

IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF A MENTORING PROGRAM WITHIN A DIETETIC INTERNSHIP AND DIDACTIC PROGRAM IN DIETETICS

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INTRODUCTION

The Queens College Dietetic Internship (DI) and Didactic Program in Dietetics (DPD) Mentoring Program was initiated in 2017 to promote mentoring and provide support and assistance to students in the dietetics field.

Mentoring provides the opportunity for both mentor (dietetic intern) and mentee (DPD student) to benefit from the relationship

- Mentee will develop knowledge, skills and confidence
- Mentor will gain inspiration from guiding mentees

Given the COVID-19 pandemic, this years mentoring program will be conducted virtually. Although there is some concern surrounding virtual mentoring, online mentoring has been shown to be just as productive as traditional mentoring.

BACKGROUND

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics has recognized the importance of mentoring within the dietetics profession.

New competencies have been established to recognize the need for mentoring:

- KRDN 2.8: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the importance and expectations in mentoring and precepting others
- CRDN 2.15: Interns will practice mentoring and precepting others

The Academy now offers their own mentoring program, in addition to mentoring programs offered by Dietetic Practice Groups and Member Interest Groups.

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a virtual mentoring program between dietetic interns and DPD students. It will be determined if virtual mentoring is as effective as traditional mentoring, and if participating in a mentoring program increases the desire of participants to participate in a mentoring relationship in the future.

METHODOLOGY

A 6-month repeated cross-sectional study was conducted. A convenience sample of 12 dietetic interns and 15 DPD students were recruited from the Queens College Family, Nutrition and Exercise Sciences Department. Mentors (dietetic interns) and mentees (DPD students) were paired 1:1 or 1:2 (mentors: mentees). Mentors assisted mentees with dietetic internship applications and provided support and advice as needed. Before the program started, a pre-program survey was conducted. The program was initiated with a group Zoom meeting where the Program Handbook was reviewed in depth. It was then up to mentor/mentee pairs to meet individually over the duration of the program. At the conclusion of the program, a post-program survey was completed. The surveys were administered through Google Forms to mentors and mentees to assess knowledge, beliefs and attitudes towards mentoring and the mentoring program. Descriptive Statistics were used to evaluate survey data.



DISCUSSION

9 mentors responded to the pre-program survey and 8 responded to the post-program survey. 9 mentees responded to the pre-program survey and 9 responded to the post-program survey.

There was an 100% increase in mentors "agreeing" or "strongly agreeing" to survey questions, and a 75% increase in mentors "agreeing" or "strongly agreeing" to survey questions.

Overall, 88% of mentors and 89% of mentees believed that online mentoring could be as productive as traditional mentoring. 100% of both mentors and mentees had the desire to mentor in the future after participating in the mentoring program.

CONCLUSION

Mentoring is crucial in the dietetics field for both mentors and mentees. Online mentoring has been shown to be just as productive as traditional mentoring, which is consistent with the results of this study.

Strengths of this study include good feedback from mentors and mentees on the program. Limitations include participants needed to be excluded from the study and not all participants responding to the pre- and post-program surveys.

Future research should:

- Place a stronger emphasis on setting SMART goals
- Place a stronger emphasis on screening mentee participants before pairing them with mentors
- Provide additional group meetings/support

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RESULTS

