

Part 2 of “More on Meeting the Needs of Students with LD in Higher Education”

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The Coaching/Mentoring program at Rowan University utilizes the Four-Stage Model for College Success. For more information, see *NAASLN’s News & Views*, Issue 12, August 2006, Spotlight Topic of the Month: “Meeting the Needs of Students with LD in Higher Education” (<http://www.naasln.org/newsletters.htm>)

Coaching/Mentoring Goals

The goals of the program are for the student to become more self-reliant, self-motivated, and autonomous, while assisting students in making a smooth transition from high school to college. The program aspires to increase the individual’s self-esteem as a result of academic and social success. A reduction in anxiety is also expected, which is a result of an increased GPA and college retention.

The conceptual framework for this program was derived from the Existential/Humanistic theory, a person-centered approach that considers the needs of the student/mentee and emphasizes, “unconditional positive regard.” This approach is active in that it views the student/mentee as having problem situations in which they need assistance to be successful, rather than being problematic students. The concentration was not on what is going wrong, but what could make things better (Rogers, 1961). The mentor assisted the mentee in identifying and developing strengths, resources, and undiscovered potential with the intention of maintaining and/or increasing self-esteem.

Four-Stage Model for College Success

A Four-Stage Model for College Success was developed and utilized specifically to guide this mentoring/coaching program. The four stages of the program included: 1) Orientation; 2) Development of College Management Plan; 3) Implementation and Monitoring; 4) Maintenance and Evaluation.

The first stage began with a four-week orientation in which students met in a large group, became acclimated to the campus, and learned study skills, time management, and organization skills. During this stage, they learned the importance of advocating for themselves, and the skills to do so, as well as understanding their individual learning styles.

The students learned the importance of knowing their own learning styles and relating this information to their professors’ teaching styles using the data from the Learning Connections Inventory (LCI). The students used the LCI scores to not only understand their strengths and weaknesses, but how to combine those

strengths and weaknesses with their professors teaching styles throughout the program. Knowledge of their learning styles also empowered the students, increased their confidence level, and ultimately, increased self-esteem.

Each student was assigned a mentor/coach by the second week. The mentor/coach assisted with organizing assignments, adjusting to living environments, and assisted with social skills when needed. A contract was signed by the mentee and the mentor with the intention of obtaining a commitment from the mentee to complete the program. Students were encouraged to attend campus programs, such as the Convocation Ceremony, help them feel connected to the university. The mentors accompanied the students to convocation, explained the ceremony, answered questions, and introduced them to various staff, faculty, and students. A proactive stance was taken by the mentor in order to predict possible issues that may arise and reduce stress during this stage.

The second stage began the fifth week with emphasis on completing the College Management Plan (CMP). The CMP was developed collaboratively between the mentor and mentee and consisted of the following domains: understanding of disability, organizational plan, time management, study skills and learning style, behavior management, self-esteem, problem-solving, recreation/activity plan, social skills/communication plan, and health maintenance. In this College Management Plan, three goals are agreed upon to assist in achieving success.

In the third stage, mentors met with their assigned mentees at least once a week depending on the individual needs of the student. The students were encouraged to attend their individual meetings, a weekly support group, and monthly workshops. Students were also encouraged to drop-in at anytime as issues arise. The CMP was reviewed weekly and mentors monitored the workload and academic progress. Referrals were made as needed for subject tutoring, personal counseling, and career and academic planning. Mentors continually monitored and assisted students throughout the semester.

The fourth stage was the maintenance phase, which occurred after the first semester for most students. For other students who had greater needs, the support continued. The CMP was evaluated on an on-going basis, which indicated the level of support needed to assist the students in being successful. The goal in this stage was to empower the student to become independent and benefit from an improved style of life and academic success.

Results of Program

The students who participated in the mentoring/coaching program earned a mean GPA score of 3.22, a median score of 3.28, with a range of 2.44-3.85. The students who did not participate in the program earned a mean GPA score of 2.45, a median score of 2.62, with a range of 1.23-4.00. These students who

participated earned a higher GPA after the first semester. The median GPA was 3.28 as compared to 2.62 for the group who did not participate, a difference of .77. The program continues at Rowan University and is in the 3rd year.

Order a Conference Session: Utilizing a Mentoring/Coaching program to Work Effectively with Students with Learning Disabilities in College, with Melissa Cox (1 tape/1 CD). For available tapes from the 2005 Conference, see www.naasln.org/conferences.htm

To learn more about the Four-Stage Model for College Success, visit www.dranott.com/Four-Stage%20Model.html