

References

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Peer Mentoring

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THE MANAGEMENT OF LARGE CLASS INSTRUCTION has been and will continue to be a part of the academic setting. We in academia accept that this structure is the most efficient way to meet the needs of the masses but question whether it is the most effective way to meet the needs of individual students. In this day and age of cultural diversity and recognition of individual learning styles, we dare not overlook this component.

In the meantime, because of lack of resources, both financial and human, coupled with ignorance about learning and teaching styles, large classes still envelop the college and university landscape. Until the knowledge and resources become available to reduce these classes, how do we accommodate these students? One possibility is peer mentoring.

In this scenario, large classes (usually core curriculum) in the humanities, sciences, math and social sciences that have a high failure rate are identified. Next, students who were successful (made an "A" or "B") in these classes are identified and challenged to serve as "models" of good student behavior. These "expert stu-

dents" or models are then paired with a professor who teaches a large class as his/her assistant. Now the work begins.

While there is an assumption that these model students knew what it took to be successful in these particular courses, they should be taught or reminded how to be model students. Once the students accept the challenge, they are hired and given charges that include attending classes daily, participating in workshops for study skills, time management and the like. Additionally, they must attend high enrollment classes and serve as role models by taking notes, stimulating discussion, asking questions and holding study sessions for fellow classmates at least twice a week.

With such a program, we are able to accomplish several goals. Three of them include saving on financial resources by hiring assistants instead of reducing class size, giving students opportunities to demonstrate their leadership and teaching skills and improving students' performance in core courses.