60-Second SoTL
Episode 52 – Mentoring Across the First-Year Experience

(Piano Music)

0:03

Jessie L. Moore:
Welcome to 60-Second SoTL! This week's episode is part of a short series by students in Elon University's Masters of Higher Education program. The students are exploring first-year experiences as meaningful or high-impact learning experiences. Listen for the other podcast episodes in their series wherever you subscribe to 60-Second SoTL.

(Piano Music)

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Emma Calhoun:
What's the value of peer-mentorship in a student's first-year? That's the focus of this week's 60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning. I'm Emma Calhoun.

In "The Value of a Semi-Formal Peer Mentorship Program for First-Year Students' Studies, Socialization and Adaptation," published in *Active Learning in Higher Education,* Art Tsang explores the perspectives of student mentors and mentees, highlighting the benefits and satisfaction derived from a first-year peer mentoring initiative.

1:01

Like many examples of the first-year experience, peer-mentoring opportunities have proven to especially help at risk students. Known to boast "stackable" benefits, increased sense of belonging, ease transition and lower attrition rates Tsang chooses to highlight peer mentoring as it proves accessible to practitioners worldwide.

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Taking place at a higher education institution in Hong Kong, Tsang followed 10 low-achieving first year students for a year, as they participated in a semi-formal peer mentorship program. Measuring with questionnaires on Perceived Importance (PI) and Perceived Assistance from Mentors (PAM), the research focused on changes in students' perceived academic and social wellbeing. Additionally, group interviews were conducted to gather qualitative data on mentors and mentees' experiences and program satisfaction.

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The study found that the program was highly beneficial for low-achieving first-year students, with both mentors and mentees expressing satisfaction with the initiative. The mentees perceived mentorship as valuable across various aspects, including academic studies, socialization, and adaptation to college life.

Qualitatively, participants equated their relationships with each other to metaphorical relationships like a "shepherd with their sheep," or like candlewax, where one life effects another.

2:28

These positive findings show the effectiveness of peer mentoring in addressing the diverse needs of students and enhancing their overall university experience. Furthermore, the study reveals that mentors found the program fulfilling as well, as they contribute to a culture of helpfulness and fostering a positive, relationship-rich atmosphere at the university. When planning first-year peer mentoring programs, Tsang's study demonstrates how semiformal mentoring can be implemented easily at low costs. When advertising peer-mentorship positions to students, opportunities for mutual gain can be supported by this study as surveyed mentors reported gains including multi-perspective thinking and higher rates of self-confidence.

3:13

To learn more about the benefits of a first-year peer mentoring program and its relation to high-impact practices, see the full citation in our show notes to read this article and review our supplemental episodes on this topic.

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Join us next week for another snapshot of recent scholarship of teaching and learning on **60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning**. Learn more about the Center at www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org.

(Piano Music)