentees. The mentoring program’s goals are to:

- Focus towards an academic area of concentration.
- Provide additional resources and opportunities to get involved.
- Offer encouragement and reinforcement of enthusiasm for the college experience.
- Minimize the feelings of isolation.

First-year mentees are contacted during the summer leading up to their fall semester by the office through an email communication asking if they would like to participate in the voluntary program. Included in this email communication is a sign-up form, which also collects demographic information from the potential mentee. The mentee also has an opportunity to list characteristics as a means of gaining a better mentor match that aligns with their backgrounds, such as field of study. The OMA then has mentors move in two days before the full campus move-in date for training and development. Mentees for the program are allowed to move in a day before the rest of the new students arrive. During this day, mentees are introduced to their mentor and engage in programming to assist with their transition to the institution; for example, mentees participate in a scavenger hunt that takes them to various locations on campus. This allows students to become more familiar with locations of various campus resources and the individuals associated with those resources.
Mentees are also provided with literature that will aid them in their transition. The first is the OMA yearly calendar of events, which is a programmatic listing of dates relevant to the mission of the office. The second is called the Multicultural Initiative for Leadership & Excellence Passport (MILE). The purpose of the MILE Passport is for mentees to:

- Become knowledgeable and comfortable with the resources that are available on campus.
- Enhance leadership skills.
- Get involved on campus.
- Become exposed to and gain an appreciation for an array of cultural programs and events.
- Achieve success in and out of the classroom (MILE, 2014).

The MILE Passport provides mentees with a quick guide to campus resources and developmental opportunities on campus. The last document provided to the students is the Mentoring Program Guide, which is broken down into six sections: Overview of the Mentoring Program; Overview of the Mentoring Process; Guidelines for Mentoring Success; Giving Effective Feedback: A Two-Way Street; Dealing with Possible Problems/Concerns; and Mentoring Program Tools (OMA Mentoring Program Guide, 2014). The guide also serves as a contract between the mentor and mentee(s) where shared rules and expectations are outlined. Mentors and mentees are also asked to develop an action plan with the purpose of giving the mentor and mentee thought-starters, motivation, and a framework to develop goals for the mentoring relationship (OMA Mentoring Program Guide, 2014). This guide is provided to create both an academic and non-academic foundation for first-year mentees that is supported by both the peer and administrative mentor.
Participants

For the 2013-2014 academic year The State University enrolled two-thousand, five-hundred and thirty-two multicultural students that included the following races/ethnicities: African-American, Asian, Latino, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Native American, Non-resident Alien, and Multi-racial. Of those students, a total of one-hundred and eighty-eight were first-time, first-year mentees of the OMA program. The gender and race/ethnicity demographics for participants in the program are the following:

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Retrieved from the Office of Multicultural Affairs Mentoring Program Data (2013-2014)

All of the one-hundred and eighty-eight first-time, first-year mentees were contacted via electronic mail for the purpose of this study, and seven volunteered to participate in the study. Of
the seven volunteer mentees, six were female and one was a male, each falling between the ages of 18 and 19 years of age. Of the mentees that participated in the study. Six of them self-identified as African-American and one self-identified as being bi-racial: African-American and Puerto Rican. For the purpose of maintaining the anonymity of each participant while keeping the data of the participants organized, each participant is identified with a pseudonym that is tied to their interview number. The interview number was used for the purpose of transcribing the interviews through ANP Transcriptions service. The use of pseudonyms was to maintain compliance with the human subjects protection of the participants and mentees were advised that their personal information would be kept confidential. While the subsequent listing will include an interview number and pseudonym, only the pseudonyms of the participants will be used to discuss the findings for this chapter. The participant pseudonyms with numbers are indicated as such:

- 702 006 – Carl
- 702 007 – Jay
- 702 008 – Kacey
- 702 009 – Brandi
- 702 010 – Alex
- 702 011 – Shay
- 702 012 – Mary

Participant Experiences

Carl

Carl is an eighteen year-old African-American male residential student. Carl was the only male mentee to participate in the study and felt like the program was an opportunity to, “socialize and get to know people and have people help me with the first-year cause it can be a struggle.” Carl also acknowledged that participating in the mentoring program could
provide him an opportunity to build a social network as well as develop professional skills that would be transferrable in a professional working environment.

Carl was first told about the program by his sister, who also works for the institution where he is a student. Carl felt being a mentee in the program would look good for his professional future and having a mentor that was “the same skin complexion and almost a look alike” made an impact on him.

*Connection with peer mentor and faculty/staff mentor*

Carl was excited to be assigned a mentor who was a senior at the university who not only had a robust network but the ability to provide a superior level of guidance during their mentoring relationship. Carl stated that, “it’s like a big brother helping me, talking to me, see if I have any problems, just letting me get through what I needed to get through.” Carl described the mentoring program as, “a brotherhood, sisterhood” at the institution. Carl appreciated the fact that his peer mentor was supportive of him, even showing up to his track meets and finding him a barber in town for haircuts. Carl also seemed to appreciate that his mentor/mentee relationship seemed to turn into a friendship as he and his peer mentor share many interests including their love for Gospel music. Another aspect that made Carl engage in the mentoring program was the fact that his mentor was the same “skin complexion” as himself. He seemed more willing to engage his mentor because of how Carl perceived his race and ethnicity, stating that, “we almost like look at each other as the same person.”
As far as a faculty/staff mentor, Carl was one of the mentees that was assigned a faculty/staff mentor for the program. Carl did not have any contact with his faculty/staff mentor during his first-year.

Connection to campus

Carl acknowledged that without the mentoring program, he may not have been as active on campus as he was being a participant of the mentoring program. Carl attributed a lot of that to his mentor, who knew much about what was happening on campus and helped him establish a social network on campus, making his transition more comfortable.

Mentoring program and the decision to return

When asked about his participation in the program being a major factor for him returning in the fall Carl stated that, “I don’t wanna say like it’s a major, but it’s like helped-for my decision to come back here.” Carl discussed that it was important but not the determining factor in his decision to come back to the same institution in the fall semester.

Jay

Jay is an eighteen year-old female African-American residential student. Jay initially decided to attend the institution because she was offered financial aid to come. She did not know a lot about the demographics of the institution; however, she was concerned about transitioning to the institution. In this, Jay says that she felt, “I’m not gonna do well; I’m not gonna fit in, decide what I wanna do; the normal concerns.” Jay was contacted via email regarding the program and moving in on campus a day early was an incentive but she also
stated that she, “wanted to be a part of the program because other minority students would show the way to classes and help along.”

*Connection with peer mentor and faculty/staff mentor*

Jay referred to her relationship with her peer mentor as a “big brother/big sister type of relationship,” and believes that the relationship with her peer mentor was an important factor in her ability to effectively transition to the institution. The “sister-like” relationship started to take shape during the academic year in the context of regular meetings, studying and socializing with her peer mentor. Jay also seemed to appreciate how proactive her mentor was in establishing a relationship and said that if mentees did not initiate contact, their mentor did. The mentoring relationship was especially engaging for Jay as her mentor would schedule lunch with her frequently as well as host dinners at her apartment for mentees to come and engage in a group setting.

Jay’s peer mentor also provided her with a vast amount of academic direction, even to the point of showing Jay what types of courses she could take during her first year. Jay did acknowledge that the notion of connecting with another minority student through the program was appealing. Jay stated that, “having somebody else that’s a minority student show me the way, and like show me like what classes I should take, and like help me out along the way. I thought that would be like really cool.”

In regards to her relationship with her faculty/staff mentor, there was little to no communication with the faculty/staff mentor for the program. Jay’s faculty/staff mentor did attempt to reach out to her once during the academic year but Jay acknowledged that she did
not reply to the communication from the faculty/staff mentor. Jay quickly and fully took responsibility for not having any interaction or relationship with her faculty/staff mentor stating, “that’s like on my part, but she has tried to like communicate with me.” Jay seemed to lament not really communicating with her faculty/staff mentor.

Connection to campus

In discussing her connection to the campus, the mentoring program provided her vast opportunities to engage in campus events. Often her mentor would send out a text to the mentee group making them aware of campus events and offered to go the events with the mentee if they were reluctant. Jay stated that, “she was just like trying to get us involved.” Jay also shared her mentor with her roommate, and found that this structure was very helpful in her campus engagement. Jay did not believe that she would have been able to connect with the campus in the same way if she were not a participant in the program. Jay stated that, “I don’t think I will be as close as I am with my-roommate without the program, and I don’t know. It really affected me.”

Mentoring program and the decision to return

Jay has decided to return to the institution for the fall semester and that as far as the mentoring program being a major factor for her return, “I think it’s not the-like most important factor, but it is like a factor.” Jay also believed that she wouldn’t have had the same campus experience without the mentoring program. The program has actually increased her interest in being a mentor for the program in the future. Jay appreciated how the experience with her mentor helped her to effectively transition to the institution. Jay actually
shared her mentoring experience through a presentation that she had to do for a public speaking class and she shared how much the mentoring program impacted her in her first year.

**Kacey**

Kacey is an eighteen year-old female African-American residential student. Kacey visited the campus and after her campus visit wanted to attend the institution, even though it was not her first choice. Kacey actually forgot that she applied to the institution and was surprised when she received the acceptance letter, but after visiting the campus for the Accepted Students Day she felt like she belonged there. Kacey stated that, “I just loved the environment, the atmosphere, the people here. So that’s why I chose to come here.”

Kacey said that she was not really aware of the racial demographics but was under the impression that the institution was not that diverse and she was worried about fitting in and finding friends when transitioning to the institution. Coming from a high school that was very diverse, going to a diverse university was very important. Kacey heard about the first-year mentoring program from another student and decided to sign up over the summer. Kacey acknowledged that the catalyst for her signing up was because she, “wanted to be closer to other minorities, like people of my ethnicity and other cultures,” and she believed that the mentoring program would give her a prime opportunity to do that.
Connection with peer mentor and faculty/staff mentor

Kacey believed that her peer mentor was more like a “friend/big sister” to her during her first-year at the institution. She also helped her academically to stay on the “straight and narrow with the grades.” Her mentor often communicated with her via email and they seem to have developed more of a friendship as opposed to a mentor/mentee relationship. While Kacey and her mentor did not have a formal meeting structure, that did not take away from their ability to establish a strong relationship during her first-year. Kacey stated that, “we are definitely, um, like a more-like not just on a mentor level. Like she’s a friend; she’s like a bigger sister.” They meet frequently to socialize but her peer mentor also helps her navigate the campus and directs her to campus resources when needed. Kacey also expressed a great appreciation for how much her mentor empowered her to be engaged. Articulating her appreciation for her mentor, Kacey stated, “I don’t think I would have had the motivation or the urge to like want to do more on campus, or to be involved, or to go to different programs and stuff like that.”

When asked about her communication with her faculty/staff mentor, Kacey acknowledged that her faculty/staff mentor did reach out to her through email but she did not respond and there was no contact or connection with her faculty/staff mentor.

Connection to campus

Kacey admitted that she did have concerns about fitting in and making friends when she came to the institution. As it relates to her connection to the campus, Kacey stated that the program “kind of helped me plan out my experience at The State University, and what I
would be interested in, and what I’m not interested in.” Another benefit was that she and her roommate shared the same mentor and often there were opportunities for them to meet as a group. All in all, Kacey believed that the mentoring program was a moving experience for her and stated that, “I don’t think if I didn’t go to the program, I don’t think I would have had the motivation or the urge to like want to do more on campus, or to be involved, or do go to different programs and stuff like that.”

Mentoring program and the decision to return

In response to the program being a major factor in her decision to return to the institution in the following fall semester, Kacey responded that, “I wouldn’t say that the program has an impact on that.” Kacey articulated that she fell in love with the campus after her initial visit and planned on returning regardless. Kacey gave a lot of credit to her initial campus visit for Accepted Student’s Day.

Brandi

Brandi is a nineteen year-old African-American female residential student. Brandi actually visited the institution and had a discussion with her brother, who is an alumnus. The school also had her major, pre-physical therapy, which was also a draw for her. She was contacted by the mentoring program the summer leading into her fall semester and the concept of moving in a day early was very appealing, leading to her decision to participate in the program. Brandi also had somewhat of a foundation as she knew two people that actually attend the institution. Brandi knew little about the demographics but liked the fact that the school seemed to be diverse; however, she did have feelings of concern transiting to the
institution. While her friends that preceded her said that there are many African-American students at the school, and she noted that you still recognize that you are a minority student.

Connection with peer mentor and faculty/staff mentor

Unlike the other participants in the study, Brandi knew her mentor previously. She and her mentor “danced together” growing up and actually went to the same high school, so during the summer, her mentor sent her a text saying that Brandi was one of her mentees. Brandi has a good relationship with her mentor and they meet frequently her mentor’s assistance helped her to adjust, and through that relationship, she had the opportunity to meet other students. Interestingly enough, Brandi was late for her interview because she was meeting with her mentor. She really appreciated how their relationship has grown over the year. Brandi stated that she was initially scared about beginning her academic experience and attributes her relationship with her mentor in helping her to transition in this area. Brandi said that, “once I got here, and then I had my mentor help, they just-I also had other like older people to help me too, I felt a whole lot more comfortable.”

In speaking about her mentor and the program Brandi stated that, “it seemed like everybody was like a family that were mentors.” Not only will her mentor contact her regarding events on campus, they also study together and her mentor provides her direction regarding scholarships on campus. Brandi was so engaging that she was “adopted” by two other mentors during the program.

Brandi was the only student to have constant communication with her faculty/staff mentor. Brandi’s faculty/staff mentor actually works in the OMA and Brandi took advantage
of having that level of access to her faculty/staff mentor and would often visit the office when she needed assistance, support or direction.

Connection to campus

Brandi attributed a lot of her connection to the campus and level of engagement to the mentoring program. Brandi admitted that the orientation for the mentoring program really set the bar high with regards to her expectation. Brandi stated that, “I already expected a lot ‘cause they said we can actually move in, I think, a day early, so I liked that, and then they fed us too. It was-it was really impressive.” The program also had events such as a scavenger hunt, to help students connect with the campus, and she distinctly remembers where the mail office is because it was part of the orientation. When asked about campus programming she stated, “I definitely would have never heard of half this stuff” if it were not for the mentoring program. When Brandi first moved to campus and engaged in the mentoring program’s activities, mentees were sent on a scavenger hunt in order to identify various campus locations. Brandi felt like programs such as the scavenger hunt helped her familiarize herself with the campus, even if she has not visited those locations since the event.

Brandi actually took advantage of her experience in the mentoring program and connected with the institution well. Brandi, through the direction of her mentor, joined an honors fraternity, as well as joining the board of the Sisters United student group.

Mentoring program and the decision to return

When asked about if her participation in the program was a major impact on her decision to return to the institution in the fall, Brandi responded, “I have to say yes and no.” Brandi
stated that her decision was based more on the fact that she really liked the school and said, “I felt like there’d be no other school I wanna go to, you know, especially because of my major.” While the mentoring program enhanced her student engagement during her first year, it was minimal in relation to her decision to return to the institution the following fall.

**Alex**

Alex is a nineteen year-old bi-racial, African-American and Puerto Rican, female residential student. Alex’s first choice for college was the University of South Carolina, but due to costs, she decided to attend The State University as it was financially more reasonable for her to do so. Alex actually considered another institution closer to home, but really wanted the experience of moving away from home for her college experience. Alex knew a little about the racial demographics, believing that it was about eighty-five percent Caucasian and fifteen percent minority, but did not have any issues with transitioning to the institution. Alex also knew a little about the institution as she has a family member who is in their senior year. Alex heard about the mentoring program from two sources: through an email from the Multicultural Affairs Department and from her roommate, who was already signed up for the program. Alex actually attributed most of her knowledge about the program to conversations with her roommate who was the participant in a summer program sponsored by the institution.

Moving in early was a major incentive for Alex to participate in the program, “so to beat all of the heavy traffic in trying-like everyone trying to move in at one time.” Alex was the only participant to discuss the characteristic selection process for matching with a mentor,
and she felt like she was listing her interests so that would gain a good peer mentor/mentee match.

*Connection with peer mentor and faculty/staff mentor*

Alex was the only participant in the study to experience a change in peer mentors during the program. Alex stated that, “I didn’t really hear from her,” and “we didn’t see each other.” Alex endeared herself to her roommate’s peer mentor and asked to be switched as she appeared to be more engaging than the peer mentor she was assigned. The new assignment seemed to be a good fit as Alex says, “I really love my new mentor.” Alex and her peer mentor have majors that are similar, so academically her peer mentor provides her with great guidance and academic support. They spent a significant amount of time doing homework together and also meet in the library almost daily in order to study together. Since Alex is a marketing major, and her mentor is a business management major, there is a lot of coursework that overlaps and this was also a beneficial component of their mentoring relationship.

Alex’s peer mentor also provided her with social and personal support during her first academic year. Alex stated that one time during the year she was in the hospital and her peer mentor actually visited her and brought her food during her stay. Socially, Alex’s peer mentor was diligent in attempting to get her mentees to engage in campus activities and would often reach out to Alex regarding campus events. While Alex preferred to stay in her room, her mentor consistently attempted to get Alex engaged in campus events. Alex’s mentor would always say, “you can’t just sit in your room. Like you got to come out, come do stuff.”
When it came to her connection with her faculty/staff mentor Alex advised that she was not assigned one because there were not enough to go around. However, while Alex would have liked to have a faculty/staff mentor, she did not lament not having one during her first academic year.

Connection to campus

In discussing her mentor, Alex conceded that, “if it wasn’t for her, I probably would still be in the room like not doing much.” Her connection to campus was directly related to her participation in the mentoring program and her relationship with her mentor. When she first started at the institution Alex would go back home every weekend, but her participation in the mentoring program helped her engage more, leading her to spend more time on campus during the weekends. Being a participant in the mentoring program changed Alex’s experiences tremendously as she described her experience prior to the program as “boring” but as she grew, developed and engaged in the program, she began to have more of an appreciation for what the campus environment had to offer so much so that Alex would like to become a mentor for the program in the near future.

Mentoring program and the decision to return

Alex believed that her participation in the program played a pretty significant role in her decision to return to the institution in the fall. Alex stated that she was “bored” and made plans not to return in the fall, applying for a transfer to Temple University. However, Alex decided to stay, stating that, “between Rosie and like just being out more, I just decided to
Shay

Shay is a nineteen year-old African-American female residential student. Shay decided to come to the institution because it was the least expensive out of her choices for college. Shay knew someone who attended the institution and also visited the campus for their Accepted Students Day. Shay was somewhat familiar with the racial demographics stating that, “I knew that there was like a good amount of Black people, and that’s what I wanted in a university”; however, she was nervous about transition to the college. Her apprehension was not due to the demographics, but because she was adequately prepared to succeed academically at the institution. Expressing disappointment while discussing her high Shay said that, “I don’t feel like they prepared me enough for college at all, and I still feel that way.” Shay received an email to sign up and stated that moving in early was an incentive to participate in the program. As she chuckled, Shay remarked that she did not believe that the program was a real program, she just thought that it was an opportunity for students to move in early to campus.

Connection with peer mentor and faculty/staff mentor

Shay really connected with her peer mentor and appreciated her relationship with her and the guidance she has given her thus far. Shay said that she has seen the results of bad mentoring programs and stated that, “I know people who aren’t close with their peer mentor who are just stranded.” Shay and her peer mentor committed to meet at least ten hours a
week and were able to build a very strong relationship as Shay is often able to go to her if she needs help. Shay really felt like she benefitted from the relationship stating that, “I strongly suggest people to do it because it’s like you build a relationship with your mentor, and if you have a good mentor and like-just like I said, if I need help with something I feel like I always have somebody to go to.” Shay and her mentor, former track athletes, would also find time to run together and this shared interest helped to strengthen their relationship over time. During our discussion, Shay also discussed how much her mentor played a part in helping to mediate her relationships, negative or positive ones, with other students.

When asked about her relationship with her faculty/staff mentor, Shay advised that she did not have a faculty/staff mentor. Shay actually did not feel as if she needed a faculty/staff mentor unless that person had an similar experience as she preferred just the peer-to-peer structure of the mentoring program.

Connection to campus

Shay admitted that the mentoring program helped her get more acquainted with the college and the campus environment. Shay acknowledged how much she enjoyed the orientation stating that, “the programs they have set up with-with the mentees and their mentors were really good; like go around school and take a picture in front of this building.” Shay felt like this really helped her to become familiar with the campus resources. Shay also believed that being a part of the mentoring program socially helped her get to know more people and motivated her to attend campus and sporting events. Shay even went on to say that in trying to attend her first campus party, “my mentor drove me and my friends there.”
Shay did not discuss her connection to the campus academically through the mentoring program. However, Shay appreciated the fact that she and her roommate shared the same peer mentor, which also helped them both connect better to the campus and grow as individuals. To this point, there was an instance during the year where Shay and her roommate had an altercation and her peer mentor actually stepped in to help mediate the situation. Shay’s experience in the program has helped pique her interest in becoming a mentor in the future and she wants to be able to give back to a program that gave her so much. Shay stated that, “I just wanna be able to offer my mentees a lot,” but feels like she needs to wait until she is a junior because her experiences and practical knowledge would help more in cultivating a relationship with a first-year mentee.

*Mentoring program and the decision to return*

While Shay appreciated how much the mentoring program helped her engage the campus environment, she did not believe that it played a significant role in her decision to return in the fall. When asked about the part the mentoring program played in her decision to return she said it did not, “because it wasn’t really focused around whether you’re coming back next year; it was focused around doing what you have to do while you’re here.”

*Mary*

Mary is an eighteen year-old African-American female residential student. Mary became interested in The State University after taking a tour of the institution with her parents. She also wanted to make sure that she attended an institution that would be close to her family and made this institution her first choice. She was also attracted to the institution due to the
affordability of an education at The State University. Mary knew about the racial demographics and while she was a little concerned with transitioning to the institution, it was not because of the racial demographics. Mary was contacted by the program via email and also heard about the program through word of mouth. Mary actually signed up after meeting one of the administrators who was affiliated with the mentoring program and encouraged her to participate. Mary also became interested in the program as it resembled “big sister like programs” which she had been involved in growing up.

*Connection with peer mentor and faculty/staff mentor*

Mary appreciated the academic attention her peer mentor paid to her and stated that she was “great with that.” Mary’s peer mentor would give her advice on how to navigate the academic waters and how to properly engage her faculty academic advisor in planning her academic course. Mary and her peer mentor would try to meet weekly. Her peer mentor was frequently in contact with her, even sending the group inspirational quotes to get them through the day. Mary also spent time studying with her peer mentor, hosting library hours during the finals week at the end of each semester.

Socially, Mary spent a lot of time with her peer mentor, describing her as being “hands on.” According to Mary, her peer mentor got her involved in various campus activities and would even invite her mentees to her apartment to cook for them. Mary named Sisters United as one of the organizations she has had an opportunity to engage with at the direction of her peer mentor.
With regard to a faculty/staff mentor, Mary says that while she did have one she never interacted with her. Mary’s faculty/staff mentor did attempt to make contact with her but Mary did not respond, a decision that she seemed to regret stating that, “I should have like reached out to her; now, I probably should because like as we as like have a student mentor, you should have a faculty mentor.”

Connection to campus

In connecting to the campus Mary stated, “once I got here and gotten involved in the mentoring program, it like got me like on my feet a little.” Mary really attributes her level of campus engagement to the mentoring program. Mary really appreciated her opportunity to expand her network at the institution through her participation in the mentoring program. The program actually helped Mary navigate the campus and its resources easier, to the point that she was able to give other first-year students direction. While the mentoring program helped her get more involved with the campus, Mary also believed that connection helped her develop as a student.

Mentoring program and the decision to return

Mary seemed to enjoy her experience in the mentoring program and plans to maintain a relationship with her mentor as she is like her “big sister.” When asked about the mentoring program and her decision to return to the institution in the fall Mary says that, “it was like kind of a factor.” Mary says that the program was motivational academically and socially and makes one want to engage in a leadership role on campus. Appreciating the familial aspects
of the mentoring program, Mary believed that every student should have the opportunity to be a part of the mentoring program because “it’s like a family.”

**Summary**

The purpose of this study was to investigate first-year mentoring programs for minority students and their impact on second-year retention of those students. Most of the participants of the study were somewhat familiar with the institution, whether it was through a personal relationship with a current student or visiting the campus during their Accepted Student Day. Most of the participants expressed concern transitioning to the institution but their knowledge of the racial demographics was not the catalyst for their concern. In order to solicit participation in the program participants were initially contacted by email by the OMA, however, the face-to-face interactions with students or administrators associated with the program seemed to be more valuable to students in making a decision on whether or not to participate. Incentivizing students with an early move in date seemed to be consistent with each of the participant’s willingness to engage in the mentoring program.

In connecting with their mentor, the mentees’ relationships with the mentors were by far the greatest asset to the program. Participants overwhelmingly expressed the importance of their relationship with their mentor and the impact those personal relationships had on their ability to persist during their first year. A disappointing trend was the non-existence of a faculty/staff mentor program. A majority of the participants expressed that either they had a faculty/staff mentor and did not make contact with them all year or they were never assigned a faculty/staff mentor because there were not enough to go around. One participant did have an engaging faculty/staff mentor, however, that mentor is also a member of the department
that sponsors the mentoring program and gave the peer mentee and opportunity to engage their faculty/staff mentor regularly and the sponsoring office as well.

When it came to campus engagement, participants unanimously expressed that the mentoring program had a positive impact on their campus engagement. Whether it was navigating the campus map and institutional resources, building a network or engaging in student life, participants attributed campus engagement to their participation in the mentoring program. Participants also found themselves feeling more comfortable with the campus environment than first-year minority students that did not participate in the program.

While participants seemed to enjoy their overall experience in the mentoring program and the relationships they cultivated during their first-year, only one participant acknowledged that the program had a significant impact on their decision to return to the institution. Other participants either stated that the mentoring program had a minor impact or no impact at all on their decision to return to the institution the following fall. The mentoring program did seem to create a sustainable environment for future mentors. Many of the first-year mentees expressed their desire to become mentors for the program in the future. There seemed to be a familial nature of the program that was reciprocal and therefore attractive for the students.

Chapter V: Discussion of Findings

Due to the change in racial and ethnic demographics in the United States, colleges and universities are tasked with developing inclusive and culturally-engaging campus programming
to develop environments that will be attractive in not only recruiting minority students, but retaining them. Cole (2007) believes that, “institutional policies, for example, could support and promote diversity-related programs co-sponsored between minority and non-minority student organizations” (p.274). While programs that try to create inclusive environments can vary from campus to campus, research has shown that creating diversity-related opportunities for students to engage can be beneficial in the development of students existing in the campus climate. A study conducted by Denson and Chang (2009) suggests that, “if higher levels of student body engagement with diversity signal more cohesive and consistent positive organizational behavior toward diversity, then the positive effects of greater student body engagement can be interpreted as a result of a more intense environment shaped by institutional practices and shifting student needs, which enhances the benefits of diversity” (p.345). Studies like this lead to the importance of initial programming that may be targeted to a specific group with that group’s engagement creating a positive campus climate.

In using mentoring as a tool of engagement for first-year students transitioning to a college or university, Rhodes and DuBois (2008) state that, “recent research indicates that mentoring programs are likely to be effective to the extent that they are successful in establishing close, enduring connections that promote positive developmental change” (p.256). This seemed to also be the sense for minority first-year students who not only grew, but also engaged, the campus environment of The State University Office of Multicultural Affairs mentoring program. Participants in the study seemed to really be impacted by the close connections they made with their mentees during their first year.
Research Question(s)

- *How important are first-year minority mentoring programs in students’ decisions to return to the same institution for a second-year of study?*
  - *How are first-year minority students’ perceptions of their institution impacted by the mentor/mentee relationship?*

Connection with Peer Mentor and Faculty/Staff Mentor

In discussing the findings of participants connecting with either their peer mentor or faculty staff mentor, the participants clearly indicated that their relationships with their peer mentor had the greatest impact when it came to campus engagement. Participants overwhelmingly expressed that their relationship with their mentor had impacted them not only with their ability to transition effectively to the institution, but in developing a level of comfort with the campus and other students. Whether it was academically, personally or socially, mentors seemed to provide a layer of support that was invaluable to participants during their first-year at the institution.

Unfortunately, a majority of the participants did not make a connection with their faculty/staff mentor because they either did not respond to their faculty/staff mentors initial inquiry, neither party followed up to establish initial contact, or mentees were never assigned a faculty/staff mentor, leaving a void in that area of the mentoring structure.

In the beginning of the academic year some of the faculty/staff mentors reached out to their mentees. While some mentees admitted that they did not respond to the initial inquiry, there was not any follow up by faculty/staff mentors to the initial communication. Some of the
participants were not afforded the opportunity to engage a faculty/staff mentor because there were none available in order to facilitate that connection. While those participants indicated that it would have been nice to have a faculty/staff mentor, the absence of one did not negatively impact their experience at the institution. One participant was assigned a faculty/staff mentor and indicated that it was a fruitful relationship, which enhanced the overall campus experience. This participant was able to meet with their faculty/staff mentor as needed and valued the open-door policy experience. One aspect of this relationship is that the faculty/staff mentor is also a member of the office that facilitates the mentoring program, leading to the consistent level engagement enjoyed by the participant.

In reference to the research question; “How important are first-year minority mentoring programs in students’ decisions to return to the same institution for a second-year of study?,” only one participant acknowledged that the mentoring program directly impacted their decision to return to the institution the following fall. This participant also articulated that the direct relationship with their mentor was the reason they decided to return. In regards to the sub question: “How are first-year minority students’ perceptions of their institution impacted by the mentor/mentee relationship?,” the study found that participants’ perceptions were impacted mainly through their engagement with their peer mentor. Some participants acknowledged that they would not have been as involved in the campus environment if it were not for their peer mentor. This impacted their perceptions, increasing participants interest in participating in student groups as well as prompting participants to want to serve as mentors in the future for the OMA department.
Connection to Campus

Participants in the study indicated that their participation in the mentoring program increased their connection to the campus, increasing their level of engagement in campus activities. In their first-year, participants not only established networks amongst their peers but they also endeavored to participate in various student groups. One example realized through the study was the campus participation pursued by the participant named “Brandi”, who through the program was able to join the Sisters United student group as well as an honors fraternity during her first-year. The mentoring program seemed to provide a natural pipeline for students to be made aware of campus programs, student organizations and social events. Another example related to connecting to campus found in this study was the experience of a student named “Alex.” Alex initially spent most of her time in her room, not attending events or interacting with other students. Alex rarely stayed on campus during the weekends, returned home, spending time there in order to fulfill a sense of engagement. Due to her relationship with her mentor and her mentor’s intentional effort to get Alex involved in campus activities, Alex began to connect with the campus more. In her situation, Alex’s connection to the college had a direct impact on her wanting to return to the campus in the fall as she initially applied for a transfer to Temple University but has since decided to stay at The State University.

In addressing the primary research question; “How important are first-year minority mentoring programs in students’ decisions to return to the same institution for a second-year of study?” all participants, with the exception of Alex, did not conclude that there was a direct correlation between the mentoring program, their connection to campus and the decision to return to the same institution in the following fall. However, participants articulated that if it were not for their peer mentor, that they would not have been as involved in campus life at the
level they were if they had not participated in the mentoring program. One example of this was through a participant named “Shay”, who was very nervous about the transition to The State University and felt unprepared. Shay also stated that the mentoring program did not make a difference in returning the follow fall semester. Conversely, Shay also stated that the mentoring program, “helped make me feel more comfortable with the institution.” Given the initial concerns of Shay and connecting to the campus through the vessel of mentoring, it could be assumed that this may have had some impact on her decision to return the following fall.

In reviewing connection to campus and the sub question; “How are first-year minority students’ perceptions of their institution impacted by the mentor/mentee relationship?,” the study found that a majority of the participants’ initial perceptions about the institution remained unchanged throughout the year and did not go up or down at the end of their first academic year. Perceptions seemed to be developed differently and depended on the type of interaction participants had with the campus environment prior to arriving for their initial semester. Some participants’ initial perceptions were developed out of the accepted students’ day hosted by the institution for prospective students the spring before their first-year. Participants that attended the accepted student day had an attraction to the campus that remained the same during their first-year with their perception of the campus remaining the same. Some participants had personal frames of reference in order to develop their perception of the institution, as was the case for Alex. Alex’s cousin is a senior at The State University. During her cousin’s college years at the institution, Alex would come up and visit her, which made her more familiar with the campus environment. Alex was the only participant whose perception of the institution was changed even
though she was very familiar with the campus environment, initially made a decision to transfer but decided to stay at The State University due to participating in the mentoring program.

Mentoring Program and the Decision to Return

As it relates to the mentoring program, the decision to return and the initial research question; “How important are first-year minority mentoring programs in students’ decisions to return to the same institution for a second-year of study?,” most of the participants, with the exception of one, felt that the mentoring program had some level of impact on their decision to return in the fall. Out of the group, one participant indicated that the mentoring program had a major impact on the decision to return in the second year.

Overall, the mentoring program seemed to be successful due to the level of engagement exhibited by the peer mentees in the program. To address the study’s sub question; “How are first-year minority students’ perceptions of their institution impacted by the mentor/mentee relationship?” participants’ initial commitment to participating in the mentoring program was the ‘moving in a day early incentive.’ Yet over time, participants seemed to appreciate the relationships cultivated during their first academic year. This also led to a majority of the participants expressing an interested in becoming peer mentors for the program during their college career. The mentoring program provided a way for participants to investigate campus groups and student-centered activities. Unfortunately, faculty/staff mentoring was almost non-existent; however, participants, while wanting this experience, did not lament not having it.
Linking Mentoring with the CECE Model

This section will discuss the findings of the study and their relation to the nine tenets of the CECE Model created by Dr. Samuel Musues. The nine tenets include: transformational cultural connections, collective cultural orientations, cultural validation, common ground, humanized educational experience, proactive philosophies, holistic support and climates for cross-cultural engagement (Musues, 2014).

Transformational Cultural Connections

The CECE Model posits that transformational cultural connections can positively influence the experiences and outcomes of racially-diverse populations (Musues, 2014). The study found that participants’ connection to the mentees created a positive experience and cultural connection. For many of the participants, the experience was transformational as all participants expressed how appreciative they were of their connection with their peer mentors.

Collective Cultural Orientations

The CECE Model suggests the environments with more collective cultural orientations, in contrast to more individualistic ones, are more conducive to positive college experiences and success among racially-diverse students (Musues, 2014). Participants in the program had the opportunity to participate in an initial orientation as a group in order to engage with the campus environment. During the year, collective cultural orientation seemed to occur informally in groups where mentees shared the same mentor. These informal experiences also had great value for mentee experiences.
Cultural Validation

The CECE Model posits that cultural validation is positively associated with success (Musues, 2014). Participation in the mentoring program and the participants’ ability to transition successfully during their first-year created positive cultural validation experiences. As most of the participants expressed some level of concern transitioning to the institution, while having some knowledge of the racial demographics, they still articulated that their experiences were positive and all confirmed that they were going to return the following fall semester.

Common Ground

The CECE Model postulates that the extent to which undergraduates are able to connect with faculty, staff, and peers with whom they share common ground is positively related to their success in college (Musues, 2014). Common ground shared by mentors and mentees by far had the most impact on the participants during their first academic year. While most of the participants in the program neither did not have a faculty/staff mentor nor had no contact with one, common ground as a means of connection for a successful college experience was solidified through the mentee/mentor relationship.

Humanized Educational Experience

The CECE Model posits that the extent to which campuses provide a humanized educational experience is positively related to college experiences and success (Musues, 2014). The initial OMA mentoring program orientation prior to the start of the fall semester provided participants with a humanized educational experience. Participants engaged in an educational
activity and had the opportunity to spend quality time with their mentors during this portion of the mentoring program.

**Proactive Philosophies**

The CECE Model suggests that the extent to which proactive philosophies exist on college campuses can partially determine the likelihood of success among racially-diverse student populations on those campuses (Musues, 2014). That The State University has invested in an office with the mission of supporting minority students shows a proactive philosophy that can lead to success for a racially-diverse student population. The mentoring program sponsored by the OMA provided an opportunity for students to chart a path of success during their first academic year.

**Holistic Support**

The CECE Model refers to the extent to which students have access to a faculty or staff member who they are confident will provide the information they need, offer the help they seek, or connect them with the information or support they require (Musues, 2014). While the mentoring program offered some participants the opportunity to obtain holistic support, participants either did not have this level of support available to them or it was not followed up on by either the mentor or mentee. Suggestions to make that more robust will be discussed in the recommendations for practice section of this chapter.

**Climates for Cross-Cultural Engagement**

The CECE Model suggests that climates for cross-cultural engagement positively influence success among racially diverse student populations (Musues, 2014). The mentoring
model was developed to create and sustain a climate for cross-cultural engagement. In order to facilitate the development of college students, postsecondary educators need to understand reciprocal interacting effects of various sub-environments, levels of environments, and students themselves (Renn and Arnold, 2003). The study showed that this occurred not only amongst mentors and mentees, but with mentees and other students. Many of the participants discussed their opportunities to meet with other upperclassmen through working with their mentors.

Limitations of the Study

There were two limitations to the study: sample size and limited existing literature on the topic. The first limitation was with the study size as there were seven participants in the study and while the interviews with these participants provided a substantial amount of data, the study could have been more robust with a greater number of participants sharing their experiences in the mentoring program. The second limitation is in regards to the amount of literature on a topic this specific. While there is a vast amount of literature on mentoring programs for undergraduate students as well as a vast amount of literature on minority undergraduate experiences, it was a challenge procuring literature on mentoring programs specifically geared toward minority students. Many mentoring programs focus on student academic success during the first-year, students with socio-economic challenges or students that could be classified as underrepresented students. There are few mentoring programs that are geared toward first-year minority students and their persistence into their second year of study.
Recommendations for Practice

This study examined the impact that first-year minority student mentoring programs have on the second-year retention of these same students. After analyzing the results of this study, there are three recommendations for practice that could enhance the quality of the mentoring program at The State University. The first recommendation for practice is to solidify a structure of consistent and purposeful communication with prospective mentees. While most mentees stated that they received an email from the OMA regarding participation in the mentoring program, many participants seemed to respond better to other forms of communication about the program such as face-to-face interactions. In order to possibly enhance the communication structure, Haring (1999) states, “another way to strengthen the design of a mentoring program is to examine models that have been articulated throughout the literature to select a known one that will be useful because it has been tested by others,” (p.11). Researching how other mentoring programs communicate with their prospective mentees could help to enhance the quality of the program.

The second recommendation is better engagement of the faculty/staff mentor in order to have a strong presence for the purpose of mentoring. Again, many of the participants either did not have contact with their faculty/staff mentor or were not assigned a faculty/staff mentor at all. In a study conducted by Abdullahi (1992), he articulates three ways of creating an environment that cultivates faculty/staff support, which can have a positive impact on student retention:

1. Faculty and staff of the school must be encouraged to be more sensitive to the needs of minority students.
2. Additional minority faculty members should be added to the faculty.
3. General support services such as counseling, guidance, and tutoring should be available for students to assist in the transition to and successful completion of their studies (p.309).

The third and last recommendation for practice is to enhance the peer-to-peer mentoring relationship through the use of structured interactions sponsored by the OMA. According to a study conducted by Salinitri (2005), “learning is taking place through social engagement” and “the student mentor is synonymous with socialization and relational learning” (p.868) and since the peer-mentoring relationships had such a great impact on participants there is great potential to grow this through structured student engagement opportunities.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study exposed a great opportunity for further research as it relates to the faculty/staff mentor, their selection and participation in the mentoring program. Faculty/staff mentors can be an integral part of a mentoring structure if provided with a solid opportunity to engage mentoring students. While literature discusses the possibility or need for faculty/staff mentors of students to possibly be of the same racial/ethnic demographic, there is an opportunity to conduct further research examining interracial relationships between faculty/staff mentors and peer mentees. While some scholars may argue that the faculty/staff mentors should be aligned with peer mentees that are of the same racial/ethnic demographic an opportunity exists to investigate the impact that the matching of mentors and mentees, notwithstanding race, can also be an effective mentoring structure practice.
There is also an opportunity to transition the research methodology from an ethnographic case study to an institutional ethnography. The institutional ethnography, derived from the work of Dorothy E. Smith, grounds inquiry in the ongoing activities of actual people in the world and aims to map the translocal process of administration and governance that shape those circumstances via the linkages of ruling relations (Holstein, 2006). The progression of this study through the lens of the institutional ethnography provides an opportunity to transition from studying participants who are the beneficiaries of the program, to studying the developers and facilitators of the program in order to have an expansive and institution-wide discussion. This also provides an opportunity to build an environment of transparent dialogue and ownership amongst key stakeholders in the program.

Another area of research and possible development would be for the researcher would to take the data from this study and use it to strengthen the proposal of a similar mentoring program at his home institution, York College of Pennsylvania (York College). The full-time and part-time Fall 2014 minority student enrollment for York College is 13%, (J. Becker, York College, personal communication, September, 12 2014), and will continue to grow through intentional efforts of the Admissions and Enrollment Management Departments. York College has also become a more attractive institution for minority students since it hired its first female and African-American president, Dr. Pamela Gunter-Smith, in July 2013. The development and implementation of a mentoring program for first-year minority students could positively support retention efforts at York College.

The mentoring program could also have a profound impact on the six-year graduation rate of minority students at York College. Given the recent development of the Federal
Government’s College Scorecard and the emphasis on graduation rates, a mentoring program could play a key role in meeting the higher education expectations of the government. According to the Federal Government College Scorecard, “each scorecard includes five key pieces of information about a college: Costs, Graduation Rate, Loan Default Rate, Median Borrowing, and Employment (WhiteHouse.Gov, 2014). Timely implementation of a program could impact how the government views our commitment to students graduating within their first six years.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to analyze the effectiveness of first-year mentoring programs as it relates to second-year retention of minority students at a Predominately White Institution. While literature focused either on the experiences of minority students or mentoring programs the literature focused primarily on African-American and Hispanic/Latino students. It is the hope that this study was able to provide an opportunity for institutions to not only look at mentoring as a strong option for student engagement, but that mentoring programs geared towards minority students could have some impact on student engagement and retention.

The results of the study extracted that mentoring relationships, connections to the campus and the need to return to the same institution in the following year are aligned and can have an impact on minority student’s perceptions of an institution. While retention of minority students can have multiple layers, having an engaging campus climate, one that gives students the opportunity to engage in campus life, has an impact on the overall first-year experience, leading
to better feelings of connection for first-year minority students seeking higher education at Predominately White Institutions.
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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

Title of Project: First-Year Minority Student Mentoring Programs: An Ethnographic Study on the Impact of First-Year Mentoring on Second-Year Retention

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study
We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?
We are asking you to be in this study because you are a first-year minority student who is participating in the mentoring program.

Why is this research study being done?
The purpose of this research is to investigate the impact first-year minority student mentoring programs have on second year retention.

What will I be asked to do?
If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you participate in a face to face interview that will last between 60 minutes. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed.

Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?
Interviews will take place at a location of your choosing. The room selected will provide participants privacy and interviews will take between 60 minutes.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?
There will be no risks associated with this study. The researcher will secure all audio files after interviews are completed and after the audio files are transcribed and data has been extracted from the transcriptions, they will be purged. The researcher will use pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants. The location selected at the site will provide participants with privacy.

Will I benefit by being in this research?
There is no direct benefit from this research; however, the data from the research will be used to develop programs that will benefit other first-year minority students.

Who will see the information about me?
Your part in this study will be confidential. Only the researchers on this study will see the information about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way or any
individual as being of this project. Pseudonyms will be used in order to protect the identity of the participants. Audio files will be identified using the pseudonyms and transcripts will be purged after themes have been developed for the purpose of the study.

Can I stop my participation in this study?
Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would otherwise have as a student.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?
If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Darrien Davenport by home telephone at 717-526-6161, cell phone at 215-431-8560 or email davenport.d@husky.neu.edu. You can also contact the principal investigator, Dr. Kristal Clemons, via email k.clemons@neu.edu.

Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?
If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Chair of the Institute Review Board, Gautam Pillay, Ph.D. and Chair of HSC Paul K. Smith, Ph.D through the Office of Sponsored Research (OSR) at Research@wcupa.edu. Dr. Smith can also be reached directly at 610-436-2764 or via e-mail at psmith@wcupa.edu. You may also contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Will I be paid for my participation?
If participants will be paid or given a gift, state what the payment is and when it will be given. You will be given a $15 gift certificate to Target as soon as you complete the interview.

Will it cost me anything to participate?
There are no participant costs associated with this study.

Is there anything else I need to know?
You must be at least 18 years old to participate. You must also be an enrolled undergraduate student at the University.

____________________________________________               ________________________
Signature of person agreeing to take part                  Date

____________________________________________
Printed name of person above

____________________________________________
Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent               Date

____________________________________________
Printed name of person above
Appendix B: Interview Question Protocol

Interview Questions

Q1: Why did you decide to come to the University?

Q2: How much did you know about the racial demographics at the institution?

Q3: Did you have feelings of concern with transitioning to the University?

Q4: How did you find out about the mentoring program?

Q5: What made you want to participate in the mentoring program?

Q6: What type of experience did you expect through the mentoring program?

Q7: Tell me about your actual experience with the mentoring program?

Q8: In what ways do you believe the mentoring program, if it did, help you engage in campus activities?

Q9: How would you describe your relationship with your faculty/administrative mentor?
Q10: How would you describe your relationship with your peer mentor?

Q11: Do you believe that the mentoring program is a major factor in your decision to return to the University this fall? Why or why not?

Appendix C: Institutional Review Board Approval

1. IRB Approval-Northeastern University
2. IRB Approval-West Chester University
3. IRB Approved Consent Form
NOTIFICATION OF IRB ACTION

Date: April 2, 2014  IRB #: CPS14-03-16

Principal Investigator(s): Kristal Clemons  
Darrien Davenport

Department: Doctor of Education Program  
College of Professional Studies

Address: 20 Belvidere  
Northeastern University

Title of Project: First-Year Minority Student Mentoring Programs: An  
Ethnographic Study on the Impact of First-Year  
Mentoring on Second-Year Retention

Participating Sites: West Chester University approval forthcoming

DHHIS Review Category: Expedited #6, #7

Informed Consents: One (1) signed consent form

Monitoring Interval: 12 months

APPROVAL EXPIRATION DATE: APRIL 1, 2015

Investigator’s Responsibilities:

1. The informed consent form bearing the IRB approval stamp must be used when  
recruiting participants into the study.
2. The investigator must notify IRB immediately of unexpected adverse reactions, or new  
information that may alter our perception of the benefit-risk ratio.
3. Study procedures and files are subject to audit any time.
4. Any modifications of the protocol or the informed consent as the study progresses must  
be reviewed and approved by this committee prior to being instituted.
5. Continuing Review Approval for the proposal should be requested at least one month  
prior to the expiration date above.
6. This approval applies to the protection of human subjects only. It does not apply to any  
other university approvals that may be necessary.

C. Randall Colvin, Ph.D., Chair  
Northeastern University Institutional Review Board

Nan C. Regina, Director  
Human Subject Research Protection

Northeastern University FWA #4630
TO: Darrien Davenport  
FROM: Paul K. Smith, Ph.D.  
Chair, WCU Human Subjects Committee (HSC)  
DATE: 4/15/2014  

Proposed Project Title:

Expedited Approval

Full Board Review Approval

Exempt From Further Review

Date of Approval: 4/10/2014  
This protocol has been approved for a period of one year. Approximately two months prior to the approval end date, you will receive a Continuing Review Request form. Please complete it and return it to Human Subjects Committee, even if the project has been completed or is discontinued. Please remember that any changes to the protocol will require the submission of a revised protocol to the HSC. Any adverse reaction by a research subject is to be reported immediately to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (Gautam Pillay, Ph.D.) and Chair of the HSC (Paul K. Smith, Ph.D) through the Office of Sponsored Research via email at humansubjectcommittee@wcupa.edu. Dr. Smith can also be reached directly at 610-436-2764 or via e-mail at psmith@wcupa.edu.

Signature: [Signature]

Chair
Informed Consent

Name of Investigator(s): Principal Investigator, Dr. Kristal Clemons
Student Researcher, Darrien Davenport

Title of Project: First-Year Minority Student Mentoring Programs: An Ethnographic Study on
the Impact of First-Year Mentoring on Second-Year Retention

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study
We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the
researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are
ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to
participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this
statement and will give you a copy to keep.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?
We are asking you to be in this study because you are a first-year minority university student who is
participating in the mentoring program.

Why is this research study being done?
The purpose of this research is to investigate the impact first-year minority student mentoring programs
have on second year retention.

What will I be asked to do?
If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you participate in a face to face interview that will last
between 60 minutes. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed.

Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?
Interviews will take place at a location of your choosing. The room selected will provide participants
privacy and interviews will take between 60 minutes.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?
There will be no risks associated with this study. The researcher will secure all audio files after interviews
are completed and after the audio files are transcribed and data has been extracted from the transcriptions,
they will be purged. The researcher will use pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants. The
location selected at the site will provide participants with privacy.

Will I benefit by being in this research?
There is no direct benefit from this research; however, the data from the research could be used to
develop programs that will benefit other first-year minority students.

Who will see the information about me?
Your part in this study will be confidential. Only the researchers on this study will see the information
about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way or any
individual as being of this project. Pseudonyms will be used in order to protect the identity of the
participants. Audio files will be identified using the pseudonyms and transcripts will be purged after
themes have been developed for the purpose of the study.

APPROVED

NU IRB#:
VALID THROUGH
Can I stop my participation in this study?
Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would otherwise have as a student.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?
If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Darrien Davenport by home telephone at 717-526-6161, cell phone at 215-431-8560 or email davenport.d@husky.neu.edu. You can also contact the principal investigator, Dr. Kristal Clemons, via email k.clemons@neu.edu.

Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?
If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Chair of the Institute Review Board, Gautam Pillay, Ph.D. and Chair of HSC Paul K. Smith, Ph.D through the Office of Sponsored Research (OSR) at Research@wcupa.edu. Dr. Smith can also be reached directly at 610-436-2764 or via e-mail at psmith@wcupa.edu. You may also contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Will I be paid for my participation?
If participants will be paid or given a gift, state what the payment is and when it will be given. You will be given a $15 gift certificate to Target as soon as you complete the interview.

Will it cost me anything to participate?
There are no participant costs associated with this study.

Is there anything else I need to know?
You must be at least 18 years old to participate. You must also be an enrolled undergraduate student at the University.

______________________________   __________________________
Signature of person agreeing to take part   Date

______________________________
Printed name of person above

______________________________   __________________________
Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent   Date

______________________________
Printed name of person above

APPROVED
NU IRB
VALID THROUGH
Appendix D: Recruitment Email

You Have Been Selected To Participate In a Research Study

Good (Morning/Afternoon):

My name is Darrien Davenport and I am an alumnus of West Chester University and a doctoral student in Northeastern University’s Doctorate of Education program. I am conducting a research study titled First-Year Minority Mentoring Programs and am asking for your assistance. The purpose of my study is to investigate the effectiveness of first-year mentoring programs geared toward minority students as they relate to second-year retention at the same institution.

This study is being conducted as part of my dissertation for the Doctorate of Education degree in Higher Education Administration at Northeastern University. I currently work with minority students in a higher education institution and with your assistance, I hope to discover whether or not mentoring programs for minority students are an effective tool for retention.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and will consist of a face-to-face interview that should take approximately 60 minutes. This will take place at a place of your choosing. In order to maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used in order to identify participants of the study. The interview will be recorded and the transcripts of the interview will be secured by me. After data has been extracted from the transcripts, they will be safely.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and if you have questions about this study, please feel free to contact me by home telephone at 717-526-6161, cell phone at 215-431-8560 or email davenport.d@husky.neu.edu. You can also contact the principal investigator, Dr. Kristal Clemons, via email k.clemons@neu.edu.

Sincerely,

Darrien Davenport