

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: First-Year Mentorship Program Influence on Second-Year Student Success

Abstract approved:

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Second-year students are a population that is often overlooked by higher education institutions. Many programs are offered to foster the success of students, but there is little research on their influence on second-year students. Mentorship initiatives are well researched and utilized support programs for students, but relatively little research has been done to examine the influence on students beyond the length of the programs. This qualitative study was conducted to better understand how a first-year mentorship program influences second-year student success. The researcher interviewed six former participants of the Faculty Student Mentorship Program at Oregon State University. Three themes emerged from the participant's narratives: skill development, support systems, and navigation. These themes indicated that mentorship programs continue to influence student success beyond the purview of the program. Furthermore, some recommendations for practitioners were discussed for running a mentorship program that influences success in the second year. *Keywords: mentorship, student success, second-year, sophomore*

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First-Year Mentorship Program Influence on Second-Year Student Success

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Nathan Petitti, Author

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

The idea behind this study was formed from the observation that college campuses often devote multiple programs to supporting first-year student success, but many of those programs or structures are lost or reduced in the second year. The goal was to examine how a program that ends in a student's first year might influence them in the future.

This study examined the influence of the Faculty Student Mentorship Program (FSMP) had on students after they completed the program. Research suggests that mentorship programs increase retention and graduation rates, increase academic performance, contribute to college adjustment, encourage career and personal development, improve civic responsibility, and reduce the opportunity gap for underrepresented minorities, first-generation and Pell-eligible students (Crisp et al., 2017). "Mentoring has long been considered a development and retention strategy for undergraduate students, and research suggests mentoring efforts are positively related to a variety of development and academic outcomes" (Crisp et al., 2017). However, much of the literature on mentoring programs specifically focus on programs which support students in navigating challenges associated with the first year of university or uses retention and graduation rates as the measures for success. Second-year students face their own unique set of challenges (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006; Hunter, 2010; Hunter et al., 2009; Schreiner et al., 2012), and many programs aimed at supporting first-year students are not continued into the second year (Schreiner et al., 2012; Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000). The purpose of this study was to examine the influence that a first-year program had on second-year student success.

Faculty Student Mentorship Program

The Faculty Student Mentorship Program (FSMP) is a mentoring program that just completed its two-year pilot and is now moving into a fully-funded program. It is focused on improving the student transition experience for underrepresented first-year and transfer students who are navigating the transition to Oregon State University (OSU). The program was introduced in the fall of 2018, with the pilot set to end in the spring of 2020. It was deemed successful by the university and received funding to expand into a full program for the 2020-2021 school year. It pairs one to five new to OSU students (mentees) with a volunteer faculty mentor and volunteer peer mentor. Groups were encouraged to meet every other week, and the program provided mentors with recommended discussion topics and best practices for mentoring. Beyond these basic guidelines, groups were left to schedule and coordinate what they would do at each meeting. Mentees for the program were required to be new to OSU students, and they could be either first-year students or transfer students. Preference was given to students from underrepresented backgrounds such as first-generation college students, low-income students, or students with underrepresented identities. Peer mentors were required to have at least one year of experience at OSU and were often matched with groups from a similar academic college or major. Faculty mentors were from across the university and could be tenure-stream faculty, non-tenure-stream faculty, or senior university leaders. The overall goal of the FSMP is to increase graduation rates and reduce the opportunity gap for underrepresented student populations, both of which are used as indicators for student success (Kuh et al., 2006).

Student Success

Many consider degree attainment to be the definitive measure of student success (Kuh et al., 2006). A more modern approach acknowledges that although equating student success with graduation rates is common, it is also a limited approach (Schreiner et al., 2012). Other factors that should be considered when examining student success include other quantifiable attainment indicators, satisfaction, comfort with the learning environment, and personal development outcomes (Kuh et al., 2006). With graduation rates lagging for decades, there is a need to look for a new definition and understanding of student success. Schreiner et. al propose a new framework and definition to student success, which they call *thriving*; the model borrows from positive psychology and provides an exploration in the difference between students who flourish in college, to those who simply survive and meet the minimum requirements (2012). The focus on graduation rates as an indicator of student success can overshadow the importance of other college processes and outcomes, including academic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal development of students (Schreiner et al., 2012). This study will draw on Schreiner et al.'s (2012) framework of *thriving* as a definition of student success which will be explored in more depth in chapter two.

Sophomore Student

The definition for a sophomore student can be challenging using traditional academic measures which are often based on the number of credits completed. For example, categorizing based on academic standing can label students as sophomores before they attend their first college class due to advance placement or international baccalaureate credits (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006). Traditional academic measures can also

label students who experience academic difficulty as sophomores when they are in their third year of study (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006). Additionally, transfer students who are new to campus may be considered sophomores when using traditional academic measures (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006). The broadest definition can include both time spent in college, as well as the number of credits completed (Schreiner, 2018). For this paper, a sophomore student will be defined as someone who is a full-time student and persisted in their second year of academic work at the institution. This means that both first-time college students and transfer students are included in this definition. Furthermore, sophomore students and second-year students are used interchangeably throughout the study.

Recognition of the importance of the first year towards persistence to graduation has motivated institutions to launch programs supporting first-year student success; however, sophomore students are a less studied and understood population (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006). Sophomore students can feel a “lack motivation, feel disconnected, and flounder academically (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006, p. 18) which has been attributed to challenges that sophomores faces such as a reduction of targeted programs (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006), little interaction with faculty and peers in the classroom (Hunter, 2010), and many academic, emotional, and interpersonal challenges (Schreiner et al., 2012). The challenges that face sophomore students, as well as strategies to support them will be explored in more depth in chapter two.

Research Question

This study seeks to understand the extent to which second-year students are thriving after participating in a mentorship program in their first year. It examines what

mentoring programs offer to students, what challenges second-year students face, and what tools and strategies they use to overcome those challenges. In doing this, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. In what ways do first-year mentorship programs influence how mentorship program participants experience/navigate the "sophomore slump?"
2. What tools or behaviors do second-year students attribute to their participation in first-year programs?

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

This literature review will lay the foundation for the issues that are explored in this study. First, it will explore some guiding theories that inform the context and interpretation of this study. Next, it will explore various definitions of student success, and the framework of student success that will be used in this study. Then it will examine the current landscape of mentoring in higher education and its relation to second-year student success. More specifically, it will review mentoring in the context of higher education today by examining definitions of mentoring in higher education, as well as the numerous benefits mentoring programs provide for mentees. Finally, it will explore the student population that is the focus of this study: the sophomore student, as well as the unique challenges that this population faces. These topics will help to guide the conversation behind the results and discussion.

Guiding Theories

These guiding theories guided the context, design, and interpretation of this study. They are important to acknowledge because they helped to inform the interpretation of results, and can give some insight into the positionality present throughout this literature review and study.

Schlossberg's Transition Theory

Schlossberg's Transition Theory is grounded in adult development literature and examines what constitutes a transition, different forms of transition, the transition process, and factors that influence transitions (Patton, 2016). A transition is "any event, or non-event, [which] results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (Schlossberg et al., 2006, p. 33). The transition process consists of three phases which

were termed as “moving in,” “moving through,” and “moving out” (Patton, 2016; Schlossberg et al., 2006). The factors that go into transition are broken into 4 S’s: situation, self, support, and strategies (Patton, 2016; Schlossberg et al., 2006). The effectiveness of someone’s ability to cope with a transition depends on the ratio of assets to liabilities in these areas (Patton, 2016). Although this theory is not explicitly developed for the college students, they are regularly in multiple phases of the transition process as they navigate different classes, living environments, and social situations. For example, second-year students are moving out of the residence halls, moving through the academic requirements of the college, and moving into new classes and social situations. Students are more likely to navigate a transition effectively if they have a strong sense of self, support from multiple sources, and strategies to cope with change. This literature review will examine in later sections how mentorship programs support students in using and developing these coping strategies through transitions.

Tinto’s Model of Retention

Tinto’s model of retention, or Tinto’s model of departure, explains that a student’s departure from an institution comes from a longitudinal process of interactions between an individual and their integration with other members of the academic and social systems of the institution (Tinto, 1993). This tells us that the more engaged students are on campus, the more likely they are to integrate socially and academically, which in turn will lead to an increased chance of retention (Crisp et al., 2017). Mentoring programs allow students to develop a supportive community of peers that provides ongoing social activities and support (Tinto, 2012). The importance of such a community is that “for many students, social support in the form of counseling, mentoring, and faculty and peer

advising can spell the difference between staying and leaving [college]” (Tinto, 2012, p. 28).

What is Student Success

There are multiple ways to measure student success, as well as multiple definitions. Kuh et. al provide a thorough review of the literature on student success in which they identified some of the more common definitions and incorporated elements, as well as considerations that should be made when examining student success (2006). Student success can incorporate quantifiable student attainment indicators such as grades, persistence to sophomore year, time to degree, and graduation (Kuh et al., 2006). Other measures of student success include the degree to which students are satisfied and feel comfortable with their learning environment because these impressions are precursors of educational attainment and other dimensions of student success (Kuh et al., 2006). A third measure of student success is the personal development outcomes of students that are beneficial to the individual and society, although this measure has relatively few studies with conclusive evidence (Kuh et al., 2006). The most common measure of student success is persistence (Kuh et al., 2006; Schreiner et al., 2012; Seidman et al., 2012). With all of these measures, consideration must be made to the student in which you are measuring the success because success will look different to students from different backgrounds (Kuh et al., 2006).

The focus on graduation rates as an indicator of student success can overshadow the importance of other college processes and outcomes, including academic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal development of students (Schreiner et al., 2012). An alternative framework to student success is proposed by Schreiner et. al by the term

thriving to ground the student success conversation on characteristics that promote performance beyond remediating student characteristics (2012). “Rather than defining success solely as grades and graduation, a focus on thriving encourages a more holistic view of student development that expands to include healthy relationships, sense of community, making a contribution, and proactively coping with life’s challenges” (Schreiner, 2010, p. 10). Thriving college students are academically successful, experience a sense of community, and maintain psychological wellbeing which allows them to gain the maximum benefit from college (Schreiner, 2010). This is important to note because although student support programs can improve retention rates (Kuh et al., 2006; Seidman et al., 2012), support programs also seek to help students develop socially, academically, and professionally (*About CAS*, n.d.; Kuh et al., 2006; Schuh et al., 2011). Therefore, when examining how effectively programs support student success, attention must be given to other factors beyond retention.

Thriving can be broken down into three distinct categories: academic thriving, intrapersonal thriving, and interpersonal thriving (Schreiner, 2010). Academic thriving is characterized by students who are psychologically engaged in the learning process and have a demonstrated investment of effort, ability to manage time, a motivation to succeed, and intentional pursuit of one’s goals (Schreiner, 2010). Intrapersonal thriving is composed of a factor of a positive perspective where students can grasp a realistic view of reality and proactively cope with it (Schreiner, 2010). Interpersonal thriving is characterized by social connectedness in which students experience a sense of community and belonging within the college environment (Schreiner, 2010). These three domains of thriving provide a means of examining and understanding student

development and success holistically throughout the collegiate experience, and they can help to provide a snapshot of how well a student is functioning.

Thus far, the examination of student success has focused on the general student population, but the factors linked to student success for historically underrepresented students may differ from the white majority (Kinzie et al., 2008). The target population of the FSMP included first-generation college students, low-income students, or students with historically underrepresented identities, and so it is important to understand what success looks like for these students. Some factors linked to student success for underrepresented students include a sense of belonging and validation (Kinzie et al., 2008). There is evidence that programs and activities that are highly engaging can increase educational gains and persistence for underrepresented students (Kinzie et al., 2008).

What is Mentoring

Mentoring is not new to higher education and is well-established as a social support strategy that encourages the social, academic, personal, and professional development of mentees (Beltman & Schaeben, 2012). Therefore, mentoring can be framed as a type of developmental relationship where goal development and personal growth are encouraged (Campbell et al., 2012). When done effectively, mentoring establishes an “enhanced sense of competence, clarity of identity, and effectiveness” for mentees navigating an institution (Campbell et al., 2012).

Mentoring can take many shapes depending on the context and mission of the mentoring relationship. For example, one literature review identified over 50 definitions of mentoring varying in scope and breadth (Crisp & Cruz, 2009), and “there is currently

an absence of a widely accepted definition and a lack of theory to explain what roles and functions are involved in a mentoring experience and how these experiences are perceived by college students” (Crisp & Cruz, 2009, p. 527). The wide range of research on mentorship can make it challenging to create a single definition; however, the learning outcomes and goals for mentoring programs are similar across institutions. Most definitions of mentoring include the idea that mentoring in college students includes a process of socialization into the institution by the mentors who are serving as a role model, resource, friend, guide, etc. (Cornelius et al., 2016).

With the variety of mentorship definitions and structures, identifying the lowest common denominator helps to identify the foundation of mentoring programs. For example, Jacobi identifies that there is a clear commonality that all the programs have a central mission to help students succeed (1991). There are several components of mentoring that are common across the literature (Crisp et al., 2017; Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Jacobi, 1991):

1. “Mentoring relationships are focused on the growth and development of students and can be constructed in various forms” (Crisp et al., 2017). The mentor typically helps the mentee to achieve longer-term, and broader goals (Jacobi, 1991).
2. “Mentoring experiences may include broad forms of support that include professional, career, and emotional support” (Crisp et al., 2017).
3. “Mentoring relationships are personal and reciprocal” (Crisp et al., 2017). Both mentor and mentee benefit from the relationship, and the relationship requires direct interaction where there is an exchange of information that may be beyond

public record documents (Jacobi, 1991).

4. “Relative to their students, mentors have more experience, influence, or achievement within the educational environment” (Crisp et al., 2017).

Current mentoring models have moved beyond the traditional view of mentoring in which a senior organizational member is the only person who will mentor a new organizational member (Crisp et al., 2017). Faculty, staff, graduate students, and peers are all integral parts of college student success (Crisp et al., 2017), and can support student success by establishing a mentoring relationship which follows the guidelines of a successful mentoring program outlined above. This literature review will examine what faculty mentors and peer mentors uniquely offer because the FSMP utilizes both groups.

Interaction with faculty has been identified as an important factor in encouraging student success (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Kuh et al., 2006; Schreiner et al., 2012; Seidman et al., 2012). Faculty mentors are uniquely positioned to support students in many different ways, and they play an important role in developing students both in and outside the classroom (Figueroa & Rodriguez, 2015). They can create a lasting impact on their mentees future career choices by sharing their lived experiences in navigating the university environment (Baker & Griffin, 2010). By working with students, faculty mentors are situated to affect a student’s desire to learn (Laverick, 2016). They can demonstrate to students how to be positive role models, and work with their mentees to define areas for self-improvement (Campbell et al., 2012). For all the benefits that faculty mentors can bring, it is important to acknowledge that mentoring can be time-intensive, and faculty must balance planning their time with students, and meeting their own academic needs (Figueroa & Rodriguez, 2015).

Peer mentors can fill the roles where faculty mentors may not have the time or energy to do so. Peer mentoring programs pair a student with more institutional experience with a less experienced student (Crisp et al., 2017). The extra support of an experienced peer mentor can help to integrate students by introducing them to one another and help ease them into the institution's community (Collings et al., 2014). They can provide emotional support and individualized feedback which can help build a sense of belonging to the group and institution (Cornelius et al., 2016), and a sense of belonging is one of the key influences to a student's decision to stay at an institution and can promote involvement which leads to student success (Tinto, 2012).

Benefits of Mentoring

The benefits of mentoring programs are well documented in higher education, and many benefits have been identified for both the mentor and the mentee (Crisp et al., 2017; Laverick, 2016). This review will focus primarily on the benefits for the mentee. "Mentoring has long been considered a development and retention strategy for undergraduate students, and research suggests mentoring efforts are positively related to a variety of development and academic outcomes" (Crisp et al., 2017). Mentoring has become a national priority in recent years and has been recommended as a central strategy for colleges to adopt to address key issues of retention and academic achievement (Crisp et al., 2017). Despite this recent prioritization, mentoring is a well-established social support strategy at higher education institutions that encourages the social, academic, personal, and professional development of mentees (Beltman & Schaeben, 2012). This portion of the review will focus primarily on the social, academic, personal, and professional development benefits for the mentee due to the structure of

this study; this aligns with thriving as a measure of student success, instead of focusing on retention. The common benefits of mentoring can vary by program focus, purpose, characteristics, and structure (Crisp et al., 2017); however, the following benefits are present to some degree in many different mentoring structures.

One benefit of mentoring is the social connections and a sense of belonging that mentor programs can provide. Building social connections helps to ease the transition to college, helps students navigate the institution with informal knowledge from their peers, and can improve a sense of self-worth (Tinto, 2012). These social connections can help to influence and create a sense of belonging within the community, which is crucial while students are adjusting to the college environment (Tinto, 2012). Involvement through social and academic membership are among the multiple ways for students to create a sense of belonging (Tinto, 2012), and building a sense of belonging through mentorship can make a difference in their success and motivation.

In addition to social benefits, mentorship programs have been proven to improve student's academic performance as well. Mentoring not only helps to build a sense of belonging but also plays a critical role in supporting students to be academically prepared (Gross et al., 2015). Students who are mentored by peers tend to have "increased motivation for academic success, academic skills, familiarity with the college environment" (Crisp et al., 2017, p. 45). Studies have found that there is a positive correlation between mentoring and academic progress, persistence, and degree completion (Crisp et al., 2017).

Mentorship programs have been shown to support student's personal development and ability to navigate universities. "Sometimes students need a nudge and the social

validation that comes from someone in authority approaching them to acknowledge their potential” (Baker & Griffin, 2010). Mentoring relationships can influence the leadership development of college students, and students who are mentored were more likely to be socially responsible leaders (Campbell et al., 2012). Mentoring programs can help students to navigate the complexities of an educational institution, and students participating in mentoring become more integrated with the university (Collings et al., 2014). Furthermore, mentoring programs enable students to better understand the university so they can navigate the university systems and understand how they function (Cornelius et al., 2016).

Career and professional development are among one of the most common outcomes addressed by quantitative researchers and may be perceived as one of the forms of support provided by mentoring programs (Crisp et al., 2017). First-year students who participated in a tiered peer mentoring program reported that career readiness was one of the top outcomes of their participation in the program (Fowler & Muckert, 2004). Mentoring relationships have the potential to increase career ambition and aid in professional identity development (Crisp et al., 2017).

With graduation rates used as one of the key indicators of students' success (Kuh et al., 2006), many studies focus on persistence into the second year and graduate rates. There is little research specifically on the benefit that students take forward from a first-year mentoring program into their second year, and how they use those skills the program helped them develop to navigate challenges. Drawing on Tinto's theory of student retention would suggest that the connection to faculty and the institution would be one factor (2012). The studies that identified the social, academic, personal, and professional

benefits of the programs were primarily for first-year students, and the study is not continued into the second year (Fowler & Muckert, 2004). While it is clear that mentoring programs help students persist in their second year and beyond, it is not studied if the students were thriving in their second year.

Although this study is not focused on students from underrepresented backgrounds, the target population of the FSMP included first-generation college students, low-income students, or students with underrepresented identities. Therefore, it is important to understand and acknowledge how mentoring programs prepare these populations for success. Mentoring programs at community colleges and universities have been shown to increase developmental and academic outcomes, as well as reduce the opportunity gap for underrepresented minorities, first-generation students, and pell-eligible students (Crisp et al., 2017). One explanation for this may be that academic and social integration are important factors for retention, especially for students of color (Tinto, 1993).

Sophomore students

The second-year is a largely unexplored area for institutions that deserves additional attention (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006). The sophomore year can be an opportunity for exploration where students begin to test their assumptions and approaches learned in their first year (Schaller, 2018). Whereas first-year students may rely on perceived experts, second-year students are beginning to develop their voices (Schaller, 2018). They are at a crossroads where they may be forced to make decisions, and they may be balancing their decision around the expectations of others, as well as their developing voice (Schaller, 2005).

There several pathway factors that can lead to sophomore students thriving through their second year of college: major certainty, campus involvement, student-faculty interaction, spirituality, and institutional integrity (Schreiner, 2018). Each of these factors can be indicative of whether a not a student is thriving in their second-year. For example, sophomores who have not yet connected with a major may struggle in clarifying their sense of purpose and identity (Schreiner, 2018). Similarly, sophomores who are more involved on campus, have positive interactions with faculty, have found meaning and purpose, and believe that their institution displays integrity are all more likely to navigate their second year successfully (Schreiner, 2018).

On the other hand, there are multiple challenges that sophomores face, and students who do not experience any of these pathways may face struggle through navigating these challenges. Some challenges that they face are internal such as academic struggles, lack of motivation, identity confusion, major and career indecision, or difficulty selecting meaningful campus engagement (Schreiner, 2018). Other challenges are external or institutional and include a lack of attention to service for sophomores, difficulty connecting with faculty, inadequate academic advising, and the removal of almost all forms of campus support from the first year (Schreiner, 2018). Students' ability to navigate these challenges impacts their ability to thrive and persist through their second year (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006).

The "sophomore slump" is a term that was first introduced as early as the 1950s, but has only recently begun to gain more traction in the 2000s (Schreiner et al., 2012). The sophomore slump is an acknowledgment that second-year students face several unique challenges that are often not addressed by support programs (Schreiner et al.,

2012), and is often used to describe sophomore students who “lack motivation, feel disconnected, and flounder academically (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006, p. 18). These feelings can be attributed to the challenges that sophomores face such as a reduction of targeted programs (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006), little interaction with faculty and peers in the classroom (Hunter, 2010), and many academic, emotional, and interpersonal challenges (Schreiner et al., 2012). Furthermore, sophomores may begin facing developmental confusion related to one’s identity as early as the second semester of college (Hunter, 2010). The existence of the sophomore slump confirms that many programs do not support first-year students, and brings into light the importance that this study will have on the literature of student success support programs.

The first-year student experience has been studied in numerous contexts which have produced theories and models for understanding the college experience; however, this does not mean students are suddenly successful in their second year (Hunter, 2010). There is less support for second-year students; in fact, less than 30% of universities have second-year retention strategies, compared to 90% and 75% for first-year and near-completion students respectively (EAB, 2014). Due to the large number of first-year initiatives, students who return in their second year may have a reduced sense of belonging when there are fewer programs (Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000). Institutional support for first-year students may lead to second-years with reduced motivation from career indecision and institutional navigation (Schreiner et al., 2012).

Some studies recommend that the sophomore slump requires change at universities. Some suggest that the focus on the first year in college has shifted the problems to later years (Seidman et al., 2012). One suggestion is to create a second-year

coordinator position, comparable to a first-year coordinator position present at many universities (Wang & Kennedy-Phillips, 2013). Another recommendation is to create programs that support relationships with faculty (Graunke & Woosley, 2005). A third recommendation is to not do anything immediately, but using this information to consider institutional responses across all academic years instead of just specific populations (Hunter, 2010). Regardless of the suggestion, research is continually suggesting that further research needs to be done on second-year students to encourage their success and retention (Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Ishitani, 2006; Wang & Kennedy-Phillips, 2013).

College student sources of support

Second-year students have less institutional support than other student populations (EAB, 2014), and the reduction of programs in the second year may lead to a reduced sense of belonging in their second year with a reduced sense of belonging (Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000). This makes it important to understand what other sources of support students may turn towards in their second-years as they lose access to the mentorship program.

Universities offer many support systems for students, such as academic advising, learning communities, student success initiatives, and student support services (Kuh et al., 2006). Student affairs practitioner's work characterizes many of these services, and their roles have grown from monitoring student behaviors to supporting the growth and development of students outside the formal curriculum (Schuh et al., 2011). These programs are meant to help students adjust by providing pathways for success (Kuh et al., 2006). Support programs vary by institution, but The Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) is committed to assuring quality programs and

services for students by providing guides to student affairs practitioners to assess and evaluate their programs (*About CAS*, n.d.).

Literature on the topic of college support have found positive relationships with student success and support programs. Students in learning communities were found to be more successful than their peers because the learning communities provided a place to receive support from faculty, peers, and other university resources (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008). Students who utilize college support systems are more likely to be better adjusted to college life (Grant-Vallone et al., 2003). Karp suggests that one reason for this may be because they encourage the development of social relationships (Karp, 2011).

In addition to university provided support systems, peers and family can be a system of support. First-year students are most likely to be successful when they have high levels of social support from peers and family (Napoli & Wortman, 1998). One study found that support systems built on campus are more critical for adjustment than family support (Grant-Vallone et al., 2003). Astin's Theory of Student Involvement suggests that student involvement in quality support programs will lead them to develop personally and academically (Astin, 1999).

Many of these studies focus primarily on first-year student success and support. There is relatively little research on sources of support for second-year students. What literature does exist suggests student-faculty interaction and peer satisfaction were among the largest contributors to student satisfaction and intent to re-enroll (Hunter, 2010). Recommendations to support sophomores thriving are based on connecting students to faculty and peers in intentional ways (Hunter, 2010; Schreiner et al., 2012).

The recurring theme between these studies is that peers, family, faculty, and programs all offer students critical support for success and retention. However, many of these studies focus on first-year students, and there is a gap in the literature on where second-year students find support systems. Furthermore, several studies suggest that further research is needed into where students find support (Grant-Vallone et al., 2003; Karp, 2011; Napoli & Wortman, 1998).

Summary/Significance

This literature revealed that there are multiple transitions that students navigate throughout their collegiate experiences, and some factors that can help students to navigate these transitions include situation, self, support, and strategies (Patton, 2016; Schlossberg et al., 2006). It may be difficult for institutions to control specific situations; however, they can enable students to develop their ability to work through the transition by developing their sense of self, support, and strategies towards transitions through life. Additionally, numerous factors go into a student's decision to continue studying at a university, but a sense of belonging and faculty interactions are large factors in that decision (Tinto, 2012). Mentorship is one way to support students through transitions and addresses many of the factors that cause students to leave.

Retention rates are one of the most common ways of defining student success (Kuh et al., 2006), but there are numerous reasons why other metrics should be included when examining student success (Kuh et al., 2006; Schreiner et al., 2012). One way of examining student success is through a lens of thriving, and how academic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal factors can be used to measure student success (Schreiner, 2010). Peer mentorship programs have a long history of supporting student success, and can help

students to develop in the areas that are indicative of a student thriving (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Campbell et al., 2012; Collings et al., 2014; Cornelius et al., 2016; Crisp et al., 2017; Fowler & Muckert, 2004; Gross et al., 2015). Faculty mentors and peer mentors both bring several unique characteristics to a mentee (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Campbell et al., 2012; Collings et al., 2014; Cornelius et al., 2016; Crisp et al., 2017; Figueroa & Rodriguez, 2015; Laverick, 2016), and the mentee can gain social, academic, personal, and professional benefits (Beltman & Schaeben, 2012).

Despite all these benefits, many peer mentoring programs are targeted primarily for first-year students and do not continue to examine the benefits for the mentees after the program has concluded beyond retention rates. Sophomore students are a population that faces multiple challenges, and they are an often-overlooked student population (Gahagan & Hunter, 2006; Hunter, 2010; Hunter et al., 2009; Schreiner et al., 2012). Furthermore, there is little research on the influence of first-year programs on second-year student success. This study hopes to address that gap in the research.

Chapter 3 - Design and Methodology

This chapter will outline the methodology used to evaluate the research questions. The first two chapters introduced some key terms and reviewed the literature of topics relevant to mentoring and student success. As noted in the literature review, most studies on mentorship programs focus on retention and graduation rates as the primary measure of student success. Furthermore, few studies examine the influence first-year programs have on second-year student success. This study is designed to allow the researchers to fill this gap in the literature through a qualitative study by answering the following questions:

1. In what ways do first-year mentorship programs influence how mentorship program participants experience/navigate the "sophomore slump?"
2. What tools or behaviors do second-year students attribute to their participation in first-year programs?

Study Site and Participants

The study was conducted at Oregon State University (OSU) which is a large, public, land grant research institution in Corvallis, Oregon. The interviews were held in the first two weeks of winter term in the 2019-2020 academic year. This allowed participants to reflect on a full term of successes and challenges in their second-year before participating in the study. The participants were self-selected from the rosters of participants in the FSMP from the 2018-2019 academic year. The students who stepped forward represented a range of ages, genders, ethnicities, socioeconomic status, educational levels, and academic interests, although no demographic information was collected for this study. Some participants were actively involved in the program as

mentors, but this did not disqualify them from participating. The only requirements for participants were that they were in their second full year at OSU, they participated in the FSMP in their first-year, and they are at least 18 years of age. Participants were given pseudonyms, and any identifying information was removed. Eight students volunteered to participate in the study, and six were ultimately interviewed and included in the data collection and analysis.

Research Design and Methodology

This study was designed to center the voices of the participants in a way that allowed the researchers to learn how their experiences were influenced by participation in the FSMP. The researchers thought it was important to allow the participants the opportunity to reflect and share their experiences so they could identify key elements of student success in their experiences. For this reason, the study was conducted with qualitative methods.

This study used a qualitative methodology through the use of semi-structured interviews and member checking. Qualitative research seeks to understand a research problem from the perspectives of the population it involves, and it is particularly effective at obtaining specific information about values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of the studied population (Mack et al., 2005). This allowed the researchers to understand the specific challenges and successes of the research participants. Credibility and neutrality are two critical elements to maintain academic rigor when creating and presenting qualitative research (Krefting, 1991) and these elements were centered when designing the methodology.

Participation in this study was voluntary, and volunteers were recruited by an email sent from the FSMP program coordinator to all students who participated in the program in the 2018-2019 school year. Students were invited to email the research team if they were in their second year of study at OSU, participated in the FSMP, and were at least 18 years of age or older. Students who contacted the research team were invited to an interview at a time that was convenient for them. All interviews were held in study rooms in the Valley Library at OSU.

This study used semi-structured interviews as the sole way to collect data because “the key to qualitative work is to learn from the information rather than control for them” (Krefting, 1991, p. 216). A semi-structured interview allows the researcher to gather data about an individual's perspective on a specific topic by engaging “with the individual by posing questions in a neutral manner, listening attentively to responses, and asking follow-up questions and probes based on those responses” (Mack et al., 2005, p. 116). Semi-structured interviews are the most widely used interviewing format for qualitative research and can allow the interviewer to develop a rapport with the interviewee so they can make meaning of the interviewee's experiences (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Interviews can be a credible and effective strategy at gathering data and interpreting the multiple realities of research participants (Krefting, 1991). Due to each participant experiencing the program differently, semi-structured interviews allowed the researchers to understand their reality with the FSMP and make meaning of their experiences. This study followed the guidelines set by DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree in conducting semi-structured interviews with an organized set open-ending questions and asking follow-up questions as needed (2006).

Interviews were scheduled to be an hour, although most interviews were approximately 30-45 minutes long. The organized set of open-ended questions can be seen in Appendix A. Follow up questions were asked as necessary to clarify and understand the student's experiences.

This study utilized member checking as a method to center the voices of the participants, and ensure that their stories were accurately represented in the results. Member checking is a technique that consists of checking that the researcher has accurately translated the research participant's viewpoints into data, analytic categories, interpretation, and conclusions that align with the experiences of the participant (Krefting, 1991). It is an effective way to ensure the credibility of a qualitative study because it allows participants to recognize their experiences in the research findings by checking that the researcher has accurately expressed their experiences into the data (Krefting, 1991).

Member checking was completed after the interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed to do a terminal member check and test that the final presentation of the data reflects the participants' experiences accurately (Krefting, 1991). Students were given the overall findings of the data, a condensed summary of their interview responses, and a summary of the themes that emerged from their experiences. They were invited to verify if the interpretations accurately reflected their experiences and clarify anything that was misinterpreted from their interview. Although it was planned to do member checking in person, data analysis was completed during the COVID-19 pandemic, and social distancing practices were followed. Therefore, all member checking was done digitally, with participants having the option to confirm their experiences over email or Zoom.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was captured through recording the entirety of the interview because handwritten notes during an interview can be relatively unreliable, and some key points may be missed (Jamshed, 2014). Recording an interview makes it easier for the researcher to focus on the interview content while generating a verbatim transcript of the interview (Jamshed, 2014). Records need to be kept in accordance with data protection regulations (Hancock et al., 2009). All data was stored in a secure OSU cloud storage that was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to protect the research participants' identities. Furthermore, no personal information was linked to the recordings, and recordings were deleted after data analysis was complete.

After all the interviews were complete, the data was transcribed. Transcribing is the procedure for producing a written version of the interview, and should be consistent in how the tone and inflection is shown through the script (Hancock et al., 2009). To achieve this, the interview recording was first run through a transcription software that captured the majority of the interview. The research team then cleaned up the transcription by checking for errors, and ensuring that the transcript remained faithful to the speech it was transcribing. The transcriptions and audio recordings were used in tandem for coding and analysis of the data.

Data analysis was conducted using a constant comparison approach through the researchers own interpretations of the data. Constant comparison is an approach based on grounded theory which allows the researchers to identify important themes in a systematic way (Hancock et al., 2009). This study loosely followed the four stages of constant comparison outlined by Hancock et al.: open coding, progressive focusing,

applying the coding frame, and summarizing and interpreting the findings (2009). Open coding was done while cleaning up the transcriptions by briefly summarizing the sections of the interviews. Progressive focusing then disseminated the summaries into distinct categories that helped to explain the way the interviewees were describing their experiences. These categories were applied using the “QDA Miner” software by systematically applying the codes to all transcripts. The codes were examined for patterns across all the participants, and any patterns that emerged were identified as themes. Some patterns could logically be grouped and broken down into subthemes due to their similarities. Finally, the results were summarized and interpreted by examining relationships between the themes and gathering insights that helped to understand the research questions.

Research Integrity

Careful consideration of the integrity of the research was given throughout the study to ensure the study was ethical and trustworthy. All research methods were approved by the IRB prior to recruiting participants. As mentioned previously, several measures were taken to protect the identity and confidentiality of the participants. All data was stored on a secure cloud storage client, no local copies of data was kept, all personal identifying information was removed from transcripts, all participants were given a pseudonym, and all interview recordings were destroyed upon completion of coding and analysis.

It is important to acknowledge my positionality in conducting this study. I was involved in some aspects of the planning and implementation of the FSMP before beginning this study. I acknowledge that this may have created a power dynamic with the

participants who were currently involved in the program as a mentor. They may have seen me as a point of authority and felt they were not able to speak openly and honestly about the program. I addressed this through statements in the agreement form and at the start of the interview that the interviewee's involvement in the program would not be influenced by participation in the study. I also acknowledge that my background and involvement with the program has the potential for me to introduce bias into the study. However, I believe this involvement has allowed me to understand the logistics of the program more thoroughly, and opened up the interview to focus more on the participant's experiences.

Chapter 4 - Summary of Results

This chapter will summarize the narratives of each participant and discuss the common themes among their narratives. Three main themes emerged across the participants' experiences: skill development, support systems, and navigation. Beyond this, there were several trends that although they do not fit into a theme, but are important to acknowledge in the context of this study.

Narrative Review

Six students participated in a semi-structured interview. All the interviews were conducted in the first two weeks of winter term, 2020 in study rooms at the OSU Valley Library. At the time of the study, all the participants had just finished the first term of their second year, and they were in the midst of their second term. Each participant was given a pseudonym that will be used throughout their narratives. Any identifying information for the participants was removed to protect their identities.

Participant 1: Patricia

Patricia was in her second year as a transfer student at OSU. She transferred after one year at another institution in Oregon, although she was an out-of-state student originally from California. She was a history major at the time of the interview, but she started as a chemistry major at OSU. She was involved in the FSMP her entire first-year and communicated with her group primarily through in-person meetings every other week. Her FSMP group started with four mentees, but one left early in the program, and the other left at the end of the winter term. Her group communicated primarily through in-person meetings, although they also emailed to work through logistics and set up

times. She talked to both mentors at the meetings, but she felt more of a connection with the faculty mentor because she was older than her peer mentor.

Patricia said that the meetings were mostly talking about information that is particularly helpful for freshmen. She felt this information was especially useful to her as a transfer student.

I probably could have found [the information] a lot through like maybe my classes, but my classes are kind of upper-division at this point. So they don't really cater to like a freshman experience. They don't really tell us a lot of like, like, where they're like, um, I know that there are like mental health meetings and things like that on campus. I would never have known about that from like my classes. So it was really nice that my mentor was able to tell me about this.

Patricia identified that their group went over various campus resources, but she did not specify exactly which ones, or those that were most beneficial for her. Some other topics that their group covered included going over the course scheduler, financial aid resources, how to get involved, and navigating the OSU website. Her mentors helped her navigate these resources so she understood them and could use them in her second year.

There's like so many, so many things to look around for, and there's so many different routes to go and there's just so many things in general. But now I know that I know how to look for something specific and I know how to use that to my advantage.

She noted that her mentors made it explicit how to use the resources, and walked her through how to use them.

Patricia found that the program helped her learn how to be more open to meeting people and sharing experiences. It also helped her to understand more about what she was interested in academically. She changed her major in her first year after conversations with her faculty mentor on what she valued in her education. Her mentor helped her work

out that there were majors that intersected two of her interest areas. Overall, Patricia felt like she did “kinda” well in her first year.

Patricia felt like her second year went better than her first. She was “a lot busier now ... because [she] [knew] the school a lot better ... So now like [she] had a lot of more opportunities that are taking those opportunities to do more things this year.” She attributed her additional involvement to her mentors because they are the reason she works in a lab. They “brought to [her] attention this transfer scholarship project” which she applied for in her first year, and continued in her second year. Despite these successes, she still faced some challenges. She felt that her new major is a challenge because it was “a huge switch” and she is “back at square one essentially doing a lot of lower-division classes.”

Patricia identified several skills that she used in her second year as a result of the lessons she learned in the program. Time management was one skill that she mastered in her first year and that she applied in her second year

I think I figured out how to kind of work an academic schedule on during my first year here at OSU. It was a lot more structured thanks to the program. Um, I was able to like make a study like, study schedule, and work schedule and like even a sleep schedule because my mentor helped me do all the things.

She was also more comfortable talking to other people. She felt that something she “learned from the program is being more open to people.” She went on to explain how she usually “likes to keep to [herself],” but now she is more comfortable trying new things such as getting involved in research.

Patricia mentioned that she was still in contact with her faculty mentor, and they tried to meet for coffee once a term. They spent most of their time just catching up

because she has “gotten to know them kind of more personally, which is really nice.” She was also still connected with her peer mentor and was “still able to meet with my mentor to like this day. Like, like, aside from his, his current group, so it's still really nice. I still have like that kind of emotional support with my mentor.”

Patricia’s experiences described growth throughout her first year. She felt confident in how her first year turned out, and that continued into her second year. She was able to lean on the skills and knowledge she learned from the program, and she continued to utilize them in her second year. She was able to make lasting connections in the program that she still maintained in her second year.

Participant 2: Joanna

Joanna was an out-of-state student in her second-year majoring in biology with an option in genetics, as well as a minor in Spanish and chemistry. She joined the program because she was very involved in high school with people who were mentors to her, and she wanted to be a part of a program that helped her to find mentors in her college experience. Both her peer and faculty mentors were in the College of Science, but neither were in her specific major. Despite this, both of her mentors were able to support her in learning more about her career interests, and connect her to people in her field. She felt that she got support in different areas from both mentors. Her faculty mentor helped to understand how to succeed academically, while her peer mentor helped her in areas outside of academics.

Her group loosely followed the recommended topics for the group meetings, but often focused on what was more relevant for the group in that moment which led to conversations in a variety of areas. Some of the topics they covered included professional

development, study skills, connections to research, and personal development. Joanna felt like there was more focus on academics, but she regularly acknowledged how many other aspects they supported her in.

I think it was more academic. But there was a lot of times too and they would help us out with like living in the dorms and how to deal with all that. And there was even one meeting where they helped a little bit with like, where to spend our money, which was helpful for me because I've never had to think about it before. But like I they introduced me to Winco. I didn't know what Winco was either and saved a lot of money. So yeah, they were, they were very helpful, just in all aspects.

She went on to explain that the varied support was especially important for her as an out of state student because she “was just really uncomfortable with everything. But they helped [her] blend in more.” Her mentors helped her to learn “more about Corvallis and Oregon in general” which she thought was “really helpful.”

Joanna’s mentors helped her to develop her confidence as well by challenging her to approach peers and professors.

I was very quiet I would have never gone to any office hours I would have never approached a single professor. And I, they told me that my one rule for the year knowing that I was a very quiet person, I had to find at least one person in every class and get their number, or their Snapchat or something so I could contact them if I needed help and I would have to show my mentor. It actually ended up helping a lot, like being in group chats with people my classes and actually getting help, and yeah, really glad they made me go to office hours, and they introduced me to other professors too. I didn't always like, keep going contact with them after that, but it's still good to like meet people.

She went on to say that it was surprising how much this helped her because “I've stuck to myself in most of my classes, and I didn't think it would be important to talk to other people. But it makes such a big difference.” She continued to use this method of reaching out to people in her second year.

Joanna's mentors were supportive of her emotional and personal needs. She explained that "we didn't know that we needed to know it is just, it was weird. It was like having another family" who "knew what was best for us and like, guided us through everything." Her mentors took the time to make sure that she did not feel out of place in college, and that she would be able to take care of herself emotionally.

They taught me the whole imposter syndrome. That's been me my whole life. Because I was as I said, with like, pageants and being cheer captain and everything. Everyone just kind of expected me to have everything together all the time. And I think my mentors are definitely like the biggest influence on like, making sure I knew that I don't have to be like that all the time. Is, I think we went over imposter syndrome like once in one of like my first classes, but never talked about it again. But they made a big deal about making sure we knew, like what it was and how to avoid it. That was really helpful. Actually, that was a good thing.

Overall, Joanna felt that she did well in her first year, but it took time for her to transition. Her first two terms were tough because she was not getting along with her roommates, and was not as confident as meeting people in her classes. It wasn't until her third term that she made close friends and started to find a sense of belonging.

... Knowing at the end of the year last year that I actually did have professors and mentors that recognize me and knew what I needed help with and were willing to help me helped a lot because I felt like I blended in. And no one knew that I even went here the first few terms of school, but like knowing that they wanted to continue helping me beyond the mentoring program, I think, helps comfort me a lot.

She went on to say that a lot of that positivity and change came from feeling more comfortable talking to professors.

This confidence and positivity from the end of Joanna's first year carried on into her second year. She felt that her second year is more fun as a whole, even though her

classes were more challenging. The more challenging classes affected her grades, but she was able to maintain a positive mindset about her performance.

I feel like I've just kind of been on top of things so far. And like last term, it's weird because my grades are like, last term, I got my first C in my life and it was like the lowest my GPA had ever been because of that. But I felt like I learned more than I did any other year of school and like that was weird how that worked out. But that was kind of cool.

She has been able to get the support she needs because she knew “all these other people that can help [her].”

Joanna attributed a lot of success to some of the skills and strategies that her mentors helped her to develop in her first year. When asked what contributed to her feeling good in her second year, she identified how the FSMP helped her be more prepared and confident in asking for help.

I think I'm just more prepared? I think that's a good way to put it. Like when I am starting to like recognize when I'm starting to like fall behind on a topic or when something's not clicking. Because last year before they yelled at me to actually start talking to professor's I would just kind of, I would notice that I didn't understand something, but I wouldn't ask for help. I would just be like, oh, I should be able to understand this. Like, I'll figure it out later. And then I never would. But now I'm kind of catching it more quickly and like actually asking for help before like it's finals and its too late.

A willingness to put herself out there and talk to others, both professors and students, came up multiple times as a skill that her mentors helped develop and has been a key to her success in her second year. Some other skills Joanna learned in her first year and found helpful in her second year included learning about campus tutoring resources, office hours, study strategies, LinkedIn and resume strategies, and career exploration and connections.

Joanna is still in touch with parts of her group. Her faculty mentor has reached out to her a few times a term to wish her well, and she would stop to talk to him when she saw him around campus. The other mentee in her group was in one of her classes, and they studied together throughout the term, but they did not talk much in terms where they did not have classes together.

Participant 3: Adeline

Adeline was a second-year biohealth sciences major. She was originally from Texas, but she moved to Oregon five years prior to this interview. She was a first-generation college student, and she joined the program because she felt that she did not know anything about college and wanted a resource to turn to.

Adeline was in a group with one other student who she connected with as a friend. She felt more of a connection with her faculty mentor, but she felt both mentors supported her throughout her participation in the program. Their group meetings were talking about relevant topics for the first two terms and transitioned to “field trips” to various labs and resources around campus for the final term. One of the main lessons that they took away was a greater understanding of who faculty are.

It helped me be more comfortable talking to professors. So I never went to office hours or really reached out. And then that made me more confident. Like they're just people to remind me that they're just people and I can just go whenever I have a question. Yeah, that was definitely my main takeaway from that.

Overall, Adeline felt like she did well in the first year. When asked why she felt successful, she identified several factors for her evaluation of success.

I got good grades. I mean, I got the expected grades and I was also I was making more time freshman year to do like activities outside of class. I played the sports I wanted to play and stuff like that. So yeah, definitely. I had a good time last year.

She identified the lessons on how to talk to faculty were a contributing factor to their success, as well as their guidance in getting to know the campus more. The field trips were especially helpful in this regard because she knew where various resources and labs were.

Although Adeline felt like she did well in her first year, it was not without any challenges. She lived off-campus in her first year so she was “not meeting people as frequently” as someone living in the residence halls. It also made it harder to get to know the campus because it took her time to form connections. The lack of social connections led to a focus on “school only.” Her mentors helped her to learn more about places to go around campus and Corvallis to eat and meet people. They also helped her to go out and make friends by encouraging her to spend some time working on forming connections.

It was definitely like emotionally heavy, because, you know, you're, you're, especially when your friends are not going to the same colleges it was definitely emotionally heavy and having to drive back and forth kind of weighed me down and so just having those people to remind you, um, of things and like, keep you credible, like responsible for the things you need to do here on campus. And then in saying it's okay to like have a day, like a break, you know, have- go to Dixon go have fun, you know, like, have people that remind you every day or every other week, um, to do more fun things to go out and like, meet new professors and meet new people. So yeah, definitely. That helped me last year.

She was eventually able to make connections by learning about places to eat in Corvallis and on campus, and stayed on campus a little longer than was necessary to build those connections.

Adeline feels like she did well in her second year because she was able to solidify her “study strategies and stuff like that this year. And like started, like, focusing on more time with friends like balancing that this year.” Her biggest challenge was learning to

balance her time more because she worked three jobs in her second year, and she found that time management was important to help her find time with friends. She went on to say that she was relying on her family more as a support system in her second year, whereas the previous year it was her FSMP group.

Adeline identified several skills and behaviors that she learned from her mentors in her first year that she used in her second year. Time management and study skills were both tools that she used in her second year. One behavior that she identified was an openness to trying new things.

I've been more optimistic to try new things. Freshman year I, um, like I was, I was kind of hesitant to try this peer mentor group thing, because I wasn't sure I'd have the time or anything. And then now I'm like, I want to schedule more meetings for this so this that's good, and I've been open to trying new things.

She explained that some of the new things she tried included getting a new hobby, talking to new people, and communicating more regularly with professors.

Communication skills was another skill that Adeline relied on heavily, particularly with emails. Her mentors sat down with her and showed her how to create an email that will elicit a response and “not waste the instructors time.” Although this was something her faculty mentor showed her in her first year, she did not leverage it until her second year. Her faculty mentors also encouraged her to do research and provided multiple connections; however, Adeline was not able to fit it in her schedule and planned to start research in her third year. She felt she would have the knowledge and connections needed to get started when she decides to pursue research.

Adeline was a peer mentor in her second year, and she mentioned several times how being a mentor in her second year also helped her throughout her second year. She found that the peer mentor group helped her to have regular social times with peers.

So this peer mentor group thing has actually been really fun because I have a scheduled hour to hang out with people that have, that come from different backgrounds. And it's actually, it's been actually the best. I have a good group because they're so fun. We play more games. And yeah, it's been like my outlet kind of.

Additionally, her participation as a peer mentor helped to broaden her perspective in her second year. Her new group has a diverse set of interests and majors. She learned that “meeting people that are completely different from you or do different things is really eye-opening.” She went on to share several stories about how she learned how to support people from different backgrounds as they went through difficult situations. She feels that she grew a lot professionally and emotionally through these experiences. In addition to her new group which she is mentoring, Adeline is still connected with her faculty mentor from her first year, and she caught up with them to check in on how she is doing.

Overall, Adeline felt confident in her success in both her first year and second year. Her mentors helped to familiarize her with the campus and gave her the skills to communicate effectively with professors. They also encouraged her to put herself out of her comfort zone to help make more social connections. She relied on these lessons throughout her second year and continues to grow from them. As a returning mentor, she passed those lessons on, while continually learning and developing those skills.

Participant 4: Vincent

Vincent was a first-generation, second-year student who transferred to OSU after two years of part-time studying at a community college. He is studying in the College of

Science and the Honors College. He is “older than most other undergraduates” because he took a few years off after high school. He came to OSU with some research experience, and he joined the FSMP to get connected with more faculty and research opportunities at OSU. He felt that the program would set him up to transition into “the university world, which obviously is a lot different than community college.”

The meetings for Vincent’s FSMP group were not structured, and they did not focus on academics because Vincent thought that might have “overwhelmed” him with the “other stuff to worry about.” Instead they shifted their attention to campus resources and social connections. Vincent was determined to get involved in research quickly, and his faculty mentor did not have many connections that were relevant to his research interest. This contributed to him connecting with his peer mentor more than the faculty mentor. The group was composed of Vincent and one other student, but the other student rarely showed up at the meetings. Vincent was only involved heavily in the program for his first term; after which, the group stopped meeting as often because he “acquainted [himself] with the campus pretty quickly.”

During the time that Vincent was in the program, he felt that the “biggest lessons were where to ask questions and how to ask the right questions.” He went on to describe how his mentors helped him know which offices to approach when he was facing specific challenges. Vincent felt that another way the program helped him was to get general information about resources.

Social support and connections were another impactful part of the program for Vincent.

...just kind of having like, a couple people. Just even as like, just acquaintances, someone to like sit down, just talk to about like, this is what's going on with my life right now, and even if there was nothing like directly that could be done right then and there, it was nice to like have someone because obviously, when I first came here, I didn't really have any friends. And so it was nice to just have that, that space to kind of like have a social environment. And so I think that was really the most impactful part of it was like, coming here and not just feeling completely isolated and alone right off the bat. So having that there was like a really nice stepping stone.

He felt that it helped him build social connections and feel more connected to others on campus.

Overall, Vincent felt that he transitioned well in his first year. Fall term was difficult because it took him some time to get moved and settled, but he felt he found his place as he began to get more connected to research and more faculty. He found a faculty thesis advisor in his first year as part of the Honors College requirement whom he built a connection with. He mentioned that he “wouldn't say there's like a particular faculty member that [he] lean[ed] on more,” but he would go to his thesis advisor more often than his FSMP mentor.

He continued to feel settled in his second year, and that helped him to move out of his comfort zone. He continued to go to the various faculty and resources that he built connections within his first year. He mentioned that those resources were helpful in any challenges that he faced, especially in working to secure scholarships.

Overall, time management is something that he felt he developed and utilized most in his second year, although that development was not a result of his involvement with the FSMP. He developed his time management strategies while he was working in a research lab over the summer between his first and second years. He mentioned that he

did not talk about the lack of time management strategies development with his group because he was “struggling so much with getting settled that first term that [his] academic, like strengths and weaknesses weren't really as apparent to me.” He thought it “would have been nice if that was maybe brought to [his] attention more.”

Vincent also felt that developing a support network helped him feel like his second year was under control. He felt the urge to build a support network because he was a first-generation student, and did not have another source of support.

My mom didn't even graduate high school. So like, they had no idea they're like, I mean, this is great. You're going to college, but I have no idea how to help you. I don't know how to prepare you for this. So it was like coming in was it was a lot to figure out and so but now I feel like I learned so much. It's hard to pinpoint one specific, like thing that like I'm leaning on. I think I'm even essentially I could say I can lean more on myself than I could have back then. So yeah, the general just like feeling supportive and like, like having a community also because like, I've got all these friends and colleagues that I've met over the year. And they're great resources, just like if I have a question.

The network that he built included many different faculty and campus resources, and the FSMP was only one choice that he would occasionally turn to for support. Instead of having a regular place of support, he “reached out for whatever was kind of nearest to [him] to figure out.” In fact, he stated the FSMP was more of a “social safety net” to make things easier for him, and wasn't “the one resource that defined [his] first year.”

Vincent was involved as a peer mentor in his second year. He felt that being a mentor allowed him to develop a more in-depth relationship with another faculty member at OSU. He also wanted to help as a “transitional guide” because he knew “how much of a struggle it can be transferring.” Despite his involvement in the program beyond his first

year, he “completely lost contact” with his group from his first year because he was “more focused on this year and things ahead.”

Participant 5: Isabelle

Isabelle was a first-generation, second-year student from rural Oregon studying Zoology. She was the first person in her family to go to college, and she got involved in the FSMP because she felt “overwhelmed” as she was beginning her university career.

Isabelle’s FSMP group let the first-year students in the group “take the lead” on what topics to cover. Their meetings were unstructured and were centered around how Isabelle was handling the transition. There were two first-year students in her group, and they ended up covering topics such as professional development, interviewing strategies, classroom strategies, and note-taking. One topic they worked extensively with Isabelle on was how to write a professional email, and in doing so, helped to make her feel more comfortable emailing faculty. They also helped connect her to research by emphasizing the importance of getting involved in research early.

Isabelle learned that “faculty is not a god.” She went on to explain that initially, she felt the faculty would not believe the things she would say. Instead, she learned that “faculty [were] really open to what [she] felt” and “how [she] was feeling.” Knowing that her faculty mentors were so welcoming, it made “talking to faculty a little less taboo.” She became more willing to “stand by her beliefs” with faculty.

Isabelle wanted to get involved in the scientific community as quickly as possible when she got to OSU, and she felt that she accomplished that goal by participating in a competitive grant. Despite this success, she felt like there was a lot of “floundering” in her first year. She explained that she still felt she had a successful first year because she

“pushed” herself, had a “full schedule,” and was involved in research; however, she was able to look back and see places where she would have approached things differently. One example she identified was taking a higher-level math class because she felt she would have been able to find success; instead she felt like she was behind her peers in progression.

Isabelle felt that her second year was “very busy.” The biggest challenge in her second year was balancing two jobs, her classes, and still making time for a social life. However, she has “never been a person to have a slow schedule ever,” and she is still here because she is “doing stuff that’s interesting” and “fulfilling.” Despite her busy schedule, she felt that her classes went well because she got a B+ average which she was happy with.

Isabelle has been getting through her busy second year by leaning on the support of her supervisor and coworkers. Her work was helpful and supportive in finding a balance between her work, academic, and social life. She has also been leaning on the network at OSU that she “spent [her] entire year developing” and can now “use outreach to different people.”

Isabelle identified the FSMP as one of the primary reasons why she chose to come back to OSU, and she felt that it has reassured her decision to come here.

It really helped me like, solidify why I'm here like, I'm here. Like, it's okay, it is every valid revalidated why I'm here, because a lot of it my freshman year, I wasn't sure why, like, why do I need to stay here, you know, and after going through research and like, talking through and having faculty like, actually care what I'm doing and like, where I'm at and how I feel about like, their classes and stuff really, like helped me feel like this is why I'm here because I can be listened to here and people will actually take my comments and my criticism at times, but

like, all those things that come through, and, you know, that's something I learned that the faculty mentorship program was like, just talking to people really helps.

She explained that it was her community that helped to make her feel welcome and have a place. Getting involved in research really “grounded” why she was here.

Isabelle was a peer mentor in the program in her second year, and she was trying to pass on the importance of confidence that she took from the program. In addition to being a peer mentor, she is connected with her faculty mentor and fellow mentee from her first year. She talks to her fellow mentee regularly, and she will stop by to chat with her faculty mentor when she sees him in buildings. Her faculty mentor continued to emphasize the importance of finding a “balance” in her responsibilities.

Participant 6: Brianna

Brianna was a second-year student studying Human Development and Family Sciences with the child development option. She graduated from high school in three years, and she hopes to graduate from college in four years, as opposed to the usual five years of her program.

Brianna’s FSMP group had one other mentee in it alongside her, but the other mentee dropped out of the program early in the fall term. She self-identified as a “more withdrawn kind or reserved, shy person” and felt that the program helped her to grow from that. She has built a “strong relationship” with her faculty mentor. She said that the program provided a “point of connection” and that she “wouldn’t feel as connected” without the program. She went on to explain that it helped her get through difficult times because she knew that there was “somebody rooting for [her].”

One “barrier” that Brianna faced in her first year was tied to her living situation. She lived with someone very close to her and had a prior relationship with. She felt that her living situation left her in a place where she “didn't feel the need to make friends” or to “to go out and make those connections.” The program helped her to get in a position where she was “able to grow” and become more “engaged” at OSU. She felt that it helped her to be more confident in interacting with new people “in a different way than high school or any other time” in her life. She mentioned that she learned “how to go about interactions with people” through the role modeling of her mentors.

When asked what lessons she learned from the FSMP, she felt like it was a “hard question because [she felt] like [she] learned so much.” Through some follow-up questions, Brianna identified the confidence to interact with others, professionalism, communication skills, the importance of office hours, and various campus resources as important topics that she learned through her experiences in the program. She spoke highly of her faculty mentor and mentioned that she learned these lessons through her mentor’s role modeling.

Overall, Brianna felt that her first year was “a huge kick in the butt and that it was a huge learning experience.” In hindsight, she “didn’t realize everything [she] was learning,” and it wasn’t until she was in her second year that she realized how much she was applying what she learned. There were ups and downs in her first year due to challenges she faced from not living at home, and the greater academic rigor “compared to high school.”

Compared to her first year, Brianna felt like she was doing much better. She felt that her “second year at OSU [was her] step of independence.” She felt that living on her

own allowed her to discover her “true self” and “explore what [she] really wanted to do.” She was able to get involved in clubs and leadership positions which helped her feel more socially connected. She also felt confident to finish her program early and began taking more credits per term. Despite the more “challenging time” academically, she was able to find a balance with the support of her faculty mentor.

Brianna also identified several skills that she is leaning on to be successful in her second year. Communication was one of the big tools that she took away from the program, especially in developing the ability to communicate when she needs support.

I was one of those people, one of those students, I guess, that like, if you're really struggling on something, you sit down and you spend two more hours on it. And if you still don't understand that you spend two more hours on it, like grind, grind, grind kind of thing, and I would say kind of the real biggest tool that I took away last year from the program was communication. It's not bad to reach out, it's not bad to ask for help. And how to communicate is a big piece, right? So like, I need help versus I'm struggling like being more specific, I would say. And so I've reached out to professors and via email instead of going to office hours and like needed clarification and so just that can be like feeling comfortable in communicating with them was a big one, which I still use today.

Brianna also identified time management and planning as a skill that she developed through the program, and that supported her success in her second year. She spoke at length about some of the different strategies that her mentors gave her to help her manage her time.

That really just gave me the tools to like, I mean, I still use them today, right? Like planning setting goals. She taught me a neat trick where you again, like a really simple thing. You just sometimes you don't think of it where you put the deadline. Like wherever you keep your boundaries. The deadline one day in advance. So like, you know, in the case that oops, like, totally miss that one is okay, you still have 24 hours. So little things like that.

She explained that some of the “little tools” her mentors taught her were how to use the “Pomodoro method” for time management, as well as how to break down large assignments into smaller tasks with goal setting.

Brianna was a peer mentor with the FSMP in her second year, and was paired with the same faculty mentor from her first year. She expressed that being a mentor and “the fact that [she] was able to continue [FSMP] onto [her] second year, really helped [her].” She continued to look up to her faculty mentor as a role model, even though they are seen as equals and co-mentors in the program. She thinks that she might not be “doing this well if it was just cut off after the first year,” but might be doing just as well because she was able to “learn a lot” and is now applying it.

Themes

The above narratives showcase several themes that explain how the participants navigated their second year, and what skills they learned from the program to assist them in their journey. This section will examine three key themes that emerged across the participants' experiences: skill development, support systems, and navigation. These themes were developed through an examination of the participant’s narratives for common responses and experiences. It will also examine some common experiences among the participants that do not fit into a theme but are important to acknowledge in the context of this study. Although the themes are common among the participants, not every theme speaks to the experience of every participant in the same way.

Skill development

When looking to answer in what tools or behaviors participants attributed to their participation in first-year programs, several skill categories emerged across all

participants: academic development, professional development, and personal development.

Academic Development. All six participants identified a development of skills that helped to improve their academic success, although the tools and strategies varied among participants.

Patricia spoke highly of the time management skills she developed with the support of her mentors. She was able to work out effective strategies for developing an academic schedule for studying, working, and sleeping.

I think I figured out how to kind of work an academic schedule on during my first year here at OSU. It was a lot more structured thanks to the program. Um, I was able to like make a study like, study schedule, and work schedule and like even a sleep schedule because my mentor helped me do all the things.

She went on to express that this was a strategy that she continued to use in her second year.

This experience was representative of the experiences of the other participants who felt they developed time management skills through the support of the FSMP. Vincent and Brianna spoke highly of the time management skills that they developed, although Vincent mentioned that he developed these skills on his own time over the summer between his first and second years.

Joanna expressed that her mentor's support in learning about different study strategies was most beneficial to her. She felt being an out-of-state student meant that she had a harder time learning about some campus locations.

I mean, they told me about a lot of just random places on campus that there are resources available for me too. And. like, study places that aren't overcrowded all the time. I like to study on campus because I will fall asleep if I try to study at my house, I will, things like that I still use, but I think it was more. They told me

things that I feel like the school expects you to learn at your orientation. And you really don't learn about a lot of the places and tools available on campus. But I feel like a lot of professors think it's just like a general knowledge like everyone knows that Waldo is available, and everyone knows that like, the mobile and things like that are available, but I really didn't until my mentors told me so.

She identified that she still used these locations throughout her second year because “after an hour [she needed] to change locations and it just it helps.” In addition to quiet places to study, her mentors helped her learn about the tutoring resources on campus, which she continues to use in her second year.

While Joanna’s experience was helpful for her situation as an out-of-state student, it was not representative of the other participants. For example, Adeline identified specific note-taking strategies as tools that helped her with study habits.

Highlighting notes more often like going back and highlighting notes. I did that near the end of last year, and I really enjoyed it. So going back on, like learning the new study skills and really con- like putting them in concrete now and making them more useful to me, so like using highlighters and using all the office supplies you never have in the past, so that's definitely a skill I've learned this year.

Isabelle and Patricia also identified note-taking strategies as something they talked about with their mentors in their first year, although they did not identify the extent to which they continue to use those strategies in their second year.

Professional Development. Four of the six participants identified professional development as a skill that they learned in their first year, and it continued to support their success in their second year. Professional development was defined by the participants as job searching strategies, networking, communication skills, and professionalism.

Patricia highlighted the number of job search skills and strategies that her mentors helped her to develop.

They found out I didn't have a LinkedIn profile and it was not good. They were very upset with me. So the second meeting, they worked with me through my resume and helped me set up my whole LinkedIn and it actually helped a lot because I got a few job offers off of there.

When asked what skills she continued to use in her second year, she identified the resume and LinkedIn support as one of the most important. She was able to get several interviews for jobs and research positions thanks to their development. Furthermore, she continues to develop these skills with the support of her mentors.

Yeah, and I mean, as I said, they helped with my resume and they always read over my papers for me if I asked them to and things like that, and I can still go to them now. And they're still nice. We're still doing that because I know they have like new students and their mentoring group but they're still willing to help me.

Isabelle also identified some support that her mentors provided through writing resumes and interviewing techniques; however, she spoke more in-depth about the importance of the networking and communication skills that she developed.

I'm a lot of my professional development skills I use. So I'm very casual here. But I do have quite a bit of like interviewing skills and like writing out resumes, how many times I've helped out freshmen and my own friends with resume writing and like, how do we connect with faculty? And what's the best way of developing a network with people? Because I spent my entire year developing a network that now I can use outreach to different people.

She further explained that her mentors helped her to learn how to email and communicate with professors.

How do you send a professional email to someone like, you know, I there's a few times out there where I was like I have to email someone but like I'm too stressed, because I don't know what to write. And like, I don't know how I'm supposed to format it. Do I use formalities? Do I know use formalities? How does that work? And so like, having someone who was a mentee, who was also first gen went

through the entire process with me it was essentially like baby my through it, being like, you know, this is how it works. You know, when you send out a professional email, we start with this, we go with this and like, kind of going through the process of like, communicating with other like, not only your own peers, but also faculty as well.

Brianna had a similar experience, and she felt that professionalism and communication were two of the main skills that she learned from her mentors. When asked what skills she is applying in her second year, she said “professionalism is a big one.” However, unlike the others, she learned these skills primarily through observation of her mentor as a role model.

Other than professionalism um a lot, a lot. Um, role model definitely. She was a great role model and my mentor, my student mentor as well, Valentine, he was good too. And just like seeing see this fifth year just seeing like, how far they've come and getting advice from them was really, really nice. And definitely like being punctual being there being you know, I mean, like responsive, engaging conversations was a big one that I learned, really just how to like, how to go about interactions with I guess, people that are either faculty or even your peers because that's something that I would say that I struggled too.

Brianna alluded to the fact that many of the professional development skills that she learned were through role modeling, and not explicitly taught to her; however, they were important to her as she emulated those skills in her second year.

Personal Development. All six of the participants identified some levels of personal growth. The most common form of growth was confidence and a willingness to step out of their comfort zones.

Vincent was the only participant who stopped participating in the program midway through his first year. He explained that one of the reasons for that was from the confidence that the program helped him gain.

I would say biggest lessons were where to ask questions and how to ask the right questions. And so like being kind of like given a lead of like, oh, so I'm struggling with some finances here, go to the financial aid office, talk to these people ask about these resources or go to human services Resource Center. And generally like it was eventually I got to the point where I was kind of, I didn't, I kind of like left the program a little early, like half, halfway through second, winter term didn't really meet as much. I was doing a lot on my own at that point. And a lot of it came from just like having someone kind of leading me in the right direction. So just, generally, like gaining confidence, I think was one of the biggest lessons that I learned.

Throughout his interview, he spoke of how challenging it was for him to get adjusted in his first term, but then how well connected he was beyond his first term.

Vincent's experience was not representative of the other's experience. For example, Adeline's experiences were more representative of the rest of the group in developing her confidence in talking to others, as well as being "more optimistic to try new things."

Yeah, so going back to opening, being open and being less introverted when it comes to talking to people. Yeah, definitely. Gosh, it's harder to think about now. Okay, let's think. Yeah, I guess just trying new things. They really inspired me because they're doing so much. You know, my peer mentor was doing research and she was like, captain of basketball team and, or like, she was a coach of the basketball team. And she was doing all these things. And I didn't do anything last year outside of school. So this year, I really wanted to like work on things outside of school. So that's what I brought from last year, for sure.

Brianna and Isabelle also identified confidence as a lesson they took away from their participation in the program, and their confidence led them to try new things.

Patricia and Joanna, on the other hand, felt that their increased confidence helped them to feel more willing to talk to students and faculty. Joanna identified how her mentors helped her to introduce herself in classes.

Yes because as I said, I was very quiet I would have never gone to any office hours I would have never approached a single professor. And I, they told me that my one rule for the year knowing that I was a very quiet person, I had to find at least one person in every class and get their number, or their Snapchat or something so I could contact them if I needed help and I would have to show my mentor. It actually ended up helping a lot, like being in group chats with people my classes and actually getting help, and yeah, really glad they made me go to office hours, and they introduced me to other professors too. I didn't always like, keep going contact with them after that, but it's still good to like meet people.

She went on to explain how she continued to use this lesson in her second year, and she attributed it to some of her success in her second year.

Support systems

Different types of support were present for all the students interviewed, although where the support came from, and the type of support offered varied across the participants. As discussed in chapter two, a sense of belonging is important to student success and retention (Kuh et al., 2006), and students can find support systems from a variety of places on campus. Three main support systems emerged that the participants formed through their time in the FMSP: Social support, emotional support, and academic support. The support systems that the participants developed were identified as one of the factors that contributed to their success in their second year.

Social Support. All six participants identified some level of social support as a result of their participation in the program. For some of the participants, the support came from their participation in the group, and the inherent social structure that it provided. The structure allowed social connections to form with both mentors and their fellow mentees. Adeline, for example, found that the group meetings were helpful to have a scheduled hour of social time.

Um, I guess just, just finding the time now to hang out with people and to reach out. So this peer mentor group thing has actually been really fun because I have a scheduled hour to hang out with people that have, that come from different backgrounds. And it's actually, it's been actually the best. I have a good group because they're so fun. We play more games. And yeah, it's been like my outlet kind of.

She further explained that she liked having a group with new people because it let her meet people that “are completely different from you” and that is “really eye-opening.” This was a common experience across several participants including Vincent, Brianna, and Isabelle. Isabelle explained that she also found friendship with the other mentee in her group, and would regularly “see each other” in class and socially. Brianna, on the other hand, found a “strong personal relationship” with her faculty mentor.

Additionally, five of the six participants were still connected to their peer mentor, faculty mentor, or fellow mentees. They have met with them at least once in their second year to catch up socially. While only Brianna identified this as a continued source of support professionally and academically, the others acknowledged that it was nice to have someone who cared about how they were doing. Furthermore, it confirms that the program ending does not end the developed relationships.

Emotional Support. All six participants also identified some level of emotional support from the program, although the levels of support varied by participant. Patricia, for example, only briefly acknowledged that she “still [had] that kind of emotional support with [her] mentor,” but she did not expand on the level of emotional support or the extent to which she relied on it. On the other hand, most of the other participants referenced the emotional support they received throughout their interview in greater detail.

Joanna and Brianna, for example, looked to the program as a second family and seemed to find a sense of belonging. Brianna felt like the emotional connection she had with her FSMP group played a role in her ability to come back in her second year.

I'm going into my second year. I knew that I at least had kind of, I would say like, it's almost like a second family. Like I think that's a little bit extreme, but it's like it's a real point of connection. And you know, you know, somebody for a year and they you're emailing with them and you obviously see them and you go do things with them. And they explore things with you. And they, they help you out and they give you advice and these types of things. And then at the end of the year, they say, okay, we'll see you in fall. Like, that's just, it's almost like coming back to family you know what I mean, in that way. And so it's definitely like, again, it was just that piece of like, coming back, there's somebody here that does care for my wellbeing and wants to see me just really that point of like a meaning of purpose. Like there's something there. It's not just me going to a college campus and getting an A like checkmark, you know, I mean, because at the end of the day, many of our professors not all, but it's like you see them for 10 weeks. And that's it. You know what I mean? We hope for something more than that, but realistically, you can't invest your entire self into every single course. So realistically, a lot of your courses are going to be 10 weeks and that's it, but this program obviously allows for a lot more than that.

Brianna went on to describe how her mentors regularly checked in with how she was doing throughout her first and second years.

Some participants continued to find support outside of the FSMP, and likely would have had the support system regardless of their involvement in the program. For example, Vincent was quick to connect and get involved with multiple research projects where he would turn to his supervisors for support. Despite this, he still acknowledged that the program was a “stepping stone” to help him “feel comfortable” in his first term.

Others turned to their family for support. Adeline relied on both her family and her FSMP group for support when she was struggling.

I needed some help for sure. Yeah. Have a good family support this year, like even more this year. So I definitely talked to them a lot more. And then I guess the peer mentor group has also helped with that because I can just, like talk about my struggles and like know that somebody else is struggling sometimes, too.

She explained that she spoke to her brother more in her second year for emotional support, and he helped her navigate the challenges she faced in her second year.

Regardless of where their emotional support came from, all the participants spoke about how their emotional support system helped their success in both their first and second years.

Academic Support. As outlined in the skill development theme, many participants were able to develop academic skills to support their success in their second year. In addition to developing skills, many participants were able to turn to their mentors as a support structure for their academics. They turned to their FSMP groups to find support in navigating their academic careers at OSU.

Isabelle went to both of her mentors to learn about what classes to take and how to be successful in different classes.

... a lot of my class stuff and like advising stuff and more interviewing situations kind of went more to my faculty. But like for peer, we would talk more about like, class vibes, like how to deal with certain classes, certain professors in my major and like how what's the best way of doing notes in this class and like stuff like that.

This was fairly typical for the support that the participants went to their mentors for. In fact, five of the six participants identified some support from their mentors in topics similar to those that Isabelle described.

One of the unique experiences that a participant described was the support they received in navigating the decision to change their major. Patricia changed their major in

their first year after speaking with their faculty mentor about their interests, and what major might be a better fit.

I think having this program helped me figure out what I liked, about like, what I liked about my program, like my academic program and what I didn't, I actually ended up switching majors because of the Faculty Student Mentor Program... So I think a lot of it was I figured out that I really liked math, because my group was like, really math, leaning, and chemistry is a very math heavy course. So there was all of that. But then the more I got into doing kind of like math related things, but also like, the intersection between math and art, was something that my mentor brought to my attention. I was like, oh, wow, I really like art, and math, a lot better than chemistry. And so I ended up switching to art history, because I can't really do art.

Although this conversation happened in their first year, it affected her experiences in her second year as she was starting from “square one” with her classes. She explained that she was happy with the change of major, despite taking an entirely new set of classes.

A final source of academic support that the FSMP provided to students was knowledge and guidance around university resources and support systems. However, that source of support is explored in more depth in the navigation theme due to a greater alignment with navigating the complexities of the institution.

Navigation

The final theme that emerged across all the participants' experiences was guidance in navigating the complexities of the college experience. Specifically, college knowledge, connection to research, and community knowledge were all helpful in the participants' navigation through their first and second-year experiences.

College Knowledge. How to navigate the variety of campus resources was an area that all six participants identified as enabling success in their first year. The resources that each participant utilized the most varied, but the experience and support

they got in finding resources were consistently their mentors. Furthermore, four of the six participants found the knowledge they gained in their first year supported their success in their second year.

Participants that were first-generation college students found the explanation and connection to college resources to be especially helpful because they did not have family members to help them navigate the resources. Isabelle, for example, stated that she was “overwhelmed” when beginning college.

Yeah, I'm a first-generation student in the respect, but most of my family have no clue how college works. And so coming in I was pretty overwhelmed. I came from a rural town. So it can be pretty difficult to adjust into like college life because I didn't really get much information about it before coming in.

She went on to explain how having “no clue how college works” impacted her. She was in one of the last orientation sessions and did not get many of the classes she wanted. She also did not realize she could retake her math placement test, and she would have done so if she knew she would have been able to be more on track with her peers. Her mentors supported her by referring her to resources that could help her “tackle these issues.”

Adeline had similar experiences as a first-generation student. She explained why it was helpful for her FMSP mentors to explain the campus resources to her.

I would always hear like professors say go to CAPS, go to academic center, go to this, and I never knew where those were. So they really directed me to where those buildings were, like, where to find people who can help you with that kind of stuff. And especially like, um, showing, like, where prefer- like professors are like, where their office hours are, like, you can say where they are what they do, but you can't fit, like I'm a very, um, like, physical or kinetic person. So like doing things helps me retain it more. And so that's that was very helpful last year.

Participants that were transfer students also found the support in finding different resources on campus extremely helpful. Patricia spoke to the challenges that she faced in

getting settled at OSU because many of her courses were not catered toward the freshman experience anymore.

I probably could have found [the information] a lot through like maybe my classes, but my classes are kind of upper-division at this point. So they don't really cater to like a freshman experience. They don't really tell us a lot of like, like, where they're like, um, I know that there are like mental health meetings and things like that on campus. I would never have known about that from like my classes. So it was really nice that my mentor was able to tell me about this.

She further explained that learning these resources was helpful to her in her second year because “it’s a lot easier to search what [she’s] looking for now.” Instead of being “intimidated,” she knows how to search for “something specific” and use it “to [her] advantage.”

Participants who were neither first-generation, nor transfer students also identified navigation as something helpful to their success, but they explained it in less detail than the first-generation or transfer participants.

Connection to research. All the participants identified research as something they were interested in. There were varying levels of interest among participants in research, but a common theme was that the FSMP helped to initiate involvement in research. Joanna did not know that research was something that you can get involved in at college, and her mentors introduced her to a first and second-year research program.

And they introduced me to the URSA engage program. And a few other just they dragged me to some research presentations, which ended up being really helpful just to get my foot in the door, you know, gain more exposure, and hear about what people do outside of class, I guess, because I didn't really know about a lot of it. And I just thought I was supposed to come to college. Go to class, and that was the end of it.

Although Patricia did not get involved in research, she was still actively seeking out research positions at the time of the interview. She participated in several interviews for research positions, but none were able to “work with her class schedule.”

This was a fairly common experience for all the participants. The mentors introduced them to some first-year research opportunities. Some, like Joanna and Adeline, tried to get involved, but haven’t been able to make it work. Others, like Patricia and Isabelle, were able to find research positions, and it helped them thrive. When asked what helped Isabelle to come back in her second year, she explained how research helped her to feel “grounded.”

I'm not too sure what I'm doing here and I'm doing essentially high school again, through college just harder. So like, why should I be here? When I could just do that back home. Yeah. Um, but it was a research that really grounded in like, this is why I'm here. I'm here for developing my research skills in specifically my field. So, right, yeah, that's a big thing. I feel like freshmen should get involved in is research if they ever can

Vincent was an exception to the other participants. He was very interested in research, and as a transfer student had an opportunity to participate in research the summer before his first year at OSU. He still spoke to his FSMP mentor in trying to find more research connections, but they were involved in a different field than he was and were not able to provide as many connections as he found on his own.

Community knowledge. A final piece of navigation that the participants through their first and second years had an understanding of how to navigate Corvallis, the city OSU is located in. Three of the six participants identified navigating Corvallis as something that supported their success, and something that their mentors helped them

navigate. Joanna spoke to how she had a hard time adjusting to Corvallis because she was an out-of-state student.

For ours, I know that every week there was like a certain syllabus, I guess that we were supposed to follow and like talk about certain topics, but for my group we usually skimmed over that and it was more about what we needed help with in that certain time. And I found that to be really helpful because they, both of my mentors, knew way more about the school than I did, because I'm not even from Oregon. I'm from California. And they're both Oregon natives. And that just helped a lot both inside and outside of school. I didn't know where anything in Corvallis was. And they gave me a lot of tips about, like what to do outside of school and to keep myself busy and not sad all the time. I don't know, It helped a lot.

She later identified that her further understanding of Corvallis and Oregon helped her to “blend in more.” The transition to Oregon was one of the biggest challenges that she faced, and she continued to rely on the places around Corvallis throughout her first and second years.

Adeline felt a similar need for guidance in finding what to do in Corvallis. Her need was a result of her living off-campus in her first year. Not living on campus meant that she was not “meeting people as frequently as other people” and that caused her to focus on “school and school only.” Her mentors showed her “cool places off-campus,” and now she goes to those places a lot more frequently in her second year.

Common experiences

The above themes are all representative of themes that were present and can help to understand the research question; however, the narratives also revealed other common experiences among the participants that are important to note. Although these common experiences do not help to answer the research question, they are representative across

most of the participants and have implications for further research and mentorship programs.

Perceptions of Faculty. One topic that was prevalent through four of the six interviews was the participants' change of perceptions of faculty. The change of perceptions impacted their confidence in speaking up and communicating with professors at OSU in their second year. Adeline explained that she felt more comfortable talking to other professors after getting to know her faculty mentor.

It helped me be more comfortable talking to professors. So I never went to office hours or really reached out. And then that made me more confident. Like they're just people to remind me that they're just people and I can just go whenever I have a question.

This was a common experience for several of the participants. Isabelle explained her change of perceptions as “faculty is not a god.” In her first year she felt “nervous about the taboos of talking to [her] professor.” She further explained that she now feels comfortable talking to them and other people of authority, and she tries to pass her learnings on to the first-years that she interacts with in her jobs.

Rising success. All of the participants were asked to share how well they felt their first year went, and how well they felt their second year was going. All six participants expressed that their second year was going as well, or better than their first year. As described in a previous theme, many of the participants felt more confident in trying new things and approaching faculty; however, there are further similarities around their overall growth between their first and second years.

Two examples of participants that had representative experiences of rising success is Patricia and Joanna. Patricia said that she was doing “kinda” well in her first term, but

the program helped her decide to switch majors. She felt her second year was “going really well,” although busier because she is taking advantage of more opportunities. Joanna “struggled the first two terms” because she did not have the best social connections, but knowing “at the end of the year last year that I actually did have professors and mentors that recognize [her]” encouraged her to come back in her second year. Her second year went better, despite the harder classes, because she is having more fun and knows “other people that can help me.”

The story is very similar to all the other participants. They struggled with something in their first few terms, but the FSMP helped them to find connections. Those connections helped to bring them to their second year where they felt they were doing much better.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

This study sought to understand the influence that a first-year mentoring program had on second-year student success. The following research questions guided the design of the study:

1. In what ways do first-year mentorship programs influence how mentorship program participants experience/navigate the "sophomore slump?"
2. What tools or behaviors do second-year students attribute to their participation in first-year programs?

This chapter will answer these questions through an exploration of the findings, limitations, recommendations, and implications produced by this study.

Summary of findings

This study provided insight into the student's experiences after they participated in the Faculty Student Mentorship Program (FSMP). The six participants shared their experiences while they were first-years involved in the program, and how those experiences influenced their ability to succeed in their second year. Through their narratives, three main themes were generated: skill development, support systems, and navigation. There were also some common experiences amongst the participants that did not fit into any one theme.

The participants' narratives indicated that they developed skills through their participation in the FSMP which contributed to their success in their second year. The skills they developed spanned academic strategies, professional development, and personal growth. All six participants identified academic skill development in areas such as time management and study skills and strategies. Only four of the six participants

developed professionally through learning how to network, communicate, interview, and develop application materials. Personal development ranged more widely between participants, but all six participants displayed or recognized some personal growth through their time in the program.

Participants also discussed the level of support they received from the program, as well as other support systems that helped them through their first and second years. Each participant's mentorship group was structured differently and therefore the forms of support they received varied; however, there were common sources of support that were discovered as a result of the program. Social, emotional, and academic support were the three overarching types of support found as a result of their participation in the program. Some of these forms of support, like social and academic, were found through participation in the program itself as well as encouraged and connected to resources that allowed participants to find and create their social support. Other forms of support, like emotional support, were already present in the participants' support systems, but also found or grown through their participation in the program.

Another theme that emerged was how participants learned to navigate the complexities of the institution. The FSMP supported the participants' abilities to navigate specific OSU resources, how to get involved in research, and information about the larger community. Transfer and first-generation students benefited from the provided navigational benefits, particularly for around navigating OSU resources. Furthermore, all participants spoke at length about the opportunities they were given to get involved in research through their connection with their faculty mentor.

In addition to skill development, support systems, and assistance in navigating the institution, participants had two common experiences that have implications for the interpretation and recommendations of this study. First, there was a shift of attitude towards faculty by the participants; four of the six participants identified a change of perception in faculty through their experiences in the program. They identified specific confidence and willingness to continue to engage with faculty moving forward in their academic careers. Second, all six participants self-identified greater success in their second year when compared to their first year. Different criteria were used amongst the participants to evaluate their success, but they aligned student success indicators outlined by the literature.

Limitations of study

Although the research methodology outlined in chapter three provided a comprehensive set of data for analysis, several limitations restrict the conclusions that can be drawn. All research participants volunteered to participate in the study which could lead to selection bias where participants with a very positive experience more likely to take time out of their day to participate in a study. Furthermore, several participants were peer mentors in the program at the time of the study. While they were not required to participate in the study, their employment with FSMP may have established a power dynamic that affected the honesty of their responses. Additionally, my positionality as someone involved in the FSMP may have influenced the participants' comfort in providing open and honest responses in the interview.

Additionally, the researchers chose to only gather data through semi-structured interviews. While these interviews were able to provide a rich story of the experiences

and lessons of participants in the program, the data collection method limited the researcher's ability to conclude broader perspectives in four ways. First, no demographic data was collected. This data could have allowed researchers to draw wider conclusions on the correlation between mentorship programs and student success. Second, the interviews only provided a snapshot of the participants' experiences in their second year. Any growth was self-identified solely through the interview, and no additional data was collected to conclude growth from first to second year. Third, while this study framed student success as the extent to which students were thriving, there is no doubting the substantial amount of literature that uses retention and grade data as measures of success. A fuller picture could have been drawn from the success of the participants if more quantitative data was included. The fourth limitation was the size of the study. The study interviewed six of the 334 that students were eligible to participate in the study. While their narratives provided a rich detailing of their experiences, there are many other realities that other students experienced in the program that were not considered when analyzing the data. Despite these limitations, detailed data was gathered from the research participants that were used to draw conclusions and recommendations on student success for second-year students.

Areas for further research

The process and results of this study raised several areas for further research. As identified in the limitations of this study, how data was collected limited the ability to draw broader conclusions on the longer-term influences of mentoring programs on student success. Further studies that examine how first-year mentoring programs second-year student success would help bring attention to the challenges that students face

throughout their academic journey. The narratives revealed different experiences of several populations that were included in the study but were not the focus of the research question. Specifically, this study revealed the disparities in experiences between transfer versus non-transfer students, current mentors versus non-mentors, and students with different identities. Further studies that examine how these different populations navigate their experiences between their first and second year would be a welcome addition to the literature.

Additionally, many of the participants' narratives revealed the numerous involvements that students have on campus, both in their first year and second year. While the participants identified the FSMP as a factor in their success, the scope of this study makes it impossible to conclude the extent to which various programs have an influence on second-year student success. The results were reported in a way that showcased the extent to which the FSMP supports the students, but that does not mean other structures on campus did not contribute to the students' abilities to navigate the institution. Further research would need to be done to understand the extent to which mentoring programs set students up for success in their second year compared to other support programs.

Additionally, while this study focused on the success of second-year students, it utilized a relatively narrow definition of student success. As identified in chapter two, student success has multiple definitions, and several indicators can be used to determine student success. This study used the concept of thriving to define student success; however, retention and GPA are among the most common measures of student success (Kuh et al., 2006). Quantitative studies using these measures to determine success for a

large group of students could provide a more robust picture of the influences that mentoring has on second-year student success.

Implications

The results of this study provide implications and how a first-year mentorship program can influence second-year student success. Overall, the participants of the FSMP were thriving in their second year as a result of their participation in the program. As discussed in chapter two, students can be considered successful when they are *thriving* in three dimensions: academic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal (Schreiner, 2010). All the participants in this study were thriving in at least one dimension, and many of them were thriving in all three dimensions. Furthermore, some of their success in these dimensions were directly attributed to their participation in the FSMP.

Academic thriving is displayed when students are engaged in the learning process, and determined for academic success (Schreiner, 2010). Although this study was not able to observe any measures of engaged learning, multiple elements of determination for academic success were present in the participants. Determination for academic success is characterized by an “investment of effort, an ability to manage one’s time and the multiple academic and personal demands of the college environment, a motivation to succeed, and the intentional pursuit of one’s goals” (Schreiner, 2010, p. 4). The participants’ indicated thriving in the academic dimension through their discussion on managing multiple demands of the college environment, as well as the skills they developed in managing their time. Furthermore, several participants were able to actively and intentionally pursue their research goals through research connections from the FSMP.

The intrapersonal dimension of student success was also developed by the FSMP. Interpersonal thriving is characterized by students who have a “positive perspective” and can proactively cope with realities by putting things into perspective and reframing challenges (Schreiner, 2010, p. 5). Intrapersonal thriving was conveyed through the participants' narratives self-identified growth and success from their first to second year. They expressed how they were far busier than they were, but how they had the tools and resources to succeed. One participant identified how despite receiving her lowest grades, she was able to maintain a positive mindset based on her learning outcomes from the term.

In addition to academic and intrapersonal thriving, participants were supported in developing interpersonal dimensions of student success. Interpersonal thriving is characterized by students who experience social connections and “diverse citizenship” by forging a sense of community through valuing difference and others (Schreiner, 2010, p. 5). Participants expressed interpersonal thriving through the connections they made with their mentors and peer groups. All participants expressed social and emotional support from their groups in meaningful ways that supported their success in their second year. Furthermore, many identified how they grew more confident in their willingness to approach others and form social connections.

The participants attributed all three elements of thriving to their participation in the FSMP which indicates it influenced student success. Additionally, other indicators of student success within the participants' narratives. Relationships with faculty are one of the key indicators for a student's sense of belonging (Tinto, 2012) and success (Kuh et al., 2006). All of the participants identified a relationship with the faculty mentors, and four

out of six noted a change in their perceptions of faculty as a whole. This helped many participants to feel more confident to approach faculty in their second year. Furthermore, several participants expressed that one of the reasons that they returned for their second year was because they knew they had someone at OSU that cared to see them return. This indicates that the FSMP was able to support student retention through the second year, and was one of the factors in the student's decision.

Additionally, while not the focus of the study, many of the researched benefits of mentoring programs such as building a sense of belonging (Gross et al., 2015), navigation of the university (Collings et al., 2014; Cornelius et al., 2016), career readiness (Fowler & Muckert, 2004), and increased academic skills (Crisp et al., 2017) were present participants' narratives. The three themes identified in chapter four of skill development, support systems, and navigation align with the benefits found in the literature on peer mentoring. Furthermore, the benefits of this mentoring program were found to continue to positively affect the participants' experiences after their participation in the program had ended.

On the other hand, many of the researched challenges that students face in their second year were not present in the participants' narratives. Of particular note, the assertion that second-year students feel a reduced sense of belonging (Schreiner & Pattengale, 2000) and reduced motivation from career indecision and institutional navigation (Schreiner et al., 2012) was not the case with the participants of this study. Instead, all of the participants displayed pathways for thriving of sophomore students outlined by Schreiner: major certainty, campus involvement, student-faculty interaction, and institutional integrity (Schreiner, 2018). Despite these positive results, there was not

sufficient attention to the presence of these challenges within the second-year student population at OSU to determine if the FSMP influenced the challenges faced by students at OSU.

Recommendations for practitioners

Although this study was designed to understand generalized influences of a first-year mentorship program on second-year student success, the inherent ties to the FSMP lead to recommendations for practitioners involved in the program, or for others intending to improve or create a similar program. The recommendations outlined include what is working in the FSMP, as well as some small changes to be considered.

The first recommendation is tied to the future implementation of the FSMP. The program was just green-lit to move beyond the pilot and will be implemented into a fully-funded program in the fall of 2020. Going forward, no significant changes should be made to the structure of the program. Peer mentors, faculty mentors, and mentees all played a contributing role in the long-term success of the participants. Furthermore, the flexibility of recommended meeting topics allowed groups to adapt to the specific needs of the students in their group.

One small change that should be considered is encouraging mentors to reach out at least once in the students the second year. Currently the program's requirements for participation and outreach for mentors end at the conclusion of the academic year. Encouraging mentors to reach out to their mentees at least once after their official participation in the program has ended can help to develop an increased sense of belonging within the university. The participants of this study who were still in touch with their mentors expressed how it was nice to still be connected to their mentors, and

know that they still had someone they could turn to as a resource. Furthermore, several of the participants indicated how their mentor's presence resulted in a sense of belonging that contributed to their return to the university. While it is impossible to know what they will do in the future, a continuation of their sense of belonging may contribute to their continued success.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

This study was brought on by the observation that there are often less dedicated support services for second-year students than first-year students. It sought to understand how a first-year mentoring program would influence second-year student success. To answer this, it worked with the Faculty Student Mentorship Program in hopes to understand how participants of the program were doing in their second year. The participants of the study were able to share their experiences through the program and their first two years at OSU. They painted a story of challenges, growth, and success. The results indicated that the FSMP was able to set its participants up for success in their second year.

The process of this study unveiled many questions that remain unanswered through the literature review, data collection, and analysis. How do specific student populations benefit from participation in first-year programs? How does continued participation in a program as a mentor influence success? How much does the mentorship structure influence second-year preparedness? Despite any limitations and future research questions generated through this study, it also produced numerous implications and recommendations for the FSMP and student affairs practitioners. First-year mentorship programs can motivate students to return in their second year, and equip them with numerous academic, social, and professional benefits that they continue to draw on throughout their second year. The structure of peer and faculty mentors, along with other co-mentees, provided students with benefits through a combination of all members of their groups. For institutions seeking to improve and support second-year success and

retention, first-year mentorship programs provide the structure and tools to support students through their transitions throughout their second year.

As universities continue to support students for success in their university careers, attention must be given to all students, including the often-overlooked second-year population. The finding of this paper provided a glimpse into some of the challenges and successes that the second-year student population faces, and one way in which they are prepared to navigate their continued academic journeys.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A - Interview Questions

1. Could you please tell me a little about yourself and your background?
2. What are your educational goals and aspirations? Where do you hope to be in five years?
3. How would you describe the Faculty Student Mentorship Program in your own words?
4. What important lesson or lessons did you gain from your exposure to FSMP that influenced your approach to your OSU experience?
5. Do you think the program gave you tools to be able to thrive beyond your first year?
 - a. Are these tools useful to you and your identity?
6. Do you feel that you thrived during your first-year at OSU?
7. What brought you back to your second year of study at Oregon State?
8. How has your experience been so far in your second year?
 - a. What's going well?
 - b. What challenges are you encountering?
9. Are there things you learned in your first year that you are now leaning on?
 - a. Are there specific skills that you are applying now in your second year?
 - b. Any specific behaviors that you can directly attribute to the program?
10. What knowledge did you gain through the FSMP that you rely upon in your current experience?
11. How did the FSMP influence how you approached your second year at OSU?
 - a. Are you currently a mentor in the program?
 - b. Are you still connected with your mentors? Fellow mentees?

12. I've been asking most of the questions so far. What questions do you have for me, or is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to know about your experiences?
13. I want to schedule a follow-up interview once I have analyzed all the data to ensure I am accurately reflecting your experiences in my report. Would you like to participate in a follow-up interview?