Strengthening a Culture of Mentoring at Alfred University: Defining, Developing, and Rewarding Mentoring Relationships

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Introduction

Demographic changes across the U.S. are changing the ways that small colleges and universities think about what makes them distinctive in a shrinking market. In 2022, Alfred University made a bold choice to include mentoring in its strategic plan as one of the stand-out features of the institution. This choice was made in response to the growing high level of support and interest in mentoring initiatives in the academic world as a key to student success (Jacobi, McKinsey, Crisp & Cruz), and in our recognition that a high-level of mentoring already occurred at Alfred University both in more formally organized programs, such as First-Year Experience programs, as well as in the crucial unplanned, more organic conversations that arise out of specific relationships and/or needs (McKinsey). Including mentoring in the strategic plan implies institutional support and resources directed towards those initiatives, while it also ***necessitates defining what we mean by mentoring***; ***identifying, developing or supporting those programs and individuals where the conditions for mentoring to occur have been established; designing new programs for mentoring to meet the needs of specific community cohorts; and finally understanding, supporting, and valuing the time-consuming, emotional work of mentoring within the community.***

In order to strengthen the culture of mentoring at Alfred University, this paper looks at the literature on mentoring to *develop a vocabulary that distinguishes mentoring as an activity related to but different than other important activities* that define an academic community, such as teaching, advising, student (and/or faculty and staff) engagement, and research. It also looks to

conversations held across the university to further develop a definition for mentoring pertinent and specific to Alfred University. It considers different types of mentoring that already occur at the university, as well as interrogates areas at the university where mentoring is not as well-defined, or not fully accessible to all members of the community. It maps the university, showing where mentoring occurs and in what forms, in order to better understand where students' needs are, or are not being met. This paper distinguishes between intentional mentoring programs where individuals are assigned mentors either in a one-to-one relationship or in cohorts, and programs that are in place to perform a specific task while also creating the conditions under which mentoring relationships may blossom. It describes the development of a new transactional program providing mentoring and guidance for Academic Explorers (students who have not yet decided on a major course of study) in The College of Liberals Arts and Sciences. Finally, the paper makes recommendations for additional programs that address the needs of specific members of the community.

Mentoring Project Goals

Project Goals

Our goal as a university community is to engage in mentoring in a collective and multi-dimensional way across the university community, building from the excellence in mentoring that already occurs both naturally and programmatically across the campus, to develop mentoring as an intentional, distinguishing feature of what we call The Alfred Experience.

The purpose of the Mentoring Project Team is to identify and increase opportunities and resources for students' academic, professional, and personal development through mentoring. While we recognize that mentoring at all levels is already an integral, organic feature of an

Alfred University education for many students, other students may not be aware of the potential for growth through a relationship with a mentor, or may not be comfortable asking for, or even expecting, help or guidance that goes beyond advising, teaching, and/or academic counseling (Lee). This may be especially true for students who have not yet chosen a major course of study, first generation students, or students belonging to underrepresented groups on campus (Campbell & Campbell; Crisp 2011; Dodson, Hirsh,).

The goal of this project is to **_identify where mentoring already occurs_**_, both **as formally**_ **_structured programs_**, and as **_relationships or exchanges that occur or develop naturally in_** **_response to a particular need._** Further, the goal includes **_defining mentoring_** in such a way that we as a community recognize what we mean when we talk about mentoring and are therefore able to develop the resources necessary to support and even train individuals in their mentoring or mentee roles thus creating greater pathways for sustainability and success (Edwards & Gordon). The goal also includes **_heightening the visibility and accessibility of mentoring across_** **_the university_** through both **_short-term programs_** designed for specific members of the community, e.g. First-Year Experience programs, and through **_recognizing and acknowledging_** **_the less formal modes of mentoring_** that may arise naturally between a faculty member and a student: during a dedicated research project, for example. **_The end-goal is to facilitate an_** **_environment that encourages individual mentoring programs and independent mentoring_** **_relationships to blossom into a culture infused with the potential for mentoring at all levels_**, with an understanding that all members of this community will have the opportunity to participate in mentoring, both as mentors and mentees depending upon the circumstances. Such a

culture, accessible to all members of the community, has the potential to attract students, build a stronger retention and graduation rate, and encourage a greater, enduring sense of community (Lee, Lunsford, Morrison et al).

Towards a Definition of Mentoring at AU

While the word "mentor" has been around for a long time, originating in *The Odyssey*, where Athena, Goddess of Wisdom, disguised herself as an old friend of Odysseus named Mentor in order to give Telemachus, a young man very much on his own, wise counsel and guidance in his father's absence, all of which seems metaphorically appropriate for the way we think of mentoring our students today, the modern groundswell of attention to and research on mentoring as a way to facilitate professional and personal growth took hold in the 1970s (McKinsey, Gutiérrez, Jacobi).

Part of understanding and defining mentorship means recognizing the ways in which it is different than the other important jobs we do. Mentorship may grow out of our classrooms and office hours and playing fields, however it has distinctive elements that separate it from teaching, advising, and coaching (McKinley). When our alumni mention individual faculty or staff members as mentors, for example, they generally point to a conversation or conversations (across time) that offered life-changing support, guidance, or inspiration, even, occasionally, a life-altering challenge – something that goes beyond excellence in teaching or advising towards an individual's life-long goals and personal development (Table 4, p. 19). Alfred University has already developed (and continues to develop) a culture of teaching excellence, as well as robust, supportive athletic programs, and diverse clubs that speak to students' personal, professional and

academic development with an emphasis on building leadership skills. Mentoring, however, despite frequently being conflated with effective teaching and coaching (McKinsey, Crisp 2010), goes beyond the curriculum to provide life-shaping support, guidance, inspiration, and vision. Alumni in our recent survey attested to experiences in which mentors helped them to choose their career path, or offered them respect and friendship within their discipline, or developed their confidence by sharing more of themselves, providing a mirror, or helped them stay the course when they didn't think they could succeed (Table 2, p.17). Effective mentoring can also attract stronger students (Morrison etal). And mentoring is not a one-way street; mentors, too, benefit from these interactions. Relationship-rich institutions are more attractive places to work and live as they create communities that move beyond the transactional into truer connections (Felton et al). A mentoring-based community provides a forum for sharing and expanding knowledge on both sides of the conversation; it can be a students' need or interests that raise a faculty member's interest or awareness of new social or academic trends and ideas (Gutiérrez), thereby enriching the entire community.

When we talk about mentoring we're describing a range of relationships across an individual's larger relationship with the academic community as a whole. These can be student-to-student, faculty-to-student, or staff-to-student. Ideally, a student developing confidence within a culture that foregrounds mentoring will build a constellation, or circles, of mentoring relationships that extend out over time (Felton et al, Smith). Since the 1990s Alfred University has been developing individual intentional mentoring programs with an emphasis on peer-to-peer mentoring especially during students' first year, though this has occurred unevenly across the university. We have also relied heavily upon the naturally occurring mentoring, primarily

faculty-to-student, (see Table 2, p.16). While this form of mentoring is often the most memorable for individuals because it is the most personal, frequently arising out of relationships that already exist, such as an advising relationship, or a professor from a student's major area of study, it is more difficult to track; it has required us to rely on anecdote; and it is hit or miss, leaving out individuals who don't know how to ask for or participate in such a relationship (Lee, Dodson, Morrison, Jacobi). By making mentoring central to our mission and strategic plan, Alfred is committing to building those pathways to mentoring relationships for all students across their personal, academic, and professional development within and in relation to this academic community. This means developing and implementing ***programs that provide intentional pathways to mentoring relationships*** that are available to all students, as well as developing and supporting ***programs that create the conditions for mentoring*** that are also available to all students.

Types of Mentoring Undergraduate Students

For this project, we have identified two broad categories of mentoring: mentoring that arises naturally and informally from an already established relationship and/or from specific circumstances in which an individual needs the counsel of someone more experienced than they, and the more formally designed mentoring programs that target specific groups of students with similar needs that place them in a particular cohort, e.g. first-year students, or students completing senior research projects.

Within these broader categories, we recognize that mentors and mentees may come from all parts of the community. Peer-to-peer mentoring is recognized as being a more effective way of

reaching first-year students, for example, because peers are perceived as being more accessible. Students who have access to peer mentor programs tend to develop a greater sense of belonging and community, to better understand the resources available to them on the campus, and to display a stronger sense of confidence and movement towards leadership (Campbell et al., 2000 and 2002, Lunsford et al., Jacobi). In the case of more advanced students who may be completing capstone projects and research, faculty-to-student mentoring is more appropriate, though students may also benefit from informal or even structured cohort or peer mentor groups during this process, as well. Research shows clearly that students benefit from different kinds of mentoring at different points in their development (McKinsey, Felton et al). Furthermore, the research posits that the goal of mentoring is to encourage student persistence and resilience towards completion of their education, which is definable, while also facilitating those less assessable goals of personal and intellectual development that can prepare an individual for a fulfilling and connected life after graduation (Nora & Crisp).

The project to develop a strong, intentional culture of mentoring at Alfred University recognizes that both categories of mentoring are important, that working in concert they bolster and support individuals across the community in collective, defining ways. The more ***formal, structured programs create specific pathways*** for students to experience and contribute to mentoring through meaningful, clearly defined relationships. Many of these programs, such as first-year programs, ***demonstrate how a student might initiate and/or maintain a mentoring relationship*** by offering planned activities or discussions that open the door to the sharing of information and experience ***while simultaneously creating the conditions under which a deeper or more meaningful connection may develop***. These programs also ***offer built-in training for mentors***

and mentees that can and should outline the responsibilities, benefits, and parameters of such a relationship. Because they are designed to meet the needs of the specific groups they are meant to serve (e.g. first-year students, first-generation students, students in specialized academic programs such as engineering), it is possible to *identify and make available* to mentors and mentees *those resources* both within and beyond the community that facilitate the relationship by allowing for clear communication and further connections. These intentionally structured programs also create *a vocabulary and an understanding of mentoring relationships* that can light up those pathways to future mentoring relationships that students may initiate on their own both as mentees (e.g. asking a professor for career advice) and as future mentors themselves (e.g. serving as peer mentors). Because the purpose and design of these programs is attuned to specific groups with specific needs, *tracking the efficacy of the mentoring relationship can be built-in to the program*.

The less formal, naturally arising forms of mentoring that already exist at Alfred University can benefit from the more formally structured programs in a number of ways:

- Clarifying the vocabulary, understanding, and parameters of the mentoring relationship.
- Creating pathways of opportunity for mentoring and being mentored for all students.
- Clarifying the reciprocal nature of the mentor-mentee relationship.
- Making available the resources and training developed to meet the specific needs of the more formal programs as templates for resources and training for all members of the community.

- Deriving appropriate, non-invasive methods for assessing and valuing what is essentially a private relationship between a mentor and mentee from assessment methods developed for the formal programs.

- Recognizing the emotional and intellectual labor associated with these relationships and including it in the way we reward and value the contributions of individuals to the culture of mentoring (McKinsey, Morrison et al).

Mapping Alfred University's Current Culture of Mentoring

A large part of our work in this first year has involved creating a map of Alfred University that shows where mentoring already occurs, both in formal mentoring programs and in naturally arising situations (Table 1, p.15).

To make the map, we:

- Interviewed all academic deans including the Dean of Libraries, to gather information on all mentoring programs or initiatives within their units. These were conversations that also described aspirations for developing more pathways to mentoring in the future. We also discussed programs within the units that while not being mentoring programs per se, created the conditions within which mentoring might occur.

- Interviewed academic program directors (e.g. CLAS Director of First-Year Experience, Center for Academic Success Director, Honors Program Director) to discover key mentoring aspects of their programs.

- Interviewed program directors in student experience, (e.g. Residence Life, Career Development) to discover key mentoring aspects of their programs.

- Collected data on all existing campus clubs to discover which had some aspect of mentoring as a component (Table 3, p. 18).

- Surveyed alumni to discover their experience of mentoring at Alfred University (Tables 2 & 4, pp. 16, 17, 19).

- Began conversations with individual members of the community to collect snapshot impressions of their experiences or expectations of mentoring at Alfred University.

What We Learned:

- Each academic unit has some form of mentoring program for first-year students, some more formally structured than others. Each differs in ways that highlight the specific needs of students in that academic area, for example, students in The College of Business are introduced to LinkedIn in a seminar taught by the Dean in their first semester and are encouraged to begin building a profile, and required by the end of the semester to demonstrate the connections they have made. They are also encouraged to make connections with each other through LinkedIn and their new profiles in a form of peer mentorship that echoes the formal First-Year Experience Program (FYE) in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences that places every first-year student in an FYE course of their choosing that has a smaller enrollment and a peer leader in the form of an upper level student assigned to the course who serves as a mentor for all things college including the adjustment to college for students in the class.

- While first-year mentoring takes different forms in the different academic units, it is all peer-mentoring whether it is class-based, or one-to-one based, or cohort-based. Research shows that peer mentoring is considered the most efficacious form of mentoring for students at this point in their college experience (Nora and Crisp, Jacobi, Lunsford et al).

- Most academic units have some form of mentoring for more advanced students who are at the research phase of their college experience, though these mentoring relationships are generally not as formally designed as the first-year experience programs, and, as we might expect, differ widely according to the disciplines and the needs of the students (Table 1, p. 15).

- Most academic units have some form of peer mentoring opportunities at the more advanced levels where a peer may be, for example a Supplemental Instructor (SI), Learning Assistant (LA), or peer-tutor in the sciences who holds regular office or lab hours. That peer mentor, though, is also being mentored by a faculty or staff member in their function as a resource for other students. The structure of the mentoring is not always formally defined, but it exists (Table 1, p.15).

- Some academic units also use architecture and space as an aid to mentoring or to creating the conditions under which mentoring is more likely to occur. We can see this in the science labs and the STEP lab, for example. Harder Hall where The School for Art and Design is housed is also a terrific case in point: younger students often have their studio spaces next to or near older or more experienced students' studio spaces thus facilitating a natural form of peer and/or peer cohort mentoring. This use of space to create meaningful connection is now echoed on the third floor of Harder outside the galleries and auditorium where colorful, comfortable seating and tables are arranged in such a way as to invite connection there, as well.

- Many smaller programs and divisions feature some form of mentoring, especially for new students, such as the *Bigs and Littles Program* in the *AU Honors Program* in which more senior students are paired with entering students in a mentoring relationship.

- In addition to formal mentoring programs, we also have programs that while geared to other specific needs and tasks, ***establish the conditions for mentoring to occur***. The libraries' Personal Librarian Program is a good example. Our task moving forward is to consider how to support librarians (in this case) in their potential role as mentors – what resources or training do they need? – as well as to measure the efficacy of such programs. How can we strengthen that tie between a teaching/coaching/research relationship and mentoring?

- Out of 66 clubs total, 28 or 42% have some kind of mentoring initiative noted as part of their description (Table 3, p.18).

- Supervision, training, and resources can be hit or miss in the smaller, unofficial mentoring situations. This does not necessarily make them ineffectual, but it's also hard to tell and difficult to reinforce the importance of such initiatives and connections as they end up depending on individual personalities more than upon a larger, cultural understanding of and support for mentoring.

- In a 10% return on the alumni survey, 58% of respondents indicated they had experienced mentoring during their time at Alfred. Many indicated multiple mentors over the span of their four years with 11% indicating their mentoring relationships remained on-going. (Table 2, p. 17).

- Alumni added stories of their mentoring relationships at AU, indicating the range of ways mentoring helped them to succeed, and exceed, their own expectations. (Table 4, p. 19).

- We used insights from our mapping and research to build the Academic Explorers pilot (Addendums A-D), and will continue to build from what we have learned as we go forward.
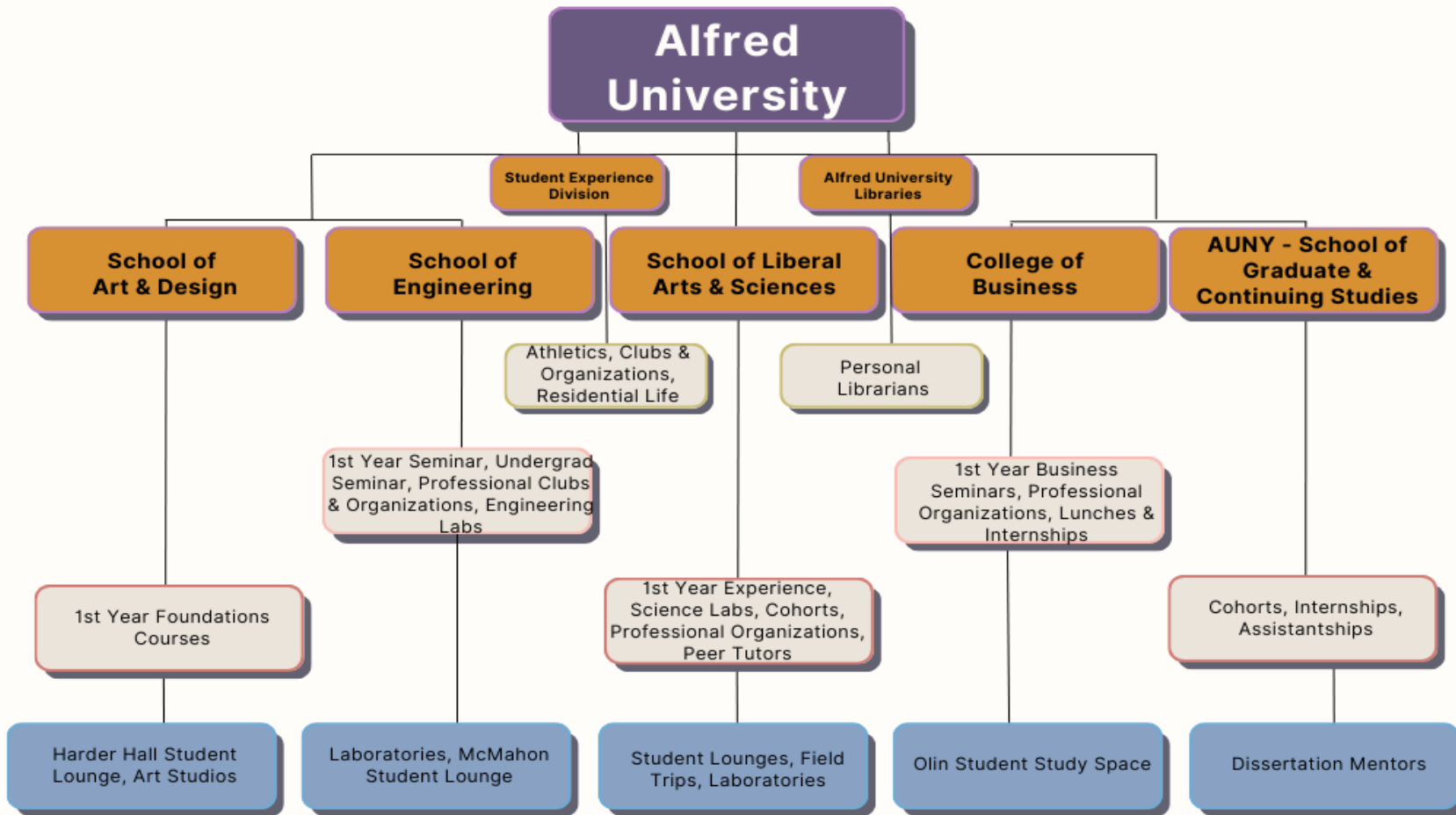
Table 1

MENTORING MAP OF CAMPUS ———————————— **ALFRED UNIVERSITY**

Alfred University

Student Experience Division

Alfred University Libraries

School of Art & Design	School of Engineering	School of Liberal Arts & Sciences	College of Business	AUNY - School of Graduate & Continuing Studies

Athletics, Clubs & Organizations, Residential Life

Personal Librarians

1st Year Seminar, Undergrad Seminar, Professional Clubs & Organizations, Engineering Labs

1st Year Business Seminars, Professional Organizations, Lunches & Internships

1st Year Foundations Courses

1st Year Experience, Science Labs, Cohorts, Professional Organizations, Peer Tutors

Cohorts, Internships, Assistantships

Harder Hall Student Lounge, Art Studios	Laboratories, McMahon Student Lounge	Student Lounges, Field Trips, Laboratories	Olin Student Study Space	Dissertation Mentors

Table 2: Survey

Question 6)

In your experience at AU, did you have a mentor or mentors?

Answer	Count
Yes	385
No	304

44%

56%
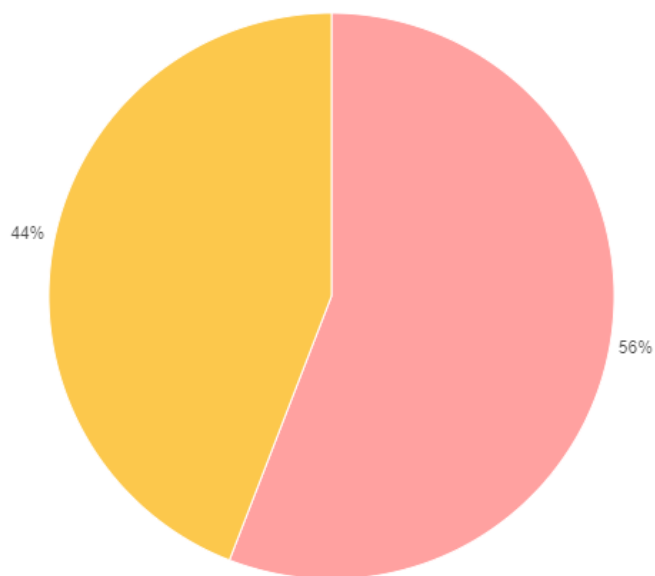
Answered: 689 | Skipped: 0   Q 6

Question 7)

Was this person(s) a...

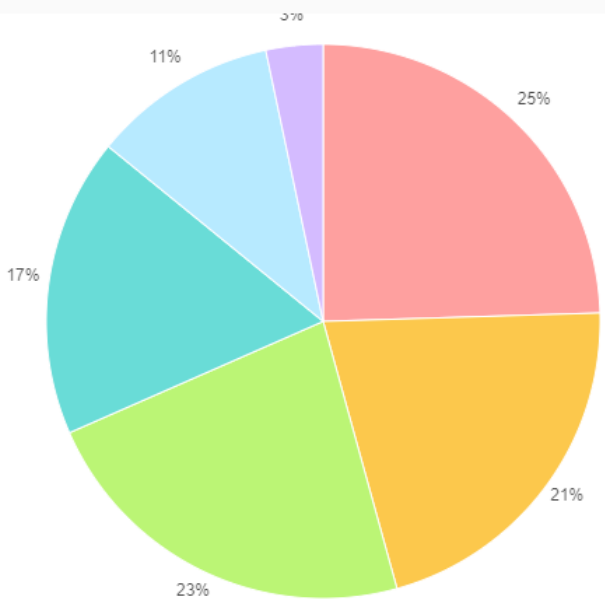| Answer	Count
Peer	93
Faculty member	345
Staff member	93
Administrator	57
Community member	30

5%

9%

15%

15%

56%
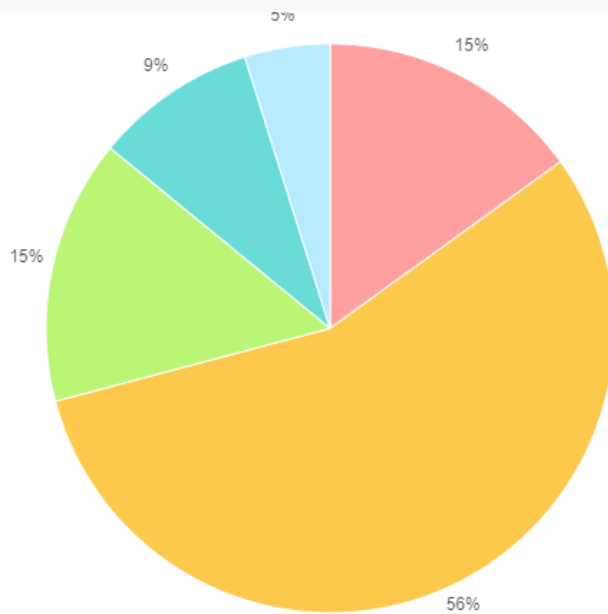
Answered: 391 | Skipped: 1   Q 7

Question 8)

At what point in your development did this relationship(s) occur?

Answer	Count
● First year	177
● Second year	153
● Third year	164
● Fourth year	126
● Ongoing	78
● Other	24

Answered: 382 | Skipped: 1   Q 8

Question 9)

Please briefly describe this relationship(s) and the impact it has had.

200 / 300

Work supervisor; made me pick the current career I have
Interactions plus their stories covered all manner of life
I was being bullied and he came to my aide
Increased my confidence
Nursing leaders practicing the art of nursing
Dr. Peter Finley
The school psychology faculty served as mentors
Drs. Ohara and Bernstein   Helped finish two courses.
Peer: friendship, trust
This faculty member followed my Alfred career
Followed in their footsteps working college athletics

Answered: 300 | Skipped: 0   Q 9

Table 3 – Campus Clubs

Academically Honest Bois*	EuroSim
Accounting Club	Extreme Sports
African Student Association*	Fashion Club
AIAA Design Build Fly	Feral Cat Protection Club
Alfred Economics Club	Fiat Lux News*
Alfred Bowling Club	Forest People
Alfred Film Club	Guiding Eyes for the Blind at Alfred University*
Alfred Goes Green	Hillel at Alfred*
Alfred Karaoke Club	Hillel House
Alfred Marketing Association*	Holding Space*
Alfred Medieval Club	International Students Association*
Alfred Men's Rugby Club	InterVarsity Christian Fellowship*
Alfred Roller Skating Club	Lighthouse Christian Fellowship*
Alfred Speech & Debate Team*	Material Advantage*
Alfred TNR - AU Branch	Newman Club*
Alfred University Anglers	Poder Latinx*
Alfred University Baseball Club	Print Club
Alfred University Cheerleading*	Queer Art Collective*
Alfred University Esports Team	Saxon Fly
Alfred uNiVersity Ironworker's League	Saxon Manufacturing Group*
Alfred University Society of Biomaterials*	Saxon Racing*
Alfred University TV	Saxon Restoration
Alfred University Ultimate Frisbee	Saxon Robotics
Alfred Women's Rugby Club	Sculpture Society
American Society of Mechanical Engineers*	Sister Circle*
Athletic Training Club*	Society of Women Engineers*
AU Boxing Club	Student Activities Board*
AU Chess Club	Student Senate*
AU Cooking Club	The Caribbean Student Association*
AU Dungeons & Dragons	The Saxon Bike Hub
AU Magic the Gathering Club	Umoja*
AU Math & Computer Science Club	United Alfred*
Electric Vehicle Club	WALF 89.7 FM

Denotes a club that has a mentoring component

CLUBS/ORGANIZATIONS	OUT OF 66 CLUBS TOTAL	%
With a clear mentoring component	28	42%
Without a clear mentoring component	38	58%

Table 4 Alumni speak to mentoring – from the Survey

Alum #7:

"I developed excellent mentor relationships with multiple faculty in the English department as far as completing the degree. My mentor relationships at the equestrian center certainly did the most to set up my life and career outside of school."

Alum #17:

"I had an internship with Sharon Rogers in the sociology department. Her husband, Evan, Rogers also was in the sociology department. They became friends as they guided me along looking back. I believe their advice was always veiled in the nature of a friendly relationship. I also will be forever grateful to the person who was the dean of the education department in 1974. I want to say his name was S. Gene Odle. It's probably too long a story to stage here, but he gave me life changing advice."

Alum #53:

"My first semester I took a course from the professor who would become my mentor -He took an active interest in me and even taught a topics course based on my interests."

Alum #81:

"Marvin H. was my head resident, and she was a huge source of comfort and direction. I still catch up with her once in a while, literally decades later. I lost sight of her on campus after freshman year but later on sought her out and we do chat once in a while, not as much about mentoring but just for fun. Marvin was a lifesaver my freshman year. I had never been away from home more than a night or two without family or immediate friends, and although I was mostly fine, for those times where I questioned if I was doing the right thing(s) or if someone was "being mean" Marvin put things into perspective and made me think about what was going on. She was a big help."

Alum #111:

"Professors instructing the Poli Sci and Philosophy courses I took. They all had high standards, were excellence-oriented, and were fair. They would provide the support or direct me to support to level up in my coursework and exceed even my own expectations."

Alum #116:

"The personal interaction with my professors totally enriched my college experience. Having both administration and faculty as mentors when I needed help was critical."

Alum #126:

"My mentors in school were graduate students, my fellow classmates and two faculty members in particular who I worked with as their studio assistant. I am still in touch with many of those individuals."

Developing a Pilot:

During this first year of culture defining and strengthening, we decided to focus on a group of students we recognized were underserved by a community of mentors. These are the students who matriculate at the university into The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) without a major and often without a clear idea of what they want to study. Though the curriculum in CLAS is designed for broad exploration of the disciplines, students who have not chosen a major often feel adrift and don't have an obvious cohort with whom to identify, as for example students who identify as "pre-med" would. Research shows these undecided students suffer from higher attrition rates between the first and second year.

By creating a program specifically designed for these students, we are able to establish a cohort, name it Academic Explorers as opposed to "Undeclared" or "Undecided" (because who wants to be an "Un" something?) and offer a range of workshops and skill-building tactics with designated graduate peers to aid these students in their decision-making process.

We were helped in the research and design process by a talented group of four graduate students who had assistantships and some free time to work with us. They have combined their backgrounds in clinical and school psychology, their research skill, and their desire to (and I'm quoting them) "give back in a meaningful way to the university," to put together a comprehensive program that includes group workshops and reflections lead by the graduate students, individual mentoring and counseling, with an emphasis on the positive development of these students across their academic and personal experiences. Two of the original group will

stay on in the first year of the pilot as super mentors who will both work with a cohort of undergraduates while also facilitating the training and reflection processes of the new graduate assistants who will be joining the program in the new academic year. They, and we, hope the overlap will be a continual part of the process from year-to-year, creating a kind of fluid relationship between mentors and mentees with the understanding that both groups have something to learn from each other, and with the hope that some Academic Explorers will return in subsequent years to participate in the mentoring and the connection-making for newer students. In some ways, this has already been successful, as the graduate students themselves reported feeling mentored and seen and listened to, and described the process of designing the pilot as developmental for them. Two plan to take their research and design to a conference in the coming year.

The pilot includes many of those formal elements that will be helpful not only to this particular program but to the development of the overall culture as well. These include:

- Training and resources for mentors
- Connection-building across the university: with faculty, with The Career Development Center, with the libraries
- Time for reflection and re-grouping (for mentors)
- Recognition and positive supervision of the work
- Assessment tools
- A shared space in which to meet and work that facilitates sharing and connecting

To see some of the preparation and structure for the pilot, please see Addendums A-D. These include the complex profile of the undecided student, the mission statement, the program design and schedule, and the research path completed by the GA's that undergirds the profile.

Next Steps

For our second year, we have begun the work to develop an alumni-student pilot to encourage discussion and mentoring support around career development. This pilot involves cooperation between the College of Business, the Career Development Center, the Office of Alumni Development, and Deans of the academic units.

Progress Markers

We are beginning to see individuals talking more about mentoring in their day-to-day conversations, recognizing it as something we do. New pilots for mentoring programs are designed with built-in mechanisms for evaluation. Data reflecting the development of our mentoring culture will be captured and shared through the COO dashboard. Candidates for open positions have been asked to talk about mentoring as part of their job talks: how would they see it as part of how they teach or direct their center, for example. Academic units are looking for student cohorts who might be better served with more intentional mentoring practices. Program directors have reached out to ask for literature on ways to better create the conditions for mentoring within their already specified purviews. These initiatives have allowed us to consider more clearly what resources and what training are necessary to support mentors in the practice of mentoring. How, for example, do we make the pathways to connection easier to access? How do we break down the silos between us so that we recognize that though one size does not fit all we

can all work together to make sure that everyone in the community has access to a connection-rich education and experience?

If we were asked, why mentoring?, and it's a good question, we need only to go back to our stated mission to educate the whole individual, to graduate students who not only have the knowledge and skills to find reasonable, even rewarding work, but those less quantifiable skills that enable individuals to live a full and rewarding life, as we asked in our alumni survey. Those are the kinds of skills that come from an institution that values mentoring and even, boldly, shapes its strategic plan around privileging and telling the stories about those kinds of connections, teaching ALL of its students how to make such connections. Faculty, staff, and students who choose to participate actively in a culture of mentoring need to be recognized, supported, and rewarded for their contributions to the community (McKinsey, Gutiérrez, Morrison et al). We're already engaging our values by looking harder at the structure of our programs, and by learning and using the vocabulary of mentoring in a clearer, more forthright manner. The university's strategic commitment to mentoring acknowledges this.

As we move forward, it will be important to find ways of inviting all members of the community to the mentoring table as both mentors and mentees, developing strategies for mentorship that serves the whole community. As educators, we know we wouldn't be where we are, we wouldn't be here, if it weren't for the people who mentored us. This is an exciting time: to take the organic impulse towards mentoring that was always a natural extension of the faculty, staff, and students in this community and develop that generosity into a culture designed to serve all members.

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Addendum A

<u>Who is The Undecided Student?</u>

- The first recorded study about undecided students was published in 1927.
- Studies over the next two decades reported that 9 to 61 percent of high school and college students were undecided.
- Research over the years has only confirmed that undecided students comprise a complex, heterogenous group and their reasons for indecision are just as varied.
- Today indecision is considered by some to be a developmental phase that is part of the decision-making process.
- Indecision is no longer the purview of adolescence and early adulthood, but rather a broad life-span perspective.
- Career plans often need to be revised due to the nature and challenges associated with a changing and complex workplace, as is true of today's economic climate.

- 50 variables have been explored as possible correlations related to indecision:
  - Career information needs
  - Vocational identity
  - Career choice anxiety
  - Career self-efficacy
  - Lack of motivation
  - Career myths
  - Dysfunctional career thoughts
  - Internal and external barriers
  - Chronic indecisiveness
  - Career decision making difficulties.

    - Other Possible Factors:
  - Opinions and attitudes from friends and family can also be a deterring factor.
  - Indecision may also emanate from not accepting/not being satisfied with the role of the occupation.
  - Sex-role stereotyping may also be a factor.
  - Avoidance behavior (fear of commitment, personality traits of perfectionism and self-consciousness.

- One study indicated that for some people indecision is an aspect of their rate of personal development and that intellectual curiosity and creativity are characteristics of students who cannot narrow their interests.
- Fear of commitment was found to be higher in undecided students than decided students.
- Undecided male students are found to be slightly less interested in science. Both men and women who are undecided are not vocationally oriented.

- Undecided students tend to emphasize the goal of college as centered in intellectual curiosity and ability rather than choosing a vocational or professional goal, or in other words, they are more intellectually and less vocationally motivated.
- In studying personality factors related to high and low career indecision groups:
  - it was found that students with high levels of career indecision appeared less socially developed and scored low on leadership potential.
  - Tendency towards nonconformity or resistance to prescribed/rules and expectations were also high in the high career indecision group.

Addendum B - Mission statement for the Academic Explorers Pilot

<u>Our Mission, Goal, and Objectives</u>

Mission Statement:

Our mission is to guide students on a journey of self - discovery through the process of self - reflection within the intersection of personal interests, values, and skills. We seek to promote academic exploration and curiosity through individual mentoring sessions, group workshops, and connection to resources available to students at Alfred University. At the end of this program, students will have gained insight, self - knowledge, and goals for their future.

Goal: Aide in academic exploration and self - discovery

    Objective 1: Lesson major / career related anxiety

    Objective 2: Build SEL skills to empower students (problem - solving, decision making, locus of control)

    Objective 3: Expose students to careers, majors, and graduate programs

    Objective 4: Guide students to determine their strengths, interests, and values

Addendum C – Schedule for the first year of the Academic Explorers Pilot

1st Semester

Week 1: Workshop

Workshop: staff meet and greet, overview of the program

Week 2: Individual Meeting

Intake assessment

Week 3: Workshop

SEL workshop: Cognitive Flexibility

Week 4: Workshop

Pinterest Board of Interests

Week 5: Workshop

Vision Boards Workshop

Powerpoint presentation

Week 6: Individual Meeting

Check in

- Self - assessment of classes taken
- Do you like these subjects?

Intro to Career 1 Stop/O-Net

- Orient to the website
- Provide guide of resources
- Homework: try one of the resources to discuss week 8

Week 7: Workshop

Workshop: SEL Lesson: Judgement and Decision making

- powerpoint

Week 8: Individual Meeting

- Discuss Career 1-Stop/Onet assessment results
- Activity: Career sorting cards
- *find way to copy/laminate cards or see if we can buy sets)

<u>Week 9: Workshop</u>

Workshop: Internal/External Locus of Control (decisiveness/ decision making)

- Powerpoint/activity

<u>Week 10: Individual Meeting</u>

- Check in
- Self - assessment of classes taken
- Do you like these subjects?
- Journal Exercise self - reflection (life oriented - not necessarily at end)
- Life goals
- Hope for future
- Types of classes they enjoy
- Develop any new areas of interest of the semester
- Strengths / weakness
- Accomplish the rest of this semester

<u>Week 11: Workshop</u>

SEL lesson: People Management

<u>Week 12: Individual Meeting</u>

Discuss finals / study strategies and stress

1. Discuss finals studying strategies and provide resources
   a. Explore the websites
2. Go through stress management powerpoint and give resource
3. Use coping skills checklist to facilitate discussion on which they use / might try

<u>Week 13: Workshop</u>

Workshop: panel of students who were previously *undecided* discuss their current major, what they like about it, and how they chose it

<u>Week 14: Individual Meeting</u>

SMART goals for next semester

2nd Semester

Week 1: Check in

Discussion about how they will achieve their smart goals during the semester

Week 2: Workshop

What to consider before choosing a major / career

Week 3 Individual meeting

Pick your values

Create a "recipe" for life incorporating your values

Exploring self - knowledge

Week 4:SEL Workshop

Week 5: Individual Meeting

Powerpoint challenge

Research an academic career zone / major

- Possible careers
- Pros and cons

Week 6: Powerpoint Challenge (pt 2) Workshop

Students present their powerpoint to their group during the workshop

Week 7: Individual Meeting

Supplemental event: panel board of professors / careers

Check in on how the panel board went

Reflect on it

Week 8: SEL

Week 9: Individual Meeting

Prepare students for career fair

Provide prompts, questions, etiquette

Week 10: Career Fair

Week 11: Individual Meeting

Check in: Discuss how career fair went

Week 12: Workshop

Speed questions

- What helped you in this course
- Reflect on where you are now
- Possible major choosing?

Week 13: Individual Meeting

Data collection on the program

Possible rewarding session for finding a major?

Celebrating self / accomplishments

- Shine sheet

Week 14: Celebration of Accomplishments and Hard Work

PARTY!

Addendum D – References for the Academic Explorers Pilot

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