

2023-2024 Innovation of the Year Application

Project Title

Peer Success Coach Program

Principal Applicant (point of contact for notifications and any questions about the application)

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Location Glendale

Name, title, college/district office of each team member who created the innovation.

Names and titles will be included on the League for Innovation in the Community Colleges website. (example - Name, Title, College; Name, Title, District Office)

- Luis Fragoso, Coordinator of the Peer Success Coach Program, Glendale Community College
- Dr. Genesis Toole, Dean of Student Life, Glendale Community College

Innovations should fall into one of the following categories. Select the category most strongly aligned with the project (maximum of one)

- Student Services and Activities

Innovations should meet one or more of the following criteria. Please select the criteria that best apply to the innovation (select all that apply).

- Quality. Students and/or staff agree that the innovation increases quality in the course, program, office, or institution. Evidence of quality may include student ratings or letters of support from colleagues.,
- Efficiency. There is evidence that the innovation contributes to a more efficient way of doing things. Student ratings, perceptions of outside consultants, and pre- and post-comparison of time involved are examples of evidence.,

- Timeliness. The innovation should be no more than five years old at the institution, but must have been around long enough to have been tested so that it meets most of the criteria.

Please select the strategy of the MCCC strategic plan most aligned with the innovation (select all that apply).

- Student outreach and success

Project Summary (maximum of 1,000 characters)

This description will be posted on the League for Innovation in the Community College website and used for program materials.

The Glendale Community College (GCC) Peer Success Coach (PSC) program was launched in Spring 2022 to provide all incoming and continuing students with one-on-one holistic support as an effort to increase retention and develop a stronger sense of belonging at GCC. The goals of the Peer Success Coach Program are to increase engagement through connection to Fields of Interest (FOI), provide specific opportunities and resources, facilitate referrals to critical personnel in response to financial and academic needs, and coach in areas of academic success, time management and self advocacy to increase persistence and retention. We have not only created and facilitated meaningful matches between Peer Success Coaches and students based on the students' preferences, but have also discovered that students who are matched in our coaching program demonstrate higher retention rates than those who are not.

Project Description (maximum of 1,000 words)

Provide a detailed explanation of the problem(s) addressed by the project? Explain how the project aligned to the category and program criteria identified by the League for Innovation in the Community College. Explain how the project aligns with one or more strategies of the MCCC strategic plan. Explain the impact of the project. Describe the partnerships involved and plan for sustainability.

In 2022, Glendale Community College (GCC) faced a seemingly insurmountable hurdle of bringing students back to campus after the pandemic. The Peer Success Coach (PSC) program was developed to facilitate this transition back to in-person programming and support students holistically by offering the resources they need to accomplish their goals. The foundation of the PSC program was designed through the evidence-based practices identified from a previous student success program, EXCEL. With EXCEL's success, we identified that peer-to-peer support was a crucial component to the achievement of EXCEL scholars. Some students shared that their Peer Mentor was their primary connection to the EXCEL program and the reason they continued their education.

This project/program is designed as a Student Success and Activity. Peer Success Coaches are tasked with facilitating connections between students and on or off-campus communities to help them build a sense of belonging and self-efficacy. Coaches provide one-on-one coaching in

areas that the students choose; whether that relates to academic success, professional development, or personal growth, students are supported in reaching both short and long term goals. Peer Success Coaches are paired with students based on important shared qualities directly identified by the students. These qualities include similarity in age, race/ethnicity, background, and major. Once matched, Coaches are invested in their students' success and serve as a person ready to listen, inspire, and help navigate challenges. Our initial goal was to match a total of 500 students with a Coach within the academic year. We've had a lot of interest in our program, matching and supporting over 848 students in the first year and a half of our program's existence. This program meets the timeliness criteria due to its short existence launching in Spring of 2022.

The quality and efficiency of the program is exemplified by the dedication of each of the Peer Success Coaches and their active engagement with their students throughout the semester through one-on-one meetings, texts, and emails. Whether it is letting a student vent, helping a student create a plan for success, or finding resources and opportunities for students, Coaches are there to help. We know making sure our students feel connected and supported is crucial to their success and we are looking forward to continuing to see how these support efforts increase the students' overall sense of belonging as well as their rates of retention and completion. In 2022-2023 when working with an outside organization called Mentor Collective that helped us survey our students and coaches among other support, found that Mentees and coaches have extremely high satisfaction in the program, with an average score of over 6 out of 7 (likert scale) for both groups. When asking mentees how likely it is that they would recommend this program to a peer/friend the program scored a 6.3 out of 7 on a likert scale, with 7 representing high satisfaction. Another successful data point was the analysis of engagement by demographics. The Hispanic/Latino students that were highly engaged, with 3 or more significant conversations with their coaches per semester, was 42%, seven percentage points higher than averages across the nation and the African American/Black students with 3 or more significant conversations with their coaches per semester, was 52%, seventeen percentage points higher than averages across the nation.

The PSC supports and aligns with Strategy 1: Student Outreach and Success, Goal 1.2 MCCCDC retains and supports students. The Peer Success Program has helped the college increase retention. The proportions of the Fall 2022 cohort that were retained to the Spring 2023 semester (fall-to-spring retention) and to the Fall 2023 semester (fall-to-fall retention) were compared with those measures for the overall college. For the Fall 2022-to-Spring 2023 retention rate, 78% of the students that had a Peer Success Coach persisted. This was 14 percentage points higher than the GCC average persistence rates for Fall-to-Spring. For the Fall 2022-to-Fall 2023 retention rate, 53% of the students who had a peer coach in Fall 2022 are enrolled in Fall 2023. This is 11 percentage points higher than the overall college fall-to-fall persistence rate of 42%. This data is evidence that this program would be an excellent candidate for the GCC Innovation of the Year.

The program was started and supported through HEERF funding in the amount of almost \$500,000. That support included software to help us recruit and monitor our interactions,

staffing, and the redesign of the Student Success HUB. A space was transformed known as the Student Success Hub to welcome students on campus and house the PSC Program. In the last year, we have been able to advocate for \$70,000 of permanent fiscal support. We are currently being supported by \$125,000 one-time funding to pay for the coaches during the 2023-24 Academic year, and will be moving to a model that utilizes more Federal Work Study students to fund our coaches and increase the sustainability of this program. The work of PSC is furthered through collaboration with departments across campus. The Behavioral Health Sciences department was awarded a grant and created additional funding for coaches that will serve a specific cohort of students. We are encouraging more partnerships that could provide monetary support from external grants by writing in the needs of Peer Success Coaches that we would lead in a centralized model. The offices of Student Life and Leadership support programming efforts, including the hosting and facilitation of workshops. GCC has also allotted \$20,000 in internal grants to be used to support students with tuition and monetary assistance. The Counseling Department encourages the First Year Experience instructors to invite Coaches to present on the program at the beginning of their classroom sessions each semester. Our Institutional Effectiveness team provides student demographic data used for outreach campaigns and measuring metrics. GCC has been very supportive of this effort and we have many champions and internal partners that provide the support to ensure this is a successful program.

