Partnerships in Learning

Jenni Wallace
Why and Where

• Need to be clear about WHY you are engaging in a Peer Mentoring scheme
• Are you targeting more than 3 outcomes?

• Where are you located? Academic department:
  • Learning and Teaching: Widening Participation:
  • Student Union: Study Support
Beginnings : Context

• 3 issues in 1970s: RETENTION
• Study skills taught in isolation do not work
• Difficult courses NOT difficult students
• Who are the experts of the first year experience? The 2nd year student
• 1990 Kingston University
• Individualised Approaches to Learning
• Successes, challenges, unions, press
Passing on a year's experience
Kingston spreads message of support
Grounded?

- Questions I was asked
- Missing from the US model
- Realisation that this was a collection of appropriate learning and teaching methodologies
- Helps define your role
- Helps define your programme
Process

• Met with 1st year students, and asked them to give me feedback about their total learning experience
• Used Nominal Group Technique
• Asked the question – “How has this course impacted on your potential for learning?”
• Feedback-identified those things that they could effect
What we learnt

• Students given responsibility will take it - do more than you ever dreamed of
• Innovate, take risks, communicate, share, support, grow, transfer
• Take the programme on to higher years
• Staff: wanting feedback on how their courses are being learnt
POST TRAUMATIC TEST DISORDER

DON’T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU
ATTEND SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION SESSIONS
BOERGER - MATH 40 / ERIK LAMBERG – COACH
MONDAY & WEDNESDAY  3:40 – 5:00  @  NSM #7
TUESDAY      12:00 – 1:30   @  NSM #9
Learning from others

• South African experience: groups using native language- build up confidence before class
• U.C.L. the activity that happens between the lecture and the seminar
• Abu Dhabi: women’s college- building on the facilitative processes that were used within Berber culture
• = answers that I used to build an ENGAGEMENT APPROACH
What is in the mix?

- **Metacognition** - awareness of the process of learning - monitoring your progress as you learn, adapting your strategies
- **Problem Based Learning (PBL)**
- Utilises real world problems, process of struggling with actual problems that students learn both content and critical thinking skills, they act as professionals and confront problems as they occur
Socratic Method

- agreed topic (asking not telling)
- the most powerful, teaching tactic for fostering critical thinking giving students questions, not answers.

We model an inquiring, probing mind by continually probing into the subject with questions.
Mentoring

• Mentoring: don’t do as I did
• a trusted colleague’ or ‘a critical friend’, with support and encouragement given.
• helping rather than supervising, guiding rather than assessing, empowering rather than training
Theories

Cognitive Development Theory - Piaget:
coop-eration among peers essential for the development of a critical attitude of mind, objectivity and discursive reflection

• Zone of Proximal Development – Vygotsky
  • The distance between the actual development as determined by individual problem solving and the level of potential development......in collaboration with a peer.
Collaborative Learning:

• working, building, learning, changing and improving together
• in groups- respects and highlights individual group members' abilities and contributions. sharing of authority and acceptance of responsibility among group members for the group’s actions.
• the underlying premise of collaborative learning is based upon consensus.
Facilitation

- Students do NOT re-teach the subject
- Help peers to learn to process the material, problem solving, organising materials, managing time, knowing HOW to ask for help, KNOW where to get it.
- It follows that those students who are better prepared, know how to ask for help, use the support opportunities and are more likely to complete their courses
Language: ENGAGEMENT

Building networks with peers providing both academic and social support
Strong connections between satisfaction levels and frequency which they interact in the learning community
ACTIVE involvement, shared commitment:
= BELONGING
Integration

- Integration into both academic and social domain = enhancing student engagement
- Tinto 1993
- Student Engagement: The role of peers in student experience:
  Krause KL, McInnis C, Welle ,C
  SRHE Annual Conference 2002
Transition Theory

• “Moving in, moving through, moving out”
• 4 factors that influence a person to cope
  • Situation
  • Self
  • Support
  • Strategies
• Their assets and liabilities
Nancy Schlossberg (1981)

- Different individuals react differently to the same sort of transition
- Why a person reacts differently at different times
- Chronological age is not an accurate indicator of a person’s development, experience, or ability to cope with transition.
So...Who are our students?

- What do they bring? : What do they want?
- Why do they come here? : Preconceived ideas
- Do they take responsibility for their learning?
- How did they know about your course?
- How do they access your teaching?
- What do they do when things go wrong?

- WHAT IS THEIR STORY?

- DOES ANYONE KNOW MY NAME?
Issues to consider

• Understand expectations- is there a mismatch when they come to study
• We have to guard against limiting their expectations by our own attitudes and practices
• Understanding what students are thinking and how they are feeling is the first step to getting successful results
To get students to stay you must get them started right

- Students need only one critical incident to judge the quality of service.
- Age, ethnicity, gender, teaching and learning styles, may differ from those who teach.
- We may only embrace retention practice as a result of recruitment crisis or Quality systems.
- Managing success means enhancing programmes and services, and thus student learning.
Futures Thinking

• tool for learning about the present.

• Invite you to step 10 years in the future - imagine how today’s trends are going to work out.

• Looking at the present through the eyes of the future stimulates the imaginative side of the brain.

• www. tomorrowproject.net
Define the issue or opportunity

Identify the key players & stakeholders - for and against

Monitor outcomes, give feedback to stakeholders, make changes

Understand the context, university and national

Agree on measurable outcomes, develop a plan

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Relevant training, supervision of mentors, Observation of sessions.
What is in your recipe?

Recipe for success

Debate
Question
Identify
Advise
Listen
Success Criteria

- Need to define what we mean by 1st year success
- Defining engagement language which links with institutional goals and mission
- Guaranteeing guidance from peers, mentors and support services
- Setting specific goals for the 1st year - assessment?
- Identifying those things both internal and external which interfere with student success – (Transition Theory?)
- How students are recruited
- Design of induction approaches
- Front load resources – Boyer Report
- Quality of guidance and teaching provided
- Need to start from the first point of contact with the university and to continue through all stages until point of exit and beyond
- Devising systems that help you spot early warning signs of students at risk
- Checking out assumptions through the eyes of the student
- Front loading the essential resources
- If you market a strong first year programme – make sure you deliver it
- Address student expectation, listen to concerns
- Create support groups
- Design flexible courses - through well designed curricula, institution can demonstrate responding and adapting to change
- Review and monitor approaches and practice
- Strategies that support both tutor and student
- Flexibility in mode of study and recognising prior learning
Success = Retention

• Retention should not be the primary aim: it should be an intended outcome from well designed policy and practice that has student success and satisfaction as the primary goal.
Student Success

• We need students to succeed, and have a positive learning experience

• ‘The success of an institution and the success of its students are inseparable:

• (Noel and Levitz 1991)
The first year

- Status of teaching on the 1st year?
- Boyer Commission: ...academics can learn from students as students are learning from academics...
- H.E. a consumer led economy
- Students ‘shop around’ for institutions and courses that best cater for their needs
- Make your mind up – was 6 weeks (Tinto)
Peer Support – one strategy

- Student rights and responsibilities as learners
- Need to provide the opportunities for engagement into the learning community
- Peer Support programme that is part of the co-curriculum
- Purpose-development of independent learners- need to develop skills of critical skills and enquiry
Peer Support

• Embedded within the L&T Strategy?
• Support of Professional Development Portfolios- Employment links?
• Success in a science foundation degree
• Recruiting ground
Why does it work?

- Owned by the students and members of staff – partnership
- Driven by course content
- Success due to student leaders
- Not the expert leading the session, trained student
- Students of the discipline – modelling the behaviours of problem solving, strategies that work, time management, directing towards the experts, advocates and mediators
Feedback

• Different atmosphere when experts (assessors) replaced by more equitable student to student relationship
• Less dependency and passivity on the part of the learner
• Feedback on what is being learnt, the added value owned and measured by the course.
Continuing Success

• Keep your training fresh and updated
• Invite stakeholders to present
• Re look at original purpose
• Re frame the model?
• The language?
• Share your research, look outside of your institution
I Have recently:

• Changed my language from retention to engagement
• Used term mediators instead of Peer Tutors
• Mediator one, “who serves as a catalyst bringing about a cognitively important reaction between (students) and events in their experience”
Mediators:

• Challenge Answers, requiring justification and explanation of student responses.
• Where possible, mediators accept the answers the students provide. The mediator may then ask the group to respond to the answer.
• Operate through questioning directed toward process rather than product.
Mediators 2

- Work to enhance metacognitive functioning, to bring about an awareness of the thinking process

- Haywood, “Teachers as Mediators”, Human Intelligence Newsletter. 1986
Partnerships = Community

• Students and teachers share the roles of expert, researcher, learner and teacher, they support themselves and each other. When they come together construct a culture that value the strengths of all participants and respects their individual difference, language ability and culture
Remember

- Good practice will give a good learning experience
- “Own your own scheme”
- Make it meet the needs of your own particular learning community
- This scheme does not belong to any one University or practitioner
- Be generous and share your findings at events like this one here today!
Case Study
The University of Manchester
Peer Assisted Study Session (PASS)

William Carey: william.carey@manchester.ac.uk
Teaching and Learning Adviser (Students as Partners)
Creating student partnerships…

• Staff Student Liaison Committee
• Student Union Representatives
• Manchester Leadership Programme
• Students as Partners Programme
  – Co consultants
  – Student initiatives
  – Peer Support
    • Peer Mentoring
    • PASS (Supplemental Instruction)
Manchester Scheme

Where is it?

1995 – 1 discipline and 10 student leaders

2005 – 11 disciplines and 250 student leaders

2009 – 16 disciplines and 400+ student leaders

also piloting in higher years

Mechanical Engineering, Mathematics, Computer Science, Aerospace Engineering, Life Sciences, Chemistry, Civil Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Material Science, Economics, Music, Physics, Electronic and Electrical Engineering, Econometrics, Middle Eastern Studies and Psychology
The PASS Approach – supplementing the core curriculum

• **Trained** student leaders **facilitate** study sessions in pairs
  – Quality assured comprehensive, interactive, practical training
  – Not teaching
  – Small group collaborative learning

• PASS is voluntary and confidential
  – Timetabled sessions
  – Safe place to admit not understanding

• Content is based on course materials
  – Students set the session agenda
The PASS Approach – supplementing the core curriculum

- Students compare notes, clarify what they read and hear, analyse, criticise, question and seek verification of ideas
- PASS leaders are engaged in:
  - sharing their experience
  - facilitating discussion rather than re-teaching the subject
- PASS encourages fun interaction between year groups
- PASS benefits all students regardless of academic performance
  - Focus on historically challenging concepts
Faculty of Life Sciences

- Introduced in 2005
- Attached to challenging units
  - Genes and Evolution
- Control Group
- PASS offered to two sets
  - \( \frac{1}{2} \) in Semester 1
  - \( \frac{1}{2} \) in Semester 2
PASS in FLS?

Impact of PASS on BL1521 results (genes and evolution)

- Mean mark %: n=158, PASS not offered = 42; n=178, PASS <4 = 45; n=54, PASS >=4 = 53
- % of students with mark <40% (fail): n=158, PASS not offered = 22; n=178, PASS <4 = 47; n=54, PASS >=4 = 42
- % of students with mark >=70%: n=158, PASS not offered = 6; n=178, PASS <4 = 7; n=54, PASS >=4 = 22

HEA Centre for Bioscience – Science Learning & Teaching Conference 2007
http://www.sltc.heacademy.ac.uk/proceedings.htm
PASS in FLS?

Impact of PASS on BL1521 mark distribution (genes and evolution)

- n=158, PASS not offered, mean = 42
- n=178, PASS <4, mean = 45
- n=54, PASS >=4, mean = 53

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Benefits of PASS

• Attendee of a PASS session
  – Jimmy
  – Sam
  – Kieran
Benefits of PASS

- Attendee of a PASS session
  - Provides support & guidance
  - Non-threatening & non-remedial
  - Social benefits
  - Increased academic confidence
  - Improved communication, teamwork, collaborative problem solving & interpersonal skills
Why does Manchester do it?

- Personalises the ‘Student Experience’
- Supportive environment to assist transition
- Enables enhanced interaction with peers across years
  - Developing a community
- Students become more engaged in course
  - Enhance their learning experience
- Improve academic performance and achievement
- Feedback to teaching staff
- Employers and professional bodies
  - Development of intellectual and professional competencies
Benefits of PASS

• PASS Leader
  – Zoe
Benefits of PASS

• PASS Leader
  – Personal development opportunity
  – Skills development - leadership, communication, teamwork etc
  – Opportunity to reflect, review and re-evaluate
  – Increased academic performance
  – Recognition and Reward
Benefits of PASS

UG Programme Director

– Graham Gough
Contacts – support and training

• National Centres
  – UK (The University of Manchester)
  – Scandinavia (Lund University)
  – South Africa (Nelson Mandela Metropolitan)
  – Australasia (University of Wollongong)
  – Canada (University of Guelph)

• International Center
  – Google Groups SI-NET – community of practice
  – www.umkc.edu/cad/si
  – International Conference: New Orleans - June 2010

• European First Year Experience (www.efye.eu)
  – University of Groningen – 13th-15th May 2009