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Environmental Navigation Network: Developing a Peer Mentor Program in the Environmental Program at the University of Vermont

Jacqueline Cardoza

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Environmental Navigation Network

Developing a Peer Mentor Program in the Environmental Program at the University of Vermont

Jacqueline Cardoza

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Science Environmental Program University of Vermont

May 2016

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Abstract

The acknowledgement of complex environmental problems and society’s work to address them during the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, inspired higher education to respond by developing a high number of interdisciplinary environmental studies programs nationally. In 1972, University of Vermont instituted the Environmental Program and the first cross-college environmental studies (ENVS) degree program. Students pursue an individually-designed program of study drawing on a wide vary of disciplines with great choice in their courses. The program sustained student interest and steadily grew over four decades. The current number of nearly 500 majors challenges the advising capacity of the faculty and staff. Other institutions in similar situations discovered success in relying on peer mentors—experienced students who help mentees understand ENVS and other university requirements and share their personal experience in the major.

In fall 2015 I developed a pilot ENVS mentor program, the Environmental Navigation Network (ENN): a Peer Mentor Student Service. Fourteen students became peer mentors and participated in peer mentoring activities in ENVS 151 and in pre-registration advising drop-in sessions. After assessing the fall semester, 11 new peer mentors were recruited and trained. The ENN program’s structure and activities modified to address the additional spring opportunities to serve. Evaluations show both mentors and mentees benefited from the program. Feedback from faculty and staff enthusiastically appreciated the mentors’ service this year and endorse its continued growth. A rising senior will coordinate the further development of the program and many students have expressed interest in becoming peer mentors for the 2016-2017 academic year.

Keywords: mentoring, environmental studies, interdisciplinary, community, education
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I am truly grateful to the students who showed leadership in being founding peer mentors to the ENN program. You taught me about what it means to assist each other on the peer-to-peer level and I am honored that you let me write about your experiences becoming a peer mentor. I am extremely thankful for everything that you do to make the ENVS community a kinder and more supportive place.

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Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ 2
Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................................... 3
Introduction ..................................................................................................................................... 7
Literature Review ............................................................................................................................ 12
  Mentorship ................................................................................................................................. 12
    Definition ................................................................................................................................. 12
    Peer Mentoring ....................................................................................................................... 13
  Traditional Education Model: Classic Mentorship vs. Peer Mentoring ...................................... 13
  Peer Mentor Program Designs in Education ................................................................................ 16
  Peer Mentor and Mentee Relationship ....................................................................................... 19
  Training Peer Mentors ................................................................................................................ 21
  Challenges .................................................................................................................................. 23
Environmental Studies Programs .................................................................................................... 24
  Establishment ............................................................................................................................. 24
  Implementing Environmental Studies Program ........................................................................... 25
  Environmental Studies Programs’ Curriculum ............................................................................ 26
  Longevity and Growth ................................................................................................................ 27
University of Vermont’s Environmental Program .......................................................................... 29
  Foundation ................................................................................................................................. 29
  Program’s Growth ....................................................................................................................... 31
  Student Leadership Involvement ............................................................................................... 33
  Current State ............................................................................................................................. 34
Methods .......................................................................................................................................... 37
  Peer Mentoring Overview .......................................................................................................... 37
  Recruiting .................................................................................................................................. 39
    Spring 2015 ............................................................................................................................... 39
    Summer 2015 ............................................................................................................................ 40
    Fall 2015 .................................................................................................................................. 41
  Training ..................................................................................................................................... 41
    Handbook ................................................................................................................................. 42
    Curriculum ............................................................................................................................... 43
    Training Session Preparation ................................................................................................. 44
  Mentoring .................................................................................................................................. 44
    Short-Term Mentoring: Working with ENVS 151 ................................................................. 45
    Long-Term Mentoring: Pre-registration advising drop-in sessions ..................................... 47
  Evaluation .................................................................................................................................. 48
  Community Events ..................................................................................................................... 50
Results ............................................................................................................................................ 51
  Peer Mentoring Overview .......................................................................................................... 51
  Recruiting .................................................................................................................................. 51
    Spring 2016 Amendments ....................................................................................................... 53
  Training Fall 2015 ...................................................................................................................... 53
    Structure................................................................................................................................. 53
    Training Session 1 .................................................................................................................. 53
    Training Session 2 .................................................................................................................. 54
Appendix 7: List of Information Mentors Need to Know ................................................................. 126
Appendix 8: Curriculum - Fall 2015 ............................................................................................. 127
Appendix 9: Mentor Evaluation ..................................................................................................... 130
Appendix 10: Peer Mentor Online Evaluation Form ................................................................. 131
Appendix 11: Curriculum - Spring 2016 ...................................................................................... 138
Appendix 12: Peer Mentor Advising Notes .................................................................................. 142
Appendix 13: Peer Advising for Learning Success Act ............................................................ 143
Introduction

Background

College education is intended to help students prepare for success in a unique role in society (Baxter Magolda, 2005). The choices students make throughout their college career are vital in advancing them to succeed and identify their role in society or enhance their lives after graduation. But what is success, what role does one have in society, and how does one become successful at it? Students are challenged to explore their personal definition of success and identify their appropriate role(s) in society during their undergraduate time. Many academic advisors encourage students to address these important questions by exploring their interests academically and personally. Students’ understanding of themselves and their academic direction affects the value they place on co-curricular experiences: relationships with peers and staff/faculty, participation in student organizations and activities, and overall involvement in the campus community (Baxter Magolda, 2005). In turn, this value determines the level of the student’s engagement in co-curricular experiences and their personal overall success in college.

Student’s self-discovery and academic exploration can require intensive support during the undergraduate years in order for the student’s pursuits beyond to be clear, identifiable, and successful. Faculty and staff who advise are trained as appropriate assistants to students’ journeys in most academic unit structures. However, in some institutions where the student demand is too high for the limited number of academic advisors, institutions may rely on peer mentors - experienced students who act as
mediators between the students and their academic advisors. Peer mentors guide students when academic advisors cannot and offer experience from the student perspective.

**Problem Statement**

Many students discover their academic and personal interest align with opportunities in the environmental studies field. Their interest has inspired many universities and colleges to establish environmental studies programs. At University of Vermont, the Environmental Program hosts an environmental studies (ENVS) major and minor degree program. The program design mirrors the interdisciplinary field of environmental studies by providing students a cross-college, individually-designed major and minor. Students who choose to pursue ENVS as a major are tasked with additionally identifying a concentration or a specific theme, choosing courses for this concentration that align with their interests, and choosing a senior capstone. This specification of academic interest, wide range of choice in courses within ENVS, and the complexity of addressing environmental issues can create a need for special focus on ENVS students to ensure they receive the academic guidance needed. The current high number of ENVS students for the number of advisors available, challenges students’ growth and development potential.

**Solution Statement**

From personal experiences as an ENVS student and anecdotal information from other ENVS students, I recognized the benefits peer mentoring could provide the Environmental Program. I founded and launched a peer mentor pilot program in the fall 2015 to utilize the knowledge and experience upper-level ENVS students have to help
other ENVS students on their journeys through the major. These upper-level students work to help others better understand the curriculum, themselves, and develop their academic direction based on their interactions discussing courses, shared interests, activities, and values. The goals of the program are to: 1) foster community, 2) support student professional development, and 3) guide student academic engagement. These goals collectively express my vision for peer mentoring in the Environmental Program to ensure student success and encourage students to engage in meaningful academic and co-curricular pursuits.

**Purpose Statement**

This thesis examines the development, implementation, and results of the year-long pilot program, Environmental Navigation Network (ENN): A Peer Mentor Student Service. The aim of this thesis is to evaluate whether the methods used to found the program achieved its original goals, mission, and intended outcomes.

**Personal Statement**

My personal interest in student success extends from my involvement in student leadership positions at University of Vermont. As an Admissions Tour Guide, I have advocated to prospective students and their families the Admissions Office’s model of student success, which includes student engagement in: 1) courses, 2) the outdoor environment, 3) community, 4) research, and 5) experiential learning. On tour, I highlight many resources and opportunities in these categories to demonstrate how to be a successful undergraduate student and prepare for life after graduation. I share my own
experiences because - although unknowingly - I followed the Admissions model of student success. I strived to extend beyond the prospective students on my tour and help current students on their own paths to success. Using my knowledge I hoped to empower my classmates to act on their own behalf and access the many resources University of Vermont provides for student success.

As a Rubenstein School Steward, my role is similar, but differs in setting and audience. I work one-on-one with current students to show them the school’s specific resources and opportunities that can help them on their way to success. I work to build a stronger and mutually supportive Rubenstein School community. My teaching assistant positions in ANTH 174 Culture, Health and Healing, and ENVS 001 Introduction to Environmental Studies, provided me an immersive academic experience in supporting students through academic-specific content. These experiences provide me various levels of opportunities to develop skills and knowledge necessary to help empower students in self-discovery and academic exploration, and to explore my own leadership capabilities.

My vision for the Environmental Navigation Network emerged in spring 2015 when a group of students and myself assembled around our interest in the Environment and Health concentration. Through discussion we discovered we all individually wanted to expand our understanding of the environment and health field and the career opportunities it held. I strongly resonated with this as I was exploring my interest within the field, but felt unsure of my direction. It was extremely helpful to talk with other students to broaden my awareness of the academic opportunities within the concentration, but also to network with other students as colleagues and to share resources for career
opportunities. We exchanged tips on valuable courses, career opportunities, and discussed how being in different colleges and schools influences our academic pursuits.

At the end of this meeting, we reflected on how helpful it was for us to share personal knowledge about our experience in the concentration. I left feeling more confident in my direction within the ENVS major, but additionally eager to continue exploring opportunities within the environmental health field. Recognizing the large beneficial impact this gathering had on myself and the other students lead to my ambition to create the Environmental Navigation Network.
Literature Review

Mentorship

Definition

Mentorship as a concept and practice is traced back to Greek mythology in Homer’s *Odyssey* (Hay, 1995). In this myth, Odysseus entrusted his son Telemachus to the Mentor, Odysseus’s old friend, who helped young Telemachus. This myth acknowledges the actions of an older individual towards a younger, inexperienced individual. This action was defined as mentorship and has grown to be applied to many situations and groups of people since the development of the myth. Jones and Jowett (1997) argue the application of mentorship as a concept expanded for a variety of different reasons including: To help individuals cope with transitions such as moving into a new job or role, improve the retention of staff, to support organizational change, or to encourage personal change. The versatility of mentorship as a practice results in a struggle of understanding mentorship as a concept. Crisp and Cruz (2009) state over 50 definitions of mentorship have been identified in literature. Morle (1990) argues that without an agreed definition for mentorship, any discussion about it is flawed due to the lack of understanding. Merriam (1983) and Piper & Piper (2000) agree, in the last 40 years the concept of mentorship is not clearly conceptualized within formal publications.

In 1996, researchers, Philip and Hendry, investigated mentorship among 150 young people aged 13 and 18 years old. Their aim was to identify and classify the types of mentorship practiced to better understand mentorship as a concept (Philip and Hendry, 1996). Through this study, Phillip and Hendry (1996) defined five types of mentorship:
1) Classic Mentoring – One-to-one relationship between an adult and a young person where the older, experienced mentor provides support, advice and challenge

2) Individual-team mentoring – where a group looks to an individual or small number of individuals for support, advice and challenge

3) Friend-to-friend mentoring

4) Peer mentoring – where an ordinary friend takes on a mentoring role

5) Long-term relationship mentoring with risk-taking adults – This style is similar to classic mentoring, but differs in the relationship between a young person and a mentor who has a history of rebellion and challenging authority.

**Peer Mentoring**

Some researchers argued the five mentorship types are not distinctly separate from each other. Harmon (2006) claims peer mentoring is a unique extension from classic mentoring. The concept of peer mentoring differs from the concept of classic mentoring as the structure consists of matching two individuals with a shared interest who are roughly equal in age, experience, and power (Campbell T. and Campbell D., 1997).

**Traditional Education Model: Classic Mentorship vs. Peer Mentoring**

One theory of the purpose of education is to provide students knowledge to solve problems that exist in the world (Littky and Grabelle, 2004). The traditional education model is a process to achieve this because the teacher, who holds the knowledge, passes it to the student who is in need of it (Chandler, 2000). This hierarchal structure is the same structure in classic mentorship; the mentor passes knowledge to mentee. For example, an
An intern at the Automotive Youth Educational Systems program is assigned to work with a mechanic (mentor) for two weeks to learn how to fix a broken air-conditioning unit (DuBois and Karcher, 2005). The mechanic has the knowledge and experience to fix the air-conditioning unit, the intern does not and seeks to gain the knowledge and skill to fix it from the mechanic.

The hierarchical structure classic mentorship and the traditional educational model is based on, emphasizes individual success over learning (Lewis, 2010). Lewis (2010) argues this places students under a large amount of pressure to perform up to defined standards (Lewis, 2010). Individual success is important to personal growth; however, improving oneself at the expense of others does not create a healthy learning environment. For example, Donald McCabe of the Center for Academic Integrity at Duke University conducted a landmark study of academic dishonesty in American colleges and university for three years. McCabe (2001) agrees with Lewis (2010) by stating, “With increasing competition for the most desired positions in the job market, today’s undergraduates experience considerable pressure to do well.” His research concludes when students, who might otherwise complete their work honestly and at their own learning pace, observe other students cheating, the honest students believe they cannot afford to be disadvantaged. They cheat to “‘level the playing field.” (McCabe, 2001). Rewarding students who cheat with a higher grade than those who did not cheat, knowingly or unknowingly, promotes an unhealthy sense of competition between students. Lewis (2010) argues the traditional model of education is prone to reward students’ individual performance not cooperative performance. This results in an environment where students are not learning
the information, but feel pressured to uphold to unrealistic standards by teachers (mentors) and other students in hopes of being successful.

Peer mentoring, in comparison to the traditional education model and classic mentorship, is founded on a drastically different structure. In the typical peer mentor program structure, mentor and mentee are matched based on equal age, experience, and power. This structural difference defied the hierarchal structure of the traditional education model (Mavinac, 2005). The inclusion of peer mentoring in the traditional education model had difficulty at first being accepted because it defies the existing authoritarian structure. Implementation of peer mentoring started first in the classroom when professors struggled with the rise of student population and sought additional help teaching classes. However, budget cuts forced universities to seek other ways to provide the additional aid in the classroom (Miller, Groccia, and Miller, 2001). Students who excelled academically were selected to hold positions, titles teaching assistant (TA), to help the professors. Students’ help inside the classroom, promoted the acceptance of peer mentoring as a concept and lead to the establishment of stand-alone peer mentor programs, peer mentoring performed on a regular basis outside of the classroom (Harmon, 2006).

The educational reform movement, which gained momentum toward the end of the 19th century, helped to show the hierarchical approach the traditional education system used was not efficient (Beck, 2009). A study conducted by the National Training Laboratories in 2000 strongly confirmed the ineffectiveness of the hierarchical approach. The study found only 5 percent of information delivered through lecture was retained, while 80 percent of information was retained when students taught other students (Leach
and Zepke, 2005). Evaluations of the hierarchical structure continued and Chandler (2000) argues the traditional education model limits the students’ natural sense of exploration and creativity due to the students’ lack of engagement. Students feel less engaged when they are prohibited from creating their own pathways of thought around matters instead of having it delivered to them (Chandler, 2000).

Peer mentoring gained support as an alternative to the traditional education model because its structure demonstrated the students’ increased learning ability. Leach and Zepke (2005) argue peer mentoring provides an opportunity for students to collaborate on educational topics and help each other reach a level of understanding not prescribed to them by a teacher or other authoritative figure. This promotes exploration, creativity, and engagement as students construct their own meaning and understanding of what they need to learn. Boud (2011) explains that students engage in conversation about academic topics permits the student to question their own view and the other’s while striving to reach consensus or dissent. Additionally, Astin (1996) proclaims the strongest single source of influence on cognitive and affective development is the student’s peer group. Astin (1996) goes further to explain that this provides enormous potential for influencing the student’s educational and personal development.

**Peer Mentor Program Designs in Education**

The literature on peer mentor programs frequently concentrates within the context of school systems, specifically universities. Materniak (1984) argues this is because undergraduate students have assisted peers academically since the 1700’s. In addition to the above mentioned underlying aspects motivating peer mentor programs to be implemented, many existing peer mentor programs are utilized by organization to address
a specific need. The specific needs vary by organization, but they fit two major themes: subject based needs and community based needs. Subject based needs focus on the mentee’s success in understanding certain material and the mentor aiding in the mentee’s process of learning (Merriam, 1983). This theme is popular in school peer mentor programs as the focus is already on student personal and professional development. However, the approach for improving student development varies by school systems. Some schools implement programs to assist students in transition between schools (junior high school to high school, or high school to college) or for students to succeed in their program (Cross, 1998). This is reflected in the peer mentor program design. For example, the Youth Empowerment Support Services (YESS) Institute has peer mentor programs for high schools near Denver, Colorado. Its design is concentrated on “inspiring and engaging youth to build emotional intelligence skills” (YESS, 2012). This program is founded in the belief that emotional intelligence skills such as “self awareness, the ability to control impulses, and motivation that goes beyond money and status” are the aspects that promote the behavior that shapes successful adults (YESS, 2012). By designing their peer mentor program on the subject of improving emotional intelligence skills, YESS (2012) states that their students have a 7.7% higher graduation rate (85%) than the state of Colorado (77.3%) and a 22.2% higher graduation rate than Denver's (62.8%).

The other theme for peer mentor program designs focuses on the community based need. This need focuses on a specific group of individuals that have unique characteristics that may limit their ability to successfully develop within the community (Merriam, 1983). The role of the peer mentor in this program design is to assist the individuals within this group (mentees) to overcome these limitations and be engaging members of the
organization (Merriam, 1983). For example, due to historic trends of minority students dropping out of college before acquiring their diplomas, there is a special focus on intervention to improve graduation rates for this group (National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, 2016). The University of Arkansas designed their peer mentor program to assist minorities through their college experience. The mentors establishing programs and events for the minority mentees that focus on developing study skills, address health issues, and improve life and interpersonal skills (University of Central Arkansas, 2016). Peer mentor programs similar to this one that cater to a specific community contribute to 62% of students having improved self-esteem, 52% of students skipping less school, and 48% of students within the specific community improving their grades according to a study conducted by The Commonwealth Fund (National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, 2016).

The two peer mentor program design themes do overlap within some peer mentor programs. For example, the University of Minnesota has a peer mentor program for women engineers. The “Big Sis/Little Sis Mentorship Program” community focus is women engineers and subject focus is on empowering and preparing women to be successful within the engineering field (Society of Women Engineers, 2013). Through mentor meetings, the mentor assists the mentee on choosing appropriate academic courses within the engineering field and other engineering opportunities for the mentee to attend to expand her skills in the field (Society of Women Engineers, 2013).

Also, not all peer mentor programs are implemented in schools. Schein (1978) argues that peer mentoring in the workplace can offer unique developmental opportunities that should not be overlooked or underestimated. Shapiro, Hazeltine, and Rowe (1978)
argue peer mentorship between supervisor (mentor) and employee (mentee), the mentor can help the mentee transition between day-to-day tasks to work life. The mentor can also become less complacent by assisting the mentee; the mentor will be reminded what it is like to be a novice (Shapiro, Hazeltine, and Rowe, 1978).

**Peer Mentor and Mentee Relationship**

The design for peer mentor programs creates the structure for the program and also influences the peer-mentor and mentee relationship. The value of the mentoring relationship depends upon the nature and depth of the relationship. The figure below displays the different forms the mentoring relationship can become. The length of the relationship here is key as it can determine the tone of the mentoring. The binary times for this spectrum are short-term and long-term. However, the length of the mentoring relationship can also be anywhere in between. The formality of the mentoring relationship is also an important aspect as it can influence the impact on the two people involved. Informal and formal relationships can develop based on the structure. (Shea and Gordon, 2002).
**Forms Mentoring May Take**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highly structure, short-term</th>
<th>Highly structure, long-term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship is established formally during a short time period under specific context.</td>
<td>Relationship is established formally during a long time. For example, training someone to take over a position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal, short term</td>
<td>Informal, long-term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship is based on spontaneous advice asking or as-needed counseling</td>
<td>Relationship depends on being available as needed for advice or share special knowledge. Also known as “friendship mentoring”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Mentoring Forms (Adapted from Shea and Gordon, 2002).

Although the value of the mentor and mentee relationship can vary, many agree that the peer mentoring relationship that develops is reciprocal. Both individuals have an opportunity for growth and development (Wisconsin Council on Developmental Disabilities, 2006). This is because a mentor can provide a myriad of opportunities for the mentee while the mentee can support the mentor in developing professionalism (Powell, 2008). It is important to focus on both the mentor and mentee because often the bond is considered of in only one direction, mentor to mentee. The reciprocal nature of the relationship is true as the mentor has much to gain from the mentee, as well. McDougall and Beattie (1997) describe that, although the peers share core values, each individual had different skills the other lacked or could improve. By pairing two individuals for mentoring,
one person's strengths can help develop the other's weakness. For example, a peer mentoring structure focused on academic guidance would permit a mentor, a student who successfully completed a specific course, assist a mentee, a student who is currently taking the course. For the mentor, their strength is understanding the majority of the information presented in the class, however, the mentor has the opportunity to relearn and reinforce their knowledge through catering towards the mentee's weakness (lack of understanding of the class material) (Potter, 1997).

Beyond this benefit, mentors can also develop significant skills and deeper knowledge of themselves for longer-term advantage (Harmon, 2006). Through their peer leader experience, students are often more prepared for the work environment as the skills required for entry level employees mirror those gained from peer leadership (Astin, 1993). Astin (1993) lists the most common skills are: the ability to manage group dynamics, facilitating learning, empathy, and communicating effectively.

**Training Peer Mentors**

The potential impact peer mentor programs can have on the mentors’ and mentees’ personal and professional development is argued to be an important aspect of a peer mentor program. Bryant and Terborg (2008) state that training, in general, for peer mentors is a valuable method for mentors to practice their mentoring skills (teaching different learning styles, providing clear and timely feedback, etc.) in a safe environment. William et al. (2009) supports Bryant and Terborg's stance and argues that communication and teamwork skills that develop through training may prevent the emergence of dysfunction in the mentor-mentee and supervisor-mentor relationships. These benefits have inspired many organizations to include training within their peer mentor programs.
There is large variety within the content presented in training sessions for peer mentor programs.

The content largely reflects the specific need the peer mentor program is seeking to satisfy. For example, if the peer mentor program has a subject based need, then the training content will contain the subject material to educate the peer mentors on how to convey the material to their audience (Merriam, 1983). The YESS Institute focuses training on defining different levels of emotional support the peer mentor will need to provide as a role model of emotional intelligence, practicing the three key emotional intelligence skills (accountability, commitment, and integrity), and practicing effective communication and active listening (YESS, 2012). Peer mentor programs designed to satisfy a community based need focus their training on understanding the community the peer mentors will be assisting. For example, the University of Central Arkansas minority mentorship peer mentor program trains their mentors by focusing on the cultural topics including the triumphs and struggles of cultural differences (University of Central Arkansas, 2016).

The time length of peer mentoring training also varies, but has a large influence on the quality of the peer mentor program. The two typical options for training structures for peer mentor programs include retreats or workshops (Merriam, 1983). A retreat is a group getaway where members of the group take time to form bonds with one another, contemplate individual and group purpose, and work on specific goals (Doxey and Sugarman, 1999). This option for training usually is a longer-time period ranging from a one full day to a week in which members stay together on a site for the entire duration for the training (Doxey and Sugarman, 1999). Eddie and Kethley (1994) argue that a retreat is a unique opportunity for members of the group to remove outside distractions and allow
directed focus on the training’s purpose. To encourage this type of focus, it is essential to have the retreat in a location that is different than the organization’s typical meeting environment (Doxey and Sugarman, 1999).

A training workshop for peer mentor programs consists of a shorter time period. A workshop is a single, short educational program designed to teach or introduce participants to skills or ideas (Eddie and Kethley, 1994). The commitment for members in this type of training session range from a couple of hours for a day to just one full day (Cabin, 2006). This training session focus is more on members learning skills rather than team bonding like a retreat. However, team bonding can be included in workshops.

**Challenges**

Peer mentoring is a complex process that challenges both the mentor and mentee, and also the traditional education model. As mentioned before, this alternative structure can provide enormous help to students’ education, however, it still has its flaws. Colvin (2007) explains the need for acute attentiveness to how both parties (professors and mentors) are responding to the alternative process. There can be resistance by the administrator such as the administrator devaluing the natural abilities of the peer mentor (Materniak, 1984). Whitman (1988) argues the administrators underutilizing the mentors’ individual focused experiences causes the downfall of a peer mentor program. Colvin (2007) recommends to keep healthy communication between both parties, and to clarify the roles of both, early in the partnership to progress in a positive direction. Reid (2008) supports this by stating: “the exact nature of expectation is a crucial element in supporting the process.”
Environmental Studies Programs

Establishment

Growing concerns for how our nation planned to safeguard our natural resources promoted the first environmental studies programs (ESP). They were established in higher education during the late 1960’s and early 1970’s (Schoenfeld 1979; Weis 1990; Soule and Press 1998). Manitates and Whissel (2000) state that approximately 300 environmental programs were established during the wave of proliferation from 1965-1975. Soule and Press (1998) argue ESP could not exist in the traditional university without student demand. Schoenfeld (1979) agreed students were energized about ecological concerns. These programs appealed to higher education institutions because students could be involved in the social movements sweeping the nation, but they were anchored in academia (Soule and Press, 1998). Romero and Eastwood (2002) conducted a survey of 670 environmental programs/departments from 378 institutions within the U.S. between September and March 2002. Of the 90 schools that responded, 39 reported their main reason for initiating an environmental program was due to student demand. Of the same 90 schools, 21 reported the faculty members demanded establishment of an environmental program. Schoenfeld (1979) suggests the founding of ESP was “natural” process. The university-environmental movement marriage is indigenous to the American campus, as it possesses an evangelical tradition that college students have always thrived on and draws out college presidents’ background as ministers (Schoenfeld, 1979).
Implementing Environmental Studies Program

Although a demand for ESP, these programs were hard to implement. Their structural foundation was not the norm in colleges and universities (Soule and Press, 1998; Maniates and Whissel, 2000; Caldwell, 1983). Environmental studies as a field was unlike any discipline seen in higher education at that time. No field took from so many different disciplines. Some argue the biggest fault in ESP are that they do not have a clear foundation to build from. No consensus was reached on whether the field can be described as an area for professional and technical preparation, interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, metadisciplinary or a discipline in itself (Romero and Eastwood, 2002; Caldwell, 1983; Wilke, 1995).

This resulted in a varying array of ESP. Schoenfeld and Disinger (1978) concluded in a study conducted in 1978 that most programs established between 1965 and 1975 were founded within existing disciplinary areas. Only 4 of the 45 programs reviewed were named Environmental Science or Environmental Studies. Rest (2002) acknowledges that restructuring the traditional education was necessary to allow for the establishment of ESP that are grounded in the interrelationships among disciplinary knowledge. Schoenfeld (1979) describes the “textbook example” of how Ball State’s Natural Resources Program evolved to an environmental studies program. “A single service course, and undergraduate minor option, an undergraduate major, an embryo master’s, a wishbook Ed. D” (Schoenfeld, 1979). Schoenfeld (1979) argues there is significant diversity among institutions of higher education for establishing ESP though and that this is a sign of a healthy environmental studies “ecosystem.”
In establishing ESP, the early programs used the resources available to them to meet the students’ and faculty demands. Soule and Press (1998) state that by the 1970’s, the courses listed in most ESP curricula depended on which faculty could be “begged or borrowed” from traditional departments. Schoendfeld (1979) described that it was comparatively easy for tenured faculty members with an environmental background to be a part of the newly established or emerging ESP. However, to appoint, retain, and promote the emerging hybrid assistant professor for an ESP was and remains a nagging problem (Schoendfeld, 1979).

**Environmental Studies Programs’ Curriculum**

With the identity of the environmental studies field in question, uncertainty also arose in the curriculum for ESP. Reid and Scott (2006) argue there is no definition of what is an appropriate curriculum overall for ESP. This leaves individual ESP reverting to the characters and strengths of their host institutions (Disinger and Schoendfeld, 1987; Soule and Press, 1998; Manning 1999). Some have declared themes of the early environmental programs based on the subjects available faculty taught. Soule and Press (1998) identified three categories in this way: 1) Environmental science – courses in physical and life sciences as well as occasionally applied science 2) Environmental policy and planning – courses in economics, law, policy analysis, political science; 3) Cultural studies – courses in literature, geography, philosophy and development studies. Kim and Dixon (1993) also separate them into three different focus groups by subject themes: Environmental design, policy and management – courses in sociology and economics with emphases on politics, philosophy and architecture; Environmental health, biology, and resource science – courses in ecology and biology with emphases on public health, medicine and agriculture; and
environmental engineering – course in mathematics and statistics with emphases on geology, physics and chemistry.

**Longevity and Growth**

In a follow-up study conducted in 1987, Disinger and Schoenfeld (1987) found that many of these early programs did not have longevity. Only two-thirds of the 45 programs reviewed were still functioning (Disinger and Schoenfeld, 1987). During the 1980's, a decline in growth in ESP occurred. Caldwell (1983) attributes it to economic distress and concerns linked to the alleged cost of environmental controls, resentment over environmental regulations, and competition with social issues like poverty, racism, and war. Overall, a shift in focus occurred. The importance put on the social contexts of environmental problems declined and moved to the science-based solutions due to public perceptions on the scientific need for more objective, effective, or unquestionable ways to solve the environmental problems seen (Disinger 1988; Cortese 1992; Strauss 1995).

In the late 1980’s, early 1990’s, a renewed interest in environmental programs occurred due to the newly developed concern with sustainable development (Manning, 1999; Maniates and Whissel, 2000; Romero and Jones, 2003). In 1990, a group of international university presidents and chancellors met for a conference held in Talloires, France. During this conference the Talloires Declaration, the first official statement committing higher education to sustainability, was created (ULSF, 2001). This document included a ten-point action plan for incorporating sustainable studies and environmental literacy into teaching. More than 350 university presidents and chancellors from 40 countries signed (ULSF, 2001).
In recent years, sustainable development has continued to be researched and expanded. Reiter et. al. (2011) detailed the results of the first of a series of roundtables on the topic of accrediting interdisciplinary environmental programs sponsored by the Interdisciplinary Environmental Association. During this roundtable discussion in 2009, clarification of the approaches used to address environmental problems was established along with the supradisciplinary approach thought to be ideal in achieving sustainability. Many institutions’ ESP embraced this new concept of sustainable development and revisited or created programs based on the importance of cultural, social, and political aspects of environmental problems with this new sustainable approach (Romero and Jones, 2003).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Connotation</th>
<th>Symbol</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unidisciplinary</td>
<td>One, Single, Alone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multidisciplinary</td>
<td>Many, Several</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transdisciplinary</td>
<td>Across</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pluridisciplinary</td>
<td>Belonging to many</td>
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<td>Interdisciplinary</td>
<td>Among</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supradisciplinary</td>
<td>Above, Over, Beyond</td>
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Figure 2. Unidisciplinary to supraadisciplinary hierarchy (Adapted from Reiter et. al., 2011)
Estimates on how many environmental programs currently exist in the United States vary because there is no consensus on how to define environmental studies, but Romero and Silveri (2006) identify 1059 academic environmental programs at 605 institutions of higher education. In addition, Vincent and Focht (2009) explain how the Council of environmental Deans and Directors, a group of academic program leaders sponsored by the University Affiliate program of the National Council for Science and Environment, reviewed interdisciplinary environmental baccalaureate and graduate degree-granting programs. This was the first comprehensive survey of interdisciplinary environmental programs in the U.S. (Vincent, 2009). The survey identified 840 programs at 652 institutions awarding 1183 degrees. Within this, there were 255 baccalaureate environmental studies degrees, 30 master environmental studies degrees, and 6 doctoral environmental studies degrees (Vincent and Focht, 2009). Vincent (2009) agrees, over the last few decades there was extraordinary growth of new environmental programs. Two-thirds of the environmental programs reviewed in this study, were established after 1990, and about a quarter since 2001 (Vincent, 2009).

University of Vermont’s Environmental Program

Foundation

In 1970, Ian Worley and department chairs in Forestry and Agricultural Engineering gained approval for an undergraduate major in environmental studies. The interest for this major came from the desire to understand the world events occurring around ecological awareness and change in the late 1960’s. The first students enrolled under this major had a choice between two tracks, Generalist (interdisciplinary) and Specialist (disciplinary).
However in 1972, this major then evolved into a university-wide academic program, a key feature distinguishing UVM’s Environmental Program from other United States environmental programs (Kaza, 2012). The mission established for this new EP surrounded the core concept,

To alert people to the state of global and local environments and opportunities for action by advocating, demonstrating and inspiring environmentally sustainable activities and ways of thinking. (Kaza, 2012).

To achieve the mission, all students were required to pursue an interdisciplinary background that included the arts and humanities, to the social, basic and applied sciences for completion of an environmental studies degree (UVM, 2015). UVM’s Environmental Program was modeled after the first ESP, which was established in 1967 at Williams College (Sutberland, 1992). The framework of UVM’s core curriculum still remains (Suberland, 1992). The core curriculum of the Environmental Program was based on a “learner-centered” approach to support individually designed courses of study based on the student’s interest and skill level. The courses for the core of the major consisted of: two introductory courses, one intermediate, and two upper-level courses. In these courses students were taught to blend knowledge from many different subject areas then apply this knowledge to better understand the ecological and cultural systems on earth. Therefore, there is a reduced number of set courses, than seen in a curriculum based on one discipline, to encourage students to explore the many disciplines offered across campus from an environmental perspective. Their final task to graduate with an environmental studies degree was to complete a senior thesis, an accumulation of their knowledge in their designated interest area. The ENVS major was the only undergraduate major at this time to
require senior students to write senior theses (Suberland, 1992). In addition, a coordinate major was also offered as an option, this later became the ENVS minor (Kaza, 2012).

Due to this unique curriculum structure, the Environmental Program was challenging to gain approval from the five college curriculum committees. In 1972, Carl Reidel, founder of the program, spoke about the progressive and complex nature of the proposed university-wide academic program at UVM's Convocation,

>This will mean tearing down some artificial barriers between disciplines, departments, and colleges; between students, professors, and administrators... It will mean new ways of teaching that recognize experience and involvement in community action as powerful teachers of synthesis and wholeness. (Kaza, 2012).

Despite the challenge to established thought, in 1973, the new Environmental Program was approved and seven students were admitted as environmental studies majors. EnvironmentalPrograms.net (2003) quoted one of the EP's founders, Thomas Hudspeth, expressing the students attracted to this major “tend to be highly value-driven” and “committed to social change/making the world a better place.” Also in 1973, staff and faculty moved into the newly renovated Bittersweet Building, the home building for the program. (Kaza, 2012).

**Program’s Growth**

In the 1980's, Ronald Regan became president and “implemented major policy reversals in all the national agencies” (Kaza, 2012). His interest in expanding the use of nuclear energy only reinforced the Environmental Program’s mission. The program teaching faculty expanded to have eight full-time and two part-time faculty (Suberland, 1992). This was in conjunction with the increasing number of environmental issues the world was acknowledging. In 1982, eighty students enrolled in the Environmental
Program. Suberland (1992) states student enrollment had increased by 1991 to 384 majors and 101 minors. Carl Reidel, the Environmental Program’s founding director, admitted to stopping recruitment five years ago earlier (Suberland, 1992). In the same year, Reidel worked with an anonymous donor to create the Enrichment Fund, which supported faculty travel and research, student theses and conference participation, funding for guest speakers, and equipment to support Program activities. This generous gift expanded the EP and providing more opportunity for all those in it to help understand the ecological and cultural systems within our world (Kaza, 2012).

In 1994, the Provost requested the Environmental Program expand to include the School of Natural Resources. This request pinned two different philosophies against each other as the School of Natural Resources was grounded solely in applied sciences fields while the environmental studies philosophy was founded with an interdisciplinary approach. In 1994, Carl Reidel stepped down as Program Director and Ian Worley assumed the position as Interim Director. This director change came at a crucial expansion time for the program. The merge was achieved and the Environmental Program received students eager to broaden their environmental perspective.

In 2008, the second director change occurred at another pivotal time period. As a result of Wall Street collapsing, the Environmental Program suffered some budget cuts and reduced the size of the program. However, Stephanie Kaza assumed the new Director position and emphasized how crucial it was to continue to provide a program that addressed the current environmental issues. She built upon the framework of the Environmental Program. One of her most notable achievements is that she co-founded the
Environmental Council at University of Vermont, a campus-wide consortium on sustainability – now the Office of Sustainability (UVM, 2015).

**Student Leadership Involvement**

Slade Hall, an environmental student residence hall that was founded in 1976, tested environmental ethics (Kaza, 2012). It was quite unique from the rest of the residence halls on campus with its own building and compost heap to reduce waste (Suberland, 1992). Students were chosen by lottery to reside in this hall and everyone who lives there is a vegetarian (Suberland, 1992). Suberland (1992) explains the building is run as a collective, with students sharing the responsibilities of buying (from local vendors) food and then cooking it. These student networks, in addition to the academics of the Environmental Program, created a tightly woven community to share and bond around the love for a clean and safe environment (Kaza, 2012).

In 1988 students founded the Vermont Student Environmental Program (VSTEP). VSTEP, an umbrella club that consisted of six different groups: 1) Student Environmental Action Coalition – focused on voter registration drives 2) Source Reduction Resource Center – creates waste reduction strategies for communities, businesses and institutions 3) Youth Educational Outreach Program – sends UVM students to local elementary schools to teach children about the environment; 4) Group to promote the use of campus shuttle buses 5) Group to create university-wide recycling program; 6) CUPPS: Can’t Use Paper, Plastic, or Styrofoam – a waste reduction group) (Suberland, 1992). VSTEP engaged 300 students throughout their six programs (Suberland, 1992).

Students have also engaged and been involved in the curriculum. ENVS student leaders came together to make the Environmental Studies Student Advisory Panel (ESSAP)
in 1992, where the student voice was heard in making suggestions to the ENVS curriculum and activities of the program. The faculty responded to their suggestions by making new breadth requirements to expand the students’ environmental understanding. For these breadth requirements students take one course in each breath area: natural science, social science, humanities, and international aspects of environmental studies. (Kaza, 2012). Students have also held positions on faculty and staff search committees and been closely involved in helping ENVS professors as teaching assistants in ENVS 001 and ENVS 002.

**Current State**

As of 2016, ENVS is one of the top majors for enrollment at UVM, with nearly 500 majors and minors pursuing a wide range of environmental interests. Students can pursue a Bachelor of Science or Arts in Environmental Studies. Students can additionally pursue the degree in three different colleges: College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) for a B.S., College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) for a B.A., and the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources (RSENR) for a B.S. The ENVS minor is available to students in all UVM colleges and schools. Within the College of Education and Social Service students can complete a major concentration in ENVS. (UVM, 2015)

The core curriculum structure (see appendix 1) remains, complemented by the expectations that students will “develop a concentration to direct their environmental course choices and high impact learning activities” (UVM, 2015). There are seven concentrations:

1. Ecology and Conservation
2. Food, Land, and Community
3. Environmental Policy and Development
4. Nature, Culture and Justice
5. Sustainability Studies
7. Individually Designed

Students in the CAS take 18 credits in their concentration and students in the CALS as well as the RSENR take 30 credits in their concentration.

Students in their senior year, have a choice of three options (see below) for their capstone experience. The capstone experience should align with the student’s concentration area and provide an in-depth learning engagement that integrates course work, skills, and experience acquired from their ENVS education. Each capstone involves nine credits of upper-level (200-level) work. The availability of the three options is a change from earlier times when writing a thesis was mandatory for all students to complete the ENVS major.

1. Thesis/project - in-depth hands-on interdisciplinary research study, project, or creative arts project

2. Internship - developed by the student in collaboration with the sponsoring organization and with assistance from ENVS staff and faculty. Also, includes a related 200-level capstone course

3. Advanced course capstone – three additional environmentally relevant upper-level courses. These three courses must meet the following requirements: must be interdisciplinary, build on previous academic foundations, and require extensive in-depth group or individual research/project activity.

All students develop an individually-designed program of study, usually focused on one of the concentrations. They fill out a major plan form to keep track of their degree program requirements. This helps students in deciding their senior capstone. The major
plan is refined with help from an academic advisor and approved by the Associate Director. Students are matched with an ENVS academic advisor by their second year and welcomed to schedule meetings to discuss academic or personal issues with their own or any advisor. In the spring 2016, there were thirteen active ENVS advisors. (UVM, 2015).

The Environmental Program currently focused on improving academic advising because the 13 advisors have between ten and 87 student advisees. The experienced advisors are on the higher end of this range with 35 to 40 advisees. The number of advisees an advisor is responsible for is always changing due to the flux in ENVS students (change of major, study-abroad, external transfer, etc.). Advising appointments (advisor and advisee meeting) are usually set for 30 minutes intervals, however, the appointments range from 20 minutes to an hour depending on the student’s needs. One advisor states, 30 minutes is typically enough and they only go over this time when no one is waiting, allowing them to spend additional time to advise and mentor the student, answer questions, and identify topics beyond those that motivated the appointment.
Methods

Peer Mentoring Overview

My vision for the Environmental Navigation Network first emerged from my personal development through the Environmental Program, but grew from collective student support. I gathered students’ testaments about their success and struggles being an ENVS student and inquired whether a peer mentoring service could improve their experience. I received strong agreement that enhanced support for student academics within the major and strengthening relations within our community would improve ENVS students overall experience in college. Building off this, I worked to ground the program in a framework to better students’ experience.

I first presented the idea of establishing a peer mentor program within the Environmental Program to another student within ENVS 201 Research Methods course. We teamed up and began working on presenting the idea to the other students in our class in order to gauge interest in establishing such program. A powerpoint was created in spring 2015 detailing the context and framework for the Environmental Navigation Network. Receiving high interest and support for the concept of this program from students and Kit Anderson, my project partner and I proceeded to create a proposal on our vision for a peer mentor program. We reflected on our own experiences as ENVS students, spoke with ENVS faculty and staff, and collected anecdotal information from our peers about what the structure of the program should be. We used this information to develop the vision, goals, and structure (see appendix 2) for the program.
When developing the vision statement, we were also developing the overall structure of the ENN program. We identified each invested group and their roles. We then determined how each group could potentially interact with each other. This information was displayed in a diagram (see appendix 3) we created to clearly express the relationships, key responsibilities for each group, and the overall functioning of the program.

We developed a set of three main goals to further clarify the roles of each invested group. These goals were identified first between my project partner and me. We then spoke with the ENVS faculty and staff over several meetings to further define the goals through developing intended outcomes (see appendix 4) for each of the goals. These intended outcomes provided depth to the main goals and identify what the program is founded to support. My project partner became interested in other activities and realized they would not be able to fully commit to continuing developing the rest of the program. We parted ways during the summer 2015 and I continued to define ways to accomplish the outcomes.

I identified five core activities of founding the program:

1. Recruit Peer Mentors
2. Establish a training program for peer mentors
3. Create and identify peer mentoring opportunities within the Environmental Program
4. Encourage students to engage in the mentoring opportunity
5. Evaluate the program

For each of the program’s activities, a vision statement and a list of intended outcomes were detailed.
This overall structure was based on the idea that students could be matched with a mentor who had shared interest (exploring the same concentrations and/or being in the same school/college). I envisioned regular weekly/bi-weekly meetings or whenever the student signified they were in need of mentoring. The mentor and student would meet to discuss the student’s questions/concerns and the mentor would use their knowledge and personal experience to guide the student in navigating their options.

**Recruiting**

With the vision of having 21 peer mentors involved in the peer mentor program, I publicized the program to recruit mentors. First, I recruited from a small, selected population, and then grew my recruiting efforts to incorporate a larger audience. The change in strategy was matched with different communication networks to better advertise the program. The recruiting process spanned across two semesters and a summer, concluding a month into the Fall 2015 semester when students committed to becoming a peer mentor in one of two ways, Short-term: Working with ENVS 151 course or Long-term: Mentoring during Pre-registration advising drop-in.

**Spring 2015**

My project partner and I hand-selected 39 individuals who we felt held the qualities of leadership, scholarship, and passion for helping others, as well as interest in enhancing the Environmental Program. We personally emailed these selected individuals as part of recruitment for the program to inform them about the new program and how they could become involved. We encouraged them to attend an information session on April 30th, 2015 or May 6th, 2015. I sent out reminder emails the day before and the day of these
information sessions. We also made announcements within our courses to encourage our fellow classmates to engage further within the Environmental Program by becoming a peer mentor for the Environmental Navigation Network. We lead the sessions by speaking about our shared vision for the program and with the powerpoint for visible display. We recorded the names, concentrations, year, and college/school of the interested individuals for both sessions. We also collected information on what the interested individuals felt would be helpful to include or not include in the program. My project partner and I contacted 10 individuals, these individuals who could not attend the information session, but were still interested in being involved in the program or wanted more information about the overall program.

Summer 2015

During the summer months, I prepared to work with the interested peer mentors. I made a Facebook Group for the 28 students who expressed interest. On the Facebook group page, I posted the working mission statement of the ENN program along with the goals and values of the program. I also posted the Peer Mentor Position Description (see appendix 5), developed to clarify the role, expectations, and qualifications for the envisioned peer mentor position. In addition, I posted a message to encourage the members of the group to add other “upper-level ENVS students who they believe are LEADERS within our community, KNOWLEDGEABLE about the ENVS program, have a passion in ASSISTING OTHERS, and want to IMPROVE the way the ENVS program functions.” By doing this, I hoped to extend the outreach to other students who were potentially qualified for the position.
Fall 2015

During the first week of the fall semester, I emailed the running list of potential peer mentors (52 at this point). To inquire about the best time to meet. On Sunday September 6, 2015 a gathering was held at Burlington Bay to discuss the peer mentor role. Two students attended this gathering.

Next, I extended my recruiting efforts to include all ENVS students interested in being a part of the program by developing a recruitment email (see appendix 6) that was sent out to the ENV Talk listserv on September 12th, 2015. This recruitment email announced the launching of the ENN program and students could be involved in one of two different ways: Short-term, working with the students in the ENVS 151 course or Long-term, assisting students during pre-registration drop-in advising.

Training

Many student leadership positions I held required training to prepare me to fulfill my position’s responsibilities. It served as a time for me to ask questions and put into a realistic context how to conduct my duties. I aimed to provide the students the same space to learn the requirements of the peer mentor role by having one-hour, once a week session training session. This frequent training structure allowed students to process the content information in manageable sections. I developed the curriculum to organize the content information into weekly topic sections and ultimately aid the mentors in understanding the many things they were to inform other students about. I additionally developed a handbook, which permitted students the ability to review the information away from the
sessions. Students during training utilized these tools to advance their understanding of their role as a peer mentor, a position in between students and academic advisors.

**Handbook**

During summer 2015, I reviewed the ENVS Academic Advisor’s Handbook to increase my understanding of the topic areas the academic advisors are trained in. This step helped to identify four key topic areas that the peer mentors should be trained in: Major Structure, Concentrations, the Environmental Program Website, Professional Careers, and High Impact Learning Opportunities. I identified these areas by their frequent mention and focus within the handbook. Also another student, ENVS faculty and staff, and I brainstormed a list of items that mentors should know (see appendix 7). I compared this list with the themes to define topics within these themes that needed specific focus. I additionally identified, from my own personal student experience, the subthemes of Study Abroad and Student Life within the theme of High Impact Learning Opportunities. These subthemes are areas where students can complement their academic education by engaging in their interests outside the classroom. During the week of September 14, 2015, I presented these themes and subthemes to some of the current academic advisors at the time to determine if and how peer mentors can be trained to mentor other students on the themes and subthemes. The timeframe of the training sessions provided the mentors the opportunity to become qualified to mentor students on these themes.

During the first week of the fall semester, I created a handbook for peer mentors. It modeled the ENVS faculty Academic Advisor Handbook I reviewed over the summer. I first obtained recycled binders from the Office of Sustainability. The peer mentor handbook included the ENVS core information available at Bittersweet: Major plans for the
colleges/school ENVS can be majored in, concentration sheets, capstone option sheet, pre-advising form). I also included information about high impact learning and the ENVS mission statement. One page was created for the ENN mission, goals, and values. A handbook was given to each mentor on the first training. I introduced the handbook to the mentors as a resource that can be updated and added to as they go through training. The aim was to adapt to what they felt they needed to mentor the most effectively.

Curriculum

The training sessions were conducted in accordance to the curriculum (see appendix 8), which was developed before the first training session. The curriculum was a document that guided the presentation of content material for the training sessions. It ultimately was a tool utilized in organizing the themes or subthemes to allow one of them to be focused on each week. I created the curriculum by applying my background as an Admissions Tour Guide and as a Rubenstein School Steward, which provided me insight on how to section content heavy material into clear, understandable portions to an audience that may be uneducated on the given topics. The curriculum separated the many layers of the ENVS major and student opportunities into manageable areas to host discussion and activities. The product I created was the curriculum; a comprehensive list of themes and subthemes mentors should be trained in. These themes and subthemes I emphasized in training through various discussions, activities, and outside speakers to present the mentors with the material in an engaging way. The training sessions were designed only for the mentors involved in long-term mentoring. I primarily led the trainings with assistance from Elizabeth Wright (Ibit) and Meg Taylor (peer mentor program staff)
occasionally when a topic they had more knowledge on arose (example: pre-registration advising drop-in logistics).

**Training Session Preparation**

In preparation for starting the training sessions, I emailed the seven mentors that expressed interest in the long-term mentoring option on September 16, 2015. This email welcomed them to the program and indicated when/where the training would start. Before each training session, I emailed this set of mentors to indicate the upcoming topics we were going to discuss in the meeting and ultimately remind the mentors that we were still having a meeting that coming week.

**Mentoring**

My ENVS student experience and a suggestion from the ENVS administration helped to identify ENVS 151 Intermediate Environmental Studies as a short-term mentoring opportunity. I capitalized on this by working with Cecilia, the professor for the ENVS 151 course, to identify and define four days and activities in which the mentors’ assistance would provide benefit to the students of the course. In addition, I worked with Ibit and Meg to create and define the long-term peer mentoring opportunity within the pre-registration advising drop-in sessions.

The peer mentors engaged in mentoring through two avenues 1) Short-Term: Working with the students in ENVS 151 course. 2) Long-Term: Pre-registration advising drop-in.
Short-Term Mentoring: Working with ENVS 151

The ENVS 151 Intermediate Environmental Studies course is the third required course in the ENVS major sequence. Offered only for ENVS major students, this is a hybrid course that meets in person on Tuesdays and has optional sessions on Thursdays (a few Thursday sessions were mandatory for students to attend). The content of the course focused on providing students “a diverse background knowledge about areas of personal environmental interest.” The course accomplished this through “presentations by class members and guests and developing students’ networking and other research skills.” Ultimately, the course “developed students’ personal academic and activity plans”. Sixty-seven students registered for the course for the fall 2015 semester.

The students, who wanted to mentor the ENVS 151 students, indicated their availability between the following four days of mentoring sessions.

- **Session 1:** Talk about your ENVS concentration with students on September 17th, 2015
- **Session 2:** Assist in reviewing resumes on September 22nd, 2015
- **Session 3:** Serve on the student ENVS Concentration Panel on September 29th, 2015
- **Session 4:** Help review major plans on October 6th, 2015

I emailed the four individuals that were available for the September 17, 2015 mentoring session to prepare them. I informed the group that the mentoring session would be a drop-in session to provide students the opportunity to explore their concentration options. The mentors’ role was to share their experiences with choosing and pursuing their concentrations. This was to prepare the students of the course for the more expansive student concentration panel on September 29, 2015.
The next mentoring session on September 22, 2015 was designed to permit the students of the class to hear from the mentors of different opportunities outside the classroom they could get involved in. The aim was students would talk about similar experiences they had and express what the impact it had on them/their professional pathway. In this way, skills and knowledge could be brought out and noted on the students' resumes. The mentors were instructed not to edit students’ resumes, but rather recommend other resources on campus that have staff trained to look at the formatting and content of a resume.

The mentoring session on September 29, 2015, was the concentration panel. This was when upper-level students discuss in a panel style their experiences within their concentration to the students of the course. Each student had five minutes to speak on a series of prepared questions focusing on how and why they chose their concentration and how they are pursuing it. The goal of this panel was to inform students of the class the opportunities within each concentration and to provide insight on how it compliments students’ career pursuits.

I organized the mentors to fill the role of each of the seven concentrations so that all concentration options were represented. On September 28, 2015, I emailed the five students that initially responded to the recruitment email stating they were available for this mentoring session. I requested they look over the list of questions the ENVS faculty and staff developed for this panel and they send me their updated major plan. The major plan would be used as a visible display as each of them spoke. In this way, students of the class would have the opportunity to see a current major plan for a student pursuing their
concentration. On the day of the mentoring session, I emailed Cecilia the panelists’ major plan and also printed them off for the class.

The last mentoring session for the ENVS 151 course focused on assisting the Cecilia in reviewing major plans. The mentors were asked to review the major plans to ensure the student had key information on it like the correct amount of credits or the correct format (Course ID, title of course, and semester taken/plan to take).

**Long-Term Mentoring: Pre-registration advising drop-in sessions**

The three weeks before course registration is typically a stressful time for students. The pre-registration advising drop-in sessions provide students a convenient time to talk through their concerns and receive guidance from academic advisors. The drop-in sessions function on a first come, first served policy and occurs before the week of course registration for each upcoming semester. The drop-in sessions have occurred for many semesters. The students who elected to engage in long-term mentoring were trained for about a month to mentor students who were in need of guidance for the spring 2016 course registration. Starting on November 2, 2015 and ending on November 20, 2015, a daily two-hour time block was designated as the drop-in time for students. Two mentors and ENVS staff were available during the drop-in times to provide the guidance. I sent out a doodle poll a week before the start of the drop-in sessions to start scheduling mentors for the first week of the drop-in time. The times of the mentoring session each day described in the doodle poll were selected from the availability the mentors expressed during the mentor training. The doodle poll allowed two mentors to sign up for each of the mentoring sessions. I organized from the doodle poll a schedule the two mentors that assisted each
day that week. I sent this schedule to the mentors on before the first week of the drop-in sessions. In this email I also reminded the mentors to bring their laptops, computers.

Through meetings with the peer mentor program staff who lead the pre-registration drop-in advising, we identified that mentors would be best incorporated in the three weeks of pre-registration advising by screening students who came for help. Students attending the advising would first speak with mentors to identify their concerns. Mentors could use their training, paired with their own knowledge and experience, to assist the students. If the student had not talked with an ENVS academic advisor before, or taken ENVS 151, then the mentor and mentee would fill out a Pre-Advising Form and then proceed with their session. This service aimed to make pre-registration more efficient as there may be students waiting for long periods of time. The mentors provided a space for students to talk and sort through their concerns by listening and drawing out the students’ stories and questions. The interaction concluded when the student felt their concerns was addressed or when they needed assistance beyond the mentor’s knowledge or responsibility. The student then spoke to the ENVS staff. The mentor was instructed to give the student the Mentor Evaluation (see appendix 9) to complete and place back in the designated bucket on the table to be later analyzed.

**Evaluation**

To evaluate the ENN program’s success and areas of strength/weakness for all invested parties, I separated the program into three evaluation areas: students, mentors, and peer mentor program staff.
Students are those who came to the pre-registration drop-in advising and were helped by mentors. The mentors were to give the student, at the end of their mentoring session, the Mentor Evaluation Form (see appendix 9). The anonymous evaluation provided insight on four areas: 1) the quality of assistance the mentors provided to the student, 2) the area(s) in which the mentors were helpful, 3) the area(s) in which the mentor could improve, and 4) if the student would recommend the ENN program to other friends/classmates for mentoring. The category of students also includes those in ENVS 151. I worked with Cecilia to add two questions about the peer mentors in her end-of-semester course evaluation.

The mentors were evaluated on their individual mentoring performance by the students they mentored. The mentors, themselves, evaluated the program and their personal development through an online evaluation form (see appendix 10).

The program evaluation by the mentors ranged on topics specific to the program’s core (the effectiveness of training, the structure, and the program’s mission, goals, and values). The personal evaluation focused on the growth and development of the mentor in specific areas of: the skills they developed or improved, the quality of their performance and what they could have done better, and their learning outcomes.

The peer mentor program staff were asked regularly for their immediate feedback on the program’s function. Feedback from a more general perspective about the program’s overall aim and success is currently in the progress.
Community Events

Early fall 2015, I worked with the ENVS staff to create an ice cream social event to provide the ENVS community (students, faculty, and staff) an informal opportunity to talk about their academic, personal interest, and work. I worked to identify and confirm a location for the event. Hosted by the ENN mentors to allow for more publicity of the program and to show it has a focus on community building. I proposed the idea of the mentors being the ice cream scoopers and they agreed this would be an appropriate role for them to serve.

In planning the location, day, and time, special attention was directed towards the availability of the newest ENVS faculty members because the event meant to welcome them into the community. Bittersweet was chosen for the event’s location to have students come and feel welcomed at the home of the Environmental Program.

I sent an email about the event to the ENV-Talk listserv and reminders were sent out closer to the event date. I then identified the available mentors for the event through email.
Results

Peer Mentoring Overview

The products developed through meetings and discussions with the peer mentor program staff include: list of vision and intended outcomes for the four core areas of the program (see appendix 4), curriculum for training (see appendix 8).

Recruiting

In response to the recruiting efforts, student interest in the peer mentor role fluctuated over spring 2015 semester and the summer. In spring 2015, the information session provided an engaging exchange of information. The four students who attended were open to listening about the vision for the program and asked specific questions. The session provided an opportunity to further develop the program’s structure collectively. No students came to the second information session I scheduled. Eleven interested students informed me through email they could not attend either session. I responded with updates of the program’s plans and more information about the mentor role. In summer 2015, 23 group members saw the first message I posted in the Facebook group page. The number who viewed my subsequent five messages slowly decreased throughout the summer. Twelve group members viewed my last message announcing the confirmed short-term and long-term mentoring opportunities.

The Facebook page was the least effective way to recruit students out of all the recruiting methods pursued. Instead of a place for students to collaborate on what the program could look like for the fall semester it was used to post updates and documents.
Discussion on the material posted did not occur as I imagined. I abandoned the page altogether by the beginning of the fall 2015 semester. Clarification on the page’s purpose (collaboration) may have encouraged more discussion. Asking more direct questions may be a way to promote discussion on specific themes if Facebook was used for recruiting in the future.

The return of students in the fall 2015 is when interest in the peer mentor role increased. Two interested students attended the Peer Mentor Gathering on the first weekend of school. One was eager to step into a leadership role with me to found the program. We discussed working together over the semester to review the ENVS Academic Advisor handbook to identify areas for mentor training. However, this student did not follow through because of other commitments.

Seven students committed to the long-term mentoring option and weekly trainings. Three other students showed interest in long-term mentoring, but could not come to the trainings. These three students were emailed about other opportunities to be involved in as peer mentors; the Admissions Open Houses and in the ENVS 151 course. A total of five individuals became long-term peer mentors while nine participated in the short-term peer mentoring events.

When the recruiting email was sent out again more students showed interest in participating in ENVS 151 course activities. These students were listed for the dates they said they could attend.
Spring 2016 Amendments

This thesis focuses on the development of the peer mentor program in fall 2015. However, the pilot program continued in spring 2016 with the following recruitment results:

- Held two information sessions at beginning of semester for students interested in peer mentor position, no one attended either.
- Two recruitment emails sent to the ENV-Talk listserv recruited all eleven of the spring 2016 mentors

Training Fall 2015

Structure

Weekly training sessions for long-term mentors were held Tuesdays at 11:45am-12:45 pm. During this time for training, I used the curriculum developed and focused on one theme/subtheme each week. This method worked very efficiently. Only one student interested in the peer mentor position could not attend the training sessions at this time. The peer mentor program staff and I trained her on an individual level.

Training Session 1

Four of the seven students who expressed interest in being a long-term mentor attended the first training session. The three who did not attend, I emailed before the following meeting to inquire if they still wanted to be involved in the peer mentor training process. Two students responded expressing their interest and explaining they planned to attend the next training session. One of these students did. I never heard from the other two again, even though I emailed them again.
During the first training session, I focused on providing space for everyone to talk and welcomed the students to the program. We spent time learning about the academic background and personal background of each peer mentor and myself. We next discussed the program's content (ENN's mission, values, goals and how it fits with Environmental Program's mission). I informed the peer mentors about my reasoning for founding the program and my vision for what it would become, but including that this program was also adapting to the needs and wants of the mentors/ENVS community. In this way, I encouraged that they express their views of the functioning of the ENN program. We next went over the ENVS major structure information and additional content in the handbooks they each received. I directed them to look at the information in their handbook as I spoke about it. I assured the mentors that the handbook was adaptable, but theirs to keep and to use as a resource to reference the key topics they should know.

Training Session 2

The second training session on Tuesday September 29, 2015 theme was concentrations. I held a group discussion where the four mentors shared how they picked their concentration and why, and how we could best guide students to think about concentrations. The mentors identified students should direct these conversation and the mentors should listen without interrupting. The mentors could then make recommendations, based on their own knowledge and experiences, how the students could further explore their interests. Another popular idea that came as a result of this discussion included using the ENVS concentration sheets as a guide to display the options the students have for concentrations. One mentor explained laying all of them out in front of you and
looking at course titles helped to identify your own interest in a specific concentration over the others.

The brainstorming and discussion session went for fifteen minutes because the mentors and I were invited to be a part of a focus group to discuss our experiences as students. This focus group was held in the Bittersweet Founders room. The mentors and myself shared information about what we felt were the most helpful parts of the ENVS program and areas of improvement. In this discussion, it was evident that the mentors as a collection of student leaders within the ENVS program could benefit the ENVS program overall as we gave feedback to be used to improve the program. The website scavenger hunt was not provided for the mentors as I did not prepare this activity in time.

**Training Session 3**

The third training session was attended by four mentors and focused on professional careers. I conducted the session in the form of a group discussion again where resources were identified and discussed on how to best help students move from their undergraduate education to a professional career. One mentor was quick to point out the option of graduate school and that not all students went onto the workforce. The conversation shifted to how mentors could support a student who wanted to explore higher education. UVM’s Career Center was discussed as an option, as well as exploring Program’s website. However, as a group, the conversation concluded in mutual agreement that we did not have many resources to offer to students who sought to continue their education in graduate school. Resources for finding a job were more plentiful and the group identified many resources. I then asked what resources the mentors found the most helpful. They each highlighted a different resource and provided a story on the quality of its
helpfulness. I emphasized the stories they were all providing would be great to also share with a student unsure of pursuing one of the resources they mentioned. I concluded the training session with a small assignment to do before the next meeting: find two jobs, or other options, that allow students to apply their academic knowledge and skills.

**Training Session 4**

Three mentors attended the fourth training session and we discussed their findings from the assignment. The mentors had a diverse collection of jobs that fit their interests. For resources used, the mentors explained that though the many emails students receive, the emails detailing job opportunities are helpful. One mentor shared that the emails are not always helpful “in the moment” but when “I sit down and want to look for jobs I reference the emails”. I highlighted this point and asked how to encourage students to check their emails more and/or not automatically delete this specific type of email. The mentors collectively brainstormed and concluded the solution was to explain to fellow students, from a personal perspective, the long-term advantages of keeping the emails and not automatically deleting them. In addition, the mentors indicated that it may be beneficial to encourage students to send the emails into a folder labeled “Job Opportunities” for later review instead of deleting them.

Also, in this training session we reviewed resources to aid students in increasing their likelihood of securing their desired job position. The mentors pointed out again the Career Center and Career Hub as resources to help update resumes, cover letters, provide interview practice, and just an overall listening ear to talk out the students concerns. The Career Hub was also discussed as it has opportunities to explore funding options as well as a central resource to connect students with other helpful career resources. I highlighted
that the Career Center website is a tool mentors can use during mentoring sessions to assist students. I additionally encouraged the mentors to familiarize themselves with this website. It should also be noted that I hoped to have a representative from the Office of International Education come to speak to the mentors. The aim with this was to have the mentors knowledgeable about the study abroad process and opportunities students could explore, however, I did not contact a representative for this day to speak.

**Training Session 5**

The plan for the fifth training session was originally for the mentors to go to the Center for Teaching and Learning office. The aim was to encourage mentors to further explore their student leader role and additional ways to engage student learning while being a mentor. However, I did not organize this activity in time. Instead, the two mentors in attendance and I explored the topic of personal story. We specifically focused on how the mentors could apply their training in order to clearly and concisely articulate their experiences. Pre-registration drop-in advising was only two weeks away and I wanted to ensure the mentors felt comfortable with mentoring students.

In addition, the training session focused on a role-playing activity that mimicked the pre-registration drop-in advising experience. I pretended to be a “difficult student” who did not want to have early classes and challenged the mentors to assist me in still fulfilling my requirements with this perspective. The mentors first were taken back and responded kindly letting me know that sometimes it is unavoidable and I may have to have early classes. I challenged the mentors further by asking what other options I had. Through a collective effort both mentors were able to identify the options of:

1) Exploring other courses to fulfill a specific requirement
2) Waiting until the next semester to take it in hopes it is at a different time (if the specific required course is usually offered in the fall semester looking into this option with the student)

3) Offering the benefits of early classes (get more work done, napping after course, more personal time to be involved in clubs or be with friends).

Once the mentors got to this stage in listing options, they realized the benefits in identifying and exploring the students options to allow them to feel supported in their needs and wants.

Training Session 6

All five mentors attended the last training session. I stressed in two emails the week before this training session that this session was crucial for attendance. The last training session before they assisted in the pre-registration drop-in advising and the peer mentor program staff and I discussed key logistical information like the final mentoring schedule and the overall procedure to follow when helping students. The second half of the session was focused on playing the Jeopardy game I customized for the mentors. This game had the main topics of the curriculum and in addition a miscellaneous category to provide a space for questions that did not have a category, but were still identified by the peer mentor program staff and me as important information the mentors needed to know. As we went through the game, a few themes arose. The mentors struggled with specific information like credits and minor specific information. When questions arose, the peer mentor program staff and I addressed it and used it as a teaching moment to allow the mentors to learn before the pre-registration drop-in advising. At the end of the game, everyone got chocolate and I reminded the mentors to review their handbooks. I instructed to bring their
handbook to the pre-registration drop-in advising so they would have a tangible resource to use. In addition to the handbook, I also advised them to bring their computers. I later emailed the jeopardy game on October 29, 2015 to the mentors, as we did not get to every question in the game during the training session. I recommended they go through the questions and answers before the pre-registration drop-in advising.

Spring 2016 Amendments

- All mentors a part of the ENN program for the spring 2016 semester were trained
- Curriculum adjusted slightly (see appendix 11)

Mentoring

Short – Term Mentoring: Working with ENVS 151 course

Nine students indicated they would be peer mentors and assist in the course’s aim in these ways.

- Session 1: Talk about their ENVS concentration with students on September 17th, 2015.
- Session 2: Assist in reviewing resumes on September 22nd, 2015.
- Session 3: Serve on the student ENVS Concentration Panel on September 29th, 2015.
- Session 4: Help review major plans on October 6th, 2015.

I could not attend any of these sessions as I had class at the same time as the ENVS 151 class time. My understanding of the results of the sessions is from the Cecilia, Ibit, and the mentors who attended. They collectively provided informal, verbal feedback on each session.
Short- Term Mentoring Session 1

The first short-term mentoring session, the two mentors who contacted me stating they were available to attend the ENVS 151 class on this day, indeed attended the ENVS 151 class. They presented in front of the class talking about their ENVS concentration. One of the mentors had their major plan (although that was not necessary) and it was displayed as the mentor explained their pathway to their concentration and how they pursued it. The other mentor did not have a major plan, but also discussed their experiences as an ENVS student focusing on the reason they continued the way they did.

The feedback from Ibit and Cecilia was that some students were confused about the mentors’ direction and pursuit of the concentration, as the mentor did not have an updated major plan. Some courses from past semesters were on the major plan as planned courses to take, but the mentor did not actually take them in the end. Ibit and Cecilia expressed concern that the students may have taken a negative perception away about the major plan. They feared the major plan was not portrayed as the useful tool it was designed to be. The major plan should be used to track courses a student wanted to take or have taken. In addition to the visible display, Ibit and Cecilia were concerned about how both mentors spoke unfiltered about their experiences with courses and high impact learning opportunities.

Cecilia, Ibit, and I debriefed what happened in a follow-up meeting. We decided the mentors who were electing to provide assistance for this course needed more direction on what they spoke about. Given the short-term mentors were separate from the long-term mentors, the short-term mentors were not attending the weekly training sessions with the long-term mentors. We discussed the current preparation for the short-term mentors,
providing concentration panel question list through email, was not enough instruction for the mentors to rise to our expectations. Given this, Ibit and Cecilia recommended I train the mentors on how to speak about their experiences as I train the long-term mentors. I did this by cancelling the second mentoring session on September 22, 2015 to review the panel questions with the mentors. I took this time to focus on clarifying who the audience for the mentors’ presentation.

*Short-Term Mentoring Session 2*

The day of the second short-term mentoring session, I sent an email informing the mentors that instead of meeting in the ENVS 151 classroom, they were to meet me in an empty classroom close by. The five mentors and I sat down in a circle and discussed their expectations and preparation for next week’s event. I discussed with the mentors that their overall aim is to be honest with their experiences and let the students know that it is acceptable that they do not know what they want to do. Their role is to let the students know the options that were helpful for them to pursue whether that is making an appointment with advisor or joining a new club. I went over the Environmental Program’s mission statement as well as the ENN mission, goals, and values, to put in context with their overall role as student panelists.

The mentors’ feedback about this training was helpful to better understand their role in mentoring for the concentration panel. One mentor expressed concern about not having enough time to speak about their various experiences during the panel and other mentors confirmed this concern. I recommended focusing on a few key experiences and explaining their impact on the mentor’s concentration and career pursuits could help with
time. In this way the mentors would have a more concise speech and fit within the time they had.

**Short-Term Mentoring Session 3**

The mentors reported the day of the panel, all panelists, one from each of the seven concentrations the major offers, sat in front of the class and presented while Ibit and Cecilia facilitated the discussion. They encouraged the mentors and panelists to expand on anything they felt was necessary. In this way, ongoing monitoring of the mentors’ expression of their experiences occurred. Ibit and Cecilia also put up the panelists’ major plan to display for the course.

With just five mentors available to attend the panel, two more concentrations needed to be represented. The ENVS staff then stepped in and found two more people. I was not involved in this process and did not train these individuals.

The ENVS faculty and staff feedback from the concentration panel was this training “helped with the expression of the mentors’ experience.” Their presentation was put in context of the Environmental Program’s overall mission as they connected their experiences with the core values of the program. For example, one mentor spoke about how they pursued an internship opportunity and then connected it to how the high impact learning experience helped them clarify their interest in energy policy.

**Short-Term Mentoring Session 4**

The mentoring session scheduled for October 6, 2015, was cancelled due to Cecilia indicating that the help from the mentors was not necessary.
**Spring 2016 Amendments**

- The ENN program structure of the spring 2016 semester did not have separation of mentors in short-term and long-term categories as every mentor received training.
- Two mentoring sessions were identified in the spring 2016 ENVS 151 course. Four mentors in total worked one-on-one with students to answer their questions and provide guidance about their major plan.

**Long-Term Mentoring: Pre-registration advising drop-in sessions**

The pre-registration advising drop-in sessions for the spring 2016 course registration took place in the Bittersweet Founders room from November 2, 2015 until November 20, 2015. The drop-in sessions were a daily two-hour time block designated as drop-in time for students to receive guidance about course selection or other concerns about their current academic path. A variety of paper resources of information relating to the major like the ENVS spring 2015 Course Description sheet, course grid, Campus Course of Interest to ENVS Students (paper trifold) covered the large table in the Founders room. This information was used during the session as resources in order to provide students information about their course options.

Academic advisors, Ibit and Meg, attended every drop-in session with the mentors rotating in attendance for the three weeks of sessions. The mentors individually mentored for four hours (at least two full sessions) a week. Over the three weeks, individually mentors spent around 12 hours at the drop-in sessions and collectively we covered the 30 hours of drop-in sessions. I could not personally attend every session, but provided ongoing monitoring during the sessions through dropping in when I could to the sessions.
and emailing the mentors and advisors. I received feedback (email and in person) on the sessions from the advisors and the mentors.

The mentors applied their training by listening to the student concerns and then identified the specific information or resource most helpful. The mentors utilized the resources on the table, each other, their handbooks, and their laptops to show the students where to find the information. They referred the student to academic advisors when the student’s question or concern when beyond the mentor’s training or personal experience.

Through personal observation I found that the mentors were becoming more aware about when to refer the student to talk to the academic advisors. When they were not working with a student, the mentors worked on their personal work. Frequently, mentors would provide insight to ongoing conversations between the academic advisors and students. This included the mentors providing information on their experience in a course that an academic advisor was suggesting for a student to take. The academic advisors commended this insight.

The academic advisors occasionally indicated the information given by the mentors was not appropriate or was not expressed properly. This immediate feedback was taken well by most mentors and applied to the next similar situation. When repeat concerns arose, talking down a course due to the mentor’s personal experience for example, I stepped in and emailed the mentors about possible ways to phrase their experiences. I encouraged mentors to be self-aware about their experiences being their own and to be careful as to not project their feelings of a course onto another student. I recommended the use of more “I” statements when talking about course experiences. This would allow
mentors to speak within their own experiences, and not assume anyone else’s experience will be the same as theirs.

I additionally checked in with the mentors throughout the three-week pre-registration drop-in times by stopping in and asking how they were doing. In the first week their feedback included they did not feel of use since there were not many students coming in for help. I assured they would be busy soon and to use the time to do their own work and get familiar with the ENVS material for the spring semester. In the following weeks, the mentors expressed frustrations that they could not help senior level students and commonly referred them to speak directly to an academic advisor. After speaking with one mentor further about this, they explained that the senior level students had, “very specific questions regarding credits or capstones.” With this new understanding, I let the mentors know that they are not qualified to help all students in every situation. I instructed they mentor students on the information they know and ask the senior if they had more broad general concerns they were qualified to address. If still no, then it was acceptable to let the student wait to talk with the academic advisors.

**Spring 2016 Amendments**

- Mentors rotated in their involvement in the eight Admitted Student Visit Days over three types of events: CAS Open Houses (6 mentors in total), RSENR sessions (2 mentors in total), ENVS information sessions (8 mentors in total).

- Mentors helped during the pre-registration advising drop-in sessions similarly to fall 2015. New this semester, the mentors additionally recorded their interactions with the students they worked with on the Peer Mentor
Advising Notes (see appendix 12). This paper helps to track the information exchange between mentor and student to then be used by an academic advisor at the next student academic advisor meeting because the paper is kept in the student's file.

**Evaluation**

*Short-Term Student Evaluation*

The 67 students in the ENVS 151 course during the fall 2015 semester evaluated the quality of help the peer mentors provided and gave insight of ways to improve the peer mentor program.

1. **For the student panels where ENVS students shared their academic and career experiences, how helpful were such panels in clarifying your own academic and career interest, on a scale of 1 to 5?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of Help</th>
<th>Student Response*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – Not at all helpful</td>
<td>10 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>11 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – Somewhat helpful</td>
<td>20 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>18 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – Extremely helpful</td>
<td>6 (9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages calculated based on the students who responded. Two students (3%) did not answer this question.
2. What other ways, in addition to panels, would be helpful to have ENVS student involvement (Check all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Options</th>
<th>Percent Answered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-on-One Peer Mentoring for the semester (Matched with ENVS student in same concentration and/or college)</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations about internships/jobs/volunteer experiences on Thursdays conducted by ENVS students</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop-in times for help on major-plans/resumes</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Long-Term Student Evaluation**

During the fall pre-registration advising drop-in sessions, 35 students who received help from the mentors completed evaluations and in the spring 50 students completed the survey. The tables below display the student response results for fall, spring, and combined from the Mentor Evaluation for each question. The percentages are calculated by the number of the student response divided by the total number of students who completed the survey for that time, multiplied by 100.

1. Was the assistance and guidance from the peer mentors...?
2. How were the mentors the most helpful to you in the session?
*For this question students could choose more than one help area
This table shows the number of times each help area was chosen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Help Area</th>
<th>Count of Help Area Selected (Fall, n=35)</th>
<th>Count of Help Area Selected (Spring, n=50)</th>
<th>Count of Help Area Selected (Combined, n=85)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifying your interest</td>
<td>16 (46%)</td>
<td>31 (62%)</td>
<td>47 (55%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping me understand specific areas of the ENVS major structure</td>
<td>24 (69%)</td>
<td>39 (78%)</td>
<td>63 (74%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing experiences that helped clarify areas in question</td>
<td>22 (63%)</td>
<td>33 (66%)</td>
<td>55 (65%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding/utilizing resources</td>
<td>20 (57%)</td>
<td>33 (66%)</td>
<td>53 (62%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table shows the number of help areas chosen by each respondent for fall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Help Areas Chosen</th>
<th>Student Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>9 (25.7%)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>12 (34.3%)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>7 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>7 (20%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The most helpful help area selected by the students who identify one help area was tied between “Helping me understand specific areas of the ENVS major structure”

*1 student put both Excellent and Good
(three students chose this option) and “Sharing experiences that helped clarify areas in question” (three students chose this option).

** The students who identified two help areas, reported that the combination of “Helping me understand specific areas of the ENVS major structure” and “Finding/utilizing resources” were the most helpful areas (4 students chose this combined option).

Two students who listed an “other” help area. One stated “organizing my thoughts” was an aspect of the mentoring session that was helpful. The other indicated the mentor provided, “helpful recommendations”.

3. “How could your experience with the peer mentors be improved?”

Fall: Seventeen students (48.6%) responded in the fall. Ten out of the seventeen students (58.8%) responded their experience with the mentors fell under the theme of “very helpful/perfect.” The other seven responses ranged on areas of improvement. A list of them is below:

- “More guidance/oversight”
- “Introduce themselves as mentors so I know who they are”
- “Need to be assigned advisor related to my concentration/minor”
- “If I was more clear”
- “Senior advising”
- “I’ve got really specific questions, specific for an advisor so not much she could do”
- “My experience was great, I just had a small question so we only had a quick chat. I can’t think of any improvements.”
Spring: Twenty-seven students (54%) responded in the spring. Twenty-one out of the twenty-seven students (77%) responded their experience with the mentors fell under the theme of “very helpful/perfect.” The other six responses ranged on areas of improvement. A list of them is below:

- If they had more knowledge of major structures
- More Ibit time, no phone
- Focus more on classes I should take
- Slow down a little
- Very supportive, but did not know much
- Appointments so we don’t have to wait for Ibit

4. Would you recommend being mentored by a member of ENN to a friend/classmate?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Options</th>
<th>Student Response (Fall, n=35)</th>
<th>Student Response (Spring, n=50)*</th>
<th>Student Response (Combined, n=85)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>33 (94%)</td>
<td>47 (94%)</td>
<td>80 (94%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* One student wrote in “Maybe.” One student did not put yes or no, but wrote: “I would recommend seeing an academic advisor first, but if none are available an ENN is a good alternative.”

**Mentor Evaluation**

The evaluation form was an anonymous online google form that I created and sent to the five mentors that participated in long-term mentoring in the fall. The design of the mentor evaluation contained first the ENN mission, goals, and values on the first page. Then
the next pages were divided into two categories: one page for Program Evaluation and one page for Personal Evaluation. The questions for the program evaluation focused on the mentors’ perceptions on core areas of the peer mentor program. Eleven questions were required to answer and two questions that did not require a response. The questions for the personal evaluation focused on mentors personal growth and their perceptions about the program’s ability to support personal growth. This section had eight required questions and two questions that did not require a response. All the types of questions asked in the evaluation ranged from open-ended to selected options (see appendix 10). Four out of the five mentors responded to the evaluation survey. The results are listed below.

**Program Evaluation**

1. **What were your expectations for the program?**

   - Mentor 1: I’m not really sure, I just wanted to help out students.
   - Mentor 2: That I would gain mentoring experience and have a chance to help students with class choices.
   - Mentor 3: I wasn’t really sure what to expect from the program. I figured that it would be a work in progress since it was newly established so I didn't have a lot of expectations. The only one I can think of is that I would be trained sufficiently in order to answer all questions pertaining to the environmental studies program (this was my initial thought).
   - Mentor 4: I expected the program to be an alternative to traditional advising. And that expectation was truly met!

2. **How well did the program meet your expectations?**
### Expectation Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectation Quality</th>
<th>Mentor Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>3 (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **What was most satisfying about the mentor program?**

- Mentor 1: Being able to help students with questions about their schedule
- Mentor 2: Getting to help my peers
- Mentor 3: There were several students I talked with in my concentration that needed help choosing a direction. I really enjoyed being able to tell my story and how I got to where I am now. I could see that the students were really listening and trying to relate themselves to a similar situation.
- Mentor 4: The peer-to-peer connection. I feel as though I was able to learn from my peers as I mentored them. I learned about interesting classes just as I shared classes that I thought were interesting during my time at UVM.

4. **What was least satisfying or most challenging about the mentor program?**

- Mentor 1: Seemed like there was too much of a time commitment for such a small amount of people who showed up with questions
- Mentor 2: When no one would show up for the pre-advising sessions
- Mentor 3: I felt a little out of place when people from other schools than myself would ask questions I didn't know the answers to. Most times there was someone there from that school to help, but a few times there wasn't. This made me feel a bit incapable.
- Mentor 4: I feel as though the time commitment could be challenging at times, especially for seniors pursuing theses. Perhaps widening the program and/or offering incentives.

5. **How helpful were the weekly training sessions in preparing you for your mentoring experience?**
6. What, if anything, could have improved your training experience?
*Not a required question

- Mentor 1: I think if they were shorter with more information in each session it would be better
- Mentor 2: No response
- Mentor 3: Even though we aren't trained to give academic advising like Ibit, I still think we should be more knowledgeable of all the schools requirements.
- Mentor 4: I found the training sessions to be thorough and interesting and well executed.

7. Do you think additional training for mentors is necessary?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Options</th>
<th>Mentor Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3 (75%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. If so, what kind?
*Not a required question

- Mentor 1: No response
- Mentor 2: No response
- Mentor 3: Just as I stated above. More training in regards to school requirements.
- Mentor 4: No response
9. Please rate how effective the ENN Program was in carrying out its mission, goals, and values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective Rate</th>
<th>Mentor Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Ineffective</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat ineffective</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat effective</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Effective</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. I had adequate support and supervision by the program staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of Support</th>
<th>Mentor Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>3 (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. What, if anything, could the program staff (Jacqui, Ibit, Meg) done to improve your peer mentoring experience? (Check all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Options</th>
<th>Count of Each Option Selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More frequent communication</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearer communication of responsibilities/expectations</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better time management of Mentor Meetings</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More structure to Mentor Meetings</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. How do you see this program expanding in the future? (Check all that apply)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Option</th>
<th>Count of Each Option Selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-on-One Mentoring</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor presence on ENVS website (bios, Ask a mentor Q &amp; A comment box, etc.)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVS Information Session lead by mentors (for first year ENVS students, Undecided students, Transfer students)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice Cream Socials lead by Mentors</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admitted Student Day talk with Mentor</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. What would you suggest to improve the mentor program?

- Mentor 1: Refine it
- Mentor 2: Adding any of the above expansion ideas
- Mentor 3: I would do all of the above in the previous question.
- Mentor 4: I think scaling up the program is my only recommendation, but I recognize that this will happen as the program evolves into the future. More mentors and more informal activities I think will help to achieve this goal.

**Personal Evaluation**

14. Expectations of me as a mentor were reasonable for the program purpose and timeframe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Options</th>
<th>Mentor Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. What did you do well this semester?

- Mentor 1: Came to all of the meetings
- Mentor 2: I feel I did well in the advising sessions.
- Mentor 3: As far as my school goes, I believe I did very well talking to students and discussing classes. Most people take similar classes in a school so I was able to easily relate my learning and experiences to people in my school.
- Mentor 4: Offered course ideas, attended most meetings, participated in meetings and advising sessions.

**16. What could you have done better?**

- Mentor 1: Read all the sheets better
- Mentor 2: I could have worked harder to be more approachable. Speaking to unknown people does not come easily to me.
- Mentor 3: I would have liked to have spent more time memorizing the requirements of the other schools so that I could have been more effective mentoring others not in my school.
- Mentor 4: Attend all training sessions. I missed a few.

**17. How would you rank your performance overall as a peer mentor?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Options</th>
<th>Mentor Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>4(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**18. As a result of being a mentor this semester I: Deepened my understanding of my career path**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Scale</th>
<th>Mentor Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>1(25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1( 25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**19. As a result of being a mentor this semester I: Feel more a part of the Environmental Program**
20. As a result of being a mentor this semester I: Feel it was worth my time and effort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Scale</th>
<th>Mentor Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>3 (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. As a result of being a mentor this semester I: Strengthen my leadership qualities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Scale</th>
<th>Mentor Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>3 (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. Other outcomes that occurred for you as a mentor this semester?
   *Not a required question*

- Mentor 1: No response
- Mentor 2: No response
- Mentor 3: ...free food?
- Mentor 4: I was able to meet new faculty members as I spent time in Bittersweet! I felt more a part of the ENVS Community as a Peer Mentor.

23. What is one thing you learned about yourself?

- Mentor 1: It’s good to participate
- Mentor 2: I am not as approachable as I’d like.
• Mentor 3: I learned that I find it very easy for me to open up my personal life with others.
• Mentor 4: I learned that I love working with people. I have always thought that before, but this program concretely showed me that I love peer-to-peer interaction and has helped me to discern an interest in education in the future.

24. What do you feel are the most important qualities to have in being a mentor?

• Mentor 1: leadership, knowledge, a good personality
• Mentor 2: Be approachable, patient, and knowledgeable.
• Mentor 3: Communication skills, Leadership skills, People skills, Passionate about the ENVS program, Grammar skills, maybe-- I might not have done the best job with this.
• Mentor 4: Wide range of courses taken, strong interest in the ENVS Major, eagerness to help peers, positive energy.

25. Would you recommend this program to other students (both as potential mentors and mentees)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Options</th>
<th>Mentor Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Community Events**

The night before the ice cream social, the peer mentoring program staff and I recognized an oncoming storm could significantly impact our event. The planned venue for the event was outside the Bittersweet House. We never secured an indoor location and were advertising the location as outside the Bittersweet House. We considered having the ice cream social inside the Bittersweet, but we feared it was too small for the number of people that we expected to come. Ibit worked on getting an indoor location while Meg and I
worked on getting ice cream on the day of the event. Meg and I picked up boxes of Ben and Jerry’s ice cream from the on campus Ben and Jerry’s about an hour before the event. Ibit informed us that she had secured the Aiken Solarium as a location for the event. She sent out an email to the listserv announcement the change of venue for the event.

The program staff and I set up the ice cream as the other mentors came. I also had a white board on a stand and wrote that the event was the ENVS Ice Cream Social. Four mentors attended the event and assisted in scooping ice cream. The ENVS faculty and staff came and students came as well. People mingled and ate ice cream. I overheard and participated in casual conversation about personal interests and how the semester was going. I made a formal announcement halfway through the event to announce that the ENN program hosted the event. I explained my involvement with the peer mentors and identified the other peer mentors there. I thanked everyone for joining us, welcomed the new faculty members, and emphasized that this was a community event. I requested everyone to continue to eat ice cream and talk with each other. The style of the event was informal drop-in and in total around 10-20 people were in the room at a time for the hour-long event. After the event, the remaining ice cream was stored in the Aiken Center’s upstairs freezer in anticipation to be moved or used again for another ice cream social.
Discussion

Recruitment Discussion

Recruitment Strategies: Selections

In spring 2015, I selectively recruited for personal reasons and with the program’s longevity in mind. I utilized my personal student network and my former partner’s to select students we felt fit the peer mentor position. I recruited students with strong leadership experience because as founding members of the program and the activities I envisioned the peer mentors performing, students needed to possess the ability to go beyond the commitment of a typical student. I also recruited students who I felt were capable of continuing the program after I graduated. Although this method was not inclusive, as it did not provide equal opportunity for all ENVS students to be peer mentors, it yielded a group of students I felt comfortable working with. This strategy, however, limited the overall number of students who could become peer mentors. Outreach to more individuals may have allowed more students to be involved in the program as peer mentors.

Mentor Gathering

The Mentor Gathering was another opportunity to further develop the program’s structure collectively specifically exploring the peer mentor role more. The location for the gathering may have contributed to the ineffectiveness of this recruiting event. Burlington Bay was theoretically a fun, informal place to gather to talk about the peer mentor’s role. I aimed for an atmosphere that promoted relaxation to encourage students to come given the earliness in the semester. However, I think it was too far off campus and too confusing
to find each other when we got there. A specific location (back table outside, near ice cream window) would have helped gather everyone if this location was to be used again.

Recruitment Challenges

Peer Mentor Position: Student Support vs. Commitment

I encountered an inconsistency in student response towards the establishment of the peer mentor program during spring 2015 through early fall 2015. Students displayed strong support for the creation of the peer mentor program, but lacked the commitment to be peer mentors. Fifteen students showed interest in the peer mentor position during the information sessions in spring 2015, but throughout the summer, student interest decreased. Only one student who attended the information session followed through and committed to the peer mentor role in the fall 2015 semester. This lack in commitment hindered the transition of the program from a vision to a functioning program.

The lack of clarity for the mentor role potentially caused students’ lack of commitment to the mentor position. Throughout the recruiting process, I looked to the interested students to help me clarify the peer mentor role and responsibility. I intentionally did this to collaborate with other students to ensure I properly addressed their needs. However, this strategy may have given students the impression the peer mentor position was not something they knew enough about to commit their time and energy to.

Number and Diversity of Students Recruited for Mentor Position

The lack of clarity for the mentor role may have influenced the total number of mentors for both the short-term and long-term mentoring opportunities last fall. I did not achieve my vision of 21 peer mentors and their roles (see appendix 3). For fall 2015, fourteen peer
mentors were a part of the program (nine short-term and five long-term). Although I knew multiple semesters were needed to accomplish my vision for the variety and number of mentors, the group of mentors in the fall semester was not as diverse in their college/school and concentration backgrounds as I envisioned. My interest in having a diverse group of peer mentors was overshadowed by my concern to have mentors to found the program in the fall. So, I welcomed all students who expressed interest in the peer mentor position in the fall semester and planned to improve the variety of the mentor group in the coming semesters.

In spring 2016, the program trained 11 mentors to work with ENVS 151, mentor at the drop-in sessions, and assist with the Admitted Student Visit Days. These 11 mentors were more diverse in their ENVS concentrations, but were only from two of the three academic units the ENVS major is offered in. I believe with continued growth of the peer mentor program diversity of the mentors will come naturally. Expanding recruitment efforts is a crucial step to increase the number and diversity of students involved in the program. I understand, from a student perspective, the challenge of deciding which activities to be involved in as there are numerous activities offered on campus. Many students who were hand-selected in the spring 2015 semester explained they did not have the time to dedicate to the peer mentor position.

**Mentor Training**

Based on several experiences of fall 2015, it became clear all mentors needed training. The original plan for the peer mentor program required only long-term mentors to help with drop-in sessions. This decision was an attempt to accommodate students’
varying time availability. Although this decision did account for that, it neglected to address an aspect that became a larger concern. For students to be able to mentor well, they need training. William et al. (2009) argues in training the development of communication and teamwork skills occurs and these skills are imperative to prevent dysfunction on the mentor-mentee and supervisor-mentor relationships. This perspective proved to be true for the ENVS 151 mentors, the peer mentor program staff, and me while preparing for the ENVS 151 concentration panel.

Without training sessions for the mentors, communication about their role in the concentration panel was unclear. A disorganized panel resulted from the lack of communication specifically of the mentors’ expectations, presentation content, and presentation style. This in turn negatively affected the goal of improving students’ knowledge of concentrations, 31% of students in the class surveyed at the end of the semester felt the quality of help from the mentors was below “somewhat helpful.”

To improve the quality of help to the students, the supervisors and I decided a stronger communication line was first required between the Cecilia and Ibit (supervisors) and me. This could improve the clarity of information to the mentors who were directly help students. The supervisors and I talked more frequently and more precisely about the role of the mentors in the ENVS 151 course. Although, no formal training sessions were established for the short-term mentors, I called for a meeting where I could inform the mentors of the information the supervisors and I discussed.

This informal training improved my relationship with the mentors as I met them and talked to them about their responsibilities and expectations for the session (as the coordinator, I organized the mentors to attend the events and never needed to meet them
before then). My relationship with supervisor also improved as I learned through instruction (a type of training) how to work with the mentors to achieve the goals of the mentoring activities. Through this experience, I learned the value of training within the peer mentor program.

**Curriculum**

I prepared to develop the training curriculum by meticulously reviewing the ENVS Academic Advisor's Handbook and the ENVS website. This endeavor expanded my knowledge about the ENVS major beyond my student experience. I gained a more holistic outlook by reading about the content-based information and the opportunities the major provides students from an academic advisor’s perspective. I created the curriculum’s content to reflect this holistic outlook because I became aware the peer mentors’ role is somewhere between a student and the academic advisor. I better understood by reviewing these two sources the scope of knowledge the academic advisors have and the potential niche the peer mentor role could fill. Through this awareness, I identified key phrases and overall language used within the two sources. I included this language in the curriculum to teach the mentors how to speak about the major and to create a natural cohesion between the academic advisors and the mentors.

**Presentation of Training Content**

Throughout the training sessions, I learned the benefits of peer collaboration extend beyond the established mentoring sessions and should be applied to the training sessions as well. I conducted the majority of the training sessions in lecture style (me talking about the specific topic and asking questions to the mentors) because my training as a tour guide demonstrated this presentation style was the most effective in delivering information.
However, all four mentors stated, to some degree, the most satisfying part of the mentor program was connecting with their peers. The mentor training lacked opportunities for peer engagement, which if included in training can prepare mentors for this kind of engagement in their mentoring work. Originally I planned to have more activities and even guest presentations. Both would have limited my lecturing, but I did not prepare efficiently for some activities or guest presentations.

One successful training activity I facilitated that encouraged peer collaboration was the Jeopardy game. The mentors individually competed against each other testing their memory of knowledge on the training content. When an answer to a question eluded the mentors, the peer mentor program staff and I challenged the mentors to collectively figure out the answer. Pooling their knowledge together, many times they were able to discover the correct answer. These learning moments helped prepare the mentors for the pre-registration advising drop-in sessions, but also encouraged engagement with each other. I recommend developing more activities like the Jeopardy game. Although, it took time to create, it is a great teaching tool that now can be used for future years. (see appendix 8 for the game’s website link).

**Applying Training Content to Mentoring Sessions**

The first intended outcome of training was: To provide information that will assist peer mentors on how to work effectively with their mentees. The accomplishment of this intended outcome was determined by:

- Most of the long-term mentors (three out of four) responded the training sessions were “extremely helpful” in preparing them for their mentoring experience.
Although true for most mentors, one mentor shared a specific area in which they wanted more training. The mentor stated, “Training on school requirements would permit more success in my mentoring.” In reflection, I included this information in training when I facilitated a group discussion about the differences of the ENVS major within the colleges/schools. However, I did not focus on the school requirements because I felt it was not within the role of mentors to advise this, rather it is the academic advisors responsibility. This refers back to the mentors’ concerns they cannot help everyone, but yet want to feel helpful. I think the mentors should be aware of the differences within school requirements and inform students of the fact there are differences, but academic advisors should advise students on which academic unit is appropriate for them in regards to the college/school’s requirements.

**Development of the Role of Peer Mentors in the Environmental Program**

The clarification of the expectations of the mentors and the potential role they served in the Environmental Program evolved throughout the academic year. The fall 2015 short-term and long-term mentors helped to identify the feasibility of my vision for the structure and function of the peer mentor program. I critically reflected and evaluated the mentors’ performance as well as their impact on the ENVS community to better understand how the mentors could more effectively serve the ENVS community. I then in the spring 2016 semester implemented the changes I saw necessary for the spring 2016 semester.
Foundation of Peer Mentor Program

I founded the peer mentor program to address the full spectrum of needs within the ENVS community. Students expressed a lack of understanding of the ENVS program structure and its subject material (concentrations, capstone, and breadth requirements). I envisioned mentors aiding in students’ learning process by helping them navigate the opportunities of the uniquely complex, individually-designed major.

My interest in the major’s subject material and structure aligns with Merriam’s (1983) theory of why peer mentor programs are established. They are focused on addressing two key need-based themes, subject-based needs or community-based needs of the organization. The first area I envisioned the ENN program addressing, in spring 2015, was the subject-based needs of the ENVS major. I thought the benefits to founding the ENN program on addressing this need aligned best with students’ need of additional academic guidance.

In addition to the subject-based needs, I also aimed to address the ENVS community-based needs. Considering the cross-college nature of the ENVS major and the wide range of courses students are taking, I hoped to build upon the inclusive community the Environmental Program is by nature, and connect students with each other, and to faculty and staff members. To accomplish this, I developed formal opportunities (mentoring sessions during ENVS 151 and peer mentors at the pre-registration advising drop-in) and informal opportunities (ice cream social event) where students, faculty, and staff could work collaboratively to support one another.
**Spring 2015 Mentor Role Vision**

The focus on subject-based needs within the foundation of the program influenced the structure of how mentors would conduct mentoring. In spring 2015, I envisioned the mentors helping students understand the ENVS subject material by matching students with one of the 21 mentors on their mutual concentration interests and/or college/school (see appendix 3). This structure encourages mentors to use their relevant experience and knowledge to help answer the student’s particular subject-based questions. I recognize multiple semesters are necessary to recruit the appropriate number of students to fit this structure and to grow the program to the level I envisioned.

**Fall 2015 Mentor Role**

In fall 2015, the role of the mentor and structure for the peer mentor program altered based on the recommendation of the ENVS Interim Director as well as the ENVS faculty and staff. The administration suggested the peer mentor program would be the most helpful with 1) ENVS 151 course and 2) pre-registration drop-in advising sessions. This suggestion was the solution to the challenge of students’ limited time availability. The short-term option (working with ENVS 151) and the long-term option (mentoring at the drop-in sessions) were established.

**Short-Term: Working with ENVS 151**

Having taken ENVS 151, I recognized the benefit of using mentors in the class. The mentors’ presentations to the ENVS 151 class was timed to help the students develop their major plan which is a tool to help them choose courses that direct their academic experience. Although very useful for the long-term, the major plan can be confusing and
overwhelming when first introduced for some students. The mentors demonstrated how to use the major plan, described their experiences to help students better understand the ENVS major structure, and highlighted opportunities students could explore.

The mentors’ assistance in ENVS 151 directly demonstrated the third goal of the overall peer mentor program, Guide Student Academic Engagement (see appendix 2).

When the mentors spoke about their own academic paths and career pursuits, the mentors:

- Encouraged students to seek high impact experiential learning opportunities.
- Informed students of academic and extracurricular resources.
- Helped to identify students’ unique environmental career interest and helped them to determine a clearer understanding of how to pursue it in the Environmental Program.

When the mentors explained the resources they had used for their academic and career success, the mentors:

- Connected students with appropriate opportunities, offices, and/or departments

Only 34% of the ENVS 151 students, who responded to the evaluation, felt the mentors were not helpful in clarifying their academic and career interest (below the rating of “somewhat helpful”). Those who did not find the mentors helpful may already have identified their academic and career interest.

**Long-term: Mentoring at pre-registration drop-in advising**

I previously attended the pre-registration advising drop-in sessions and received help from Ibit, who offered her knowledge and experience to help me decide on which courses to take for the upcoming semester. By Campbell T. and Campbell D.’s (1997)
definition, I, along with the other students who attend the drop-in sessions, are being mentored. Academic advising is a form of mentorship as the academic advisor is “a more experienced individual who encourages and assists a less experienced individual.” (Campbell T. and Campbell D., 1997).

Reflecting on my experiences at the drop-in sessions, I saw opportunities where peer mentoring could help students in need. Similar to the short-term mentoring, I envisioned mentors addressing the subject-based needs of the ENVS students. Working with the peer mentor program staff, I included peer mentoring into the structure of the drop-in sessions and accomplished all of the intended outcomes under the activity: Create and identify the mentoring opportunities within the Environmental Program (see appendix 4). Below, are each intended outcome for this activity, an explanation of the mentors’ role in accomplishing the intended outcome, and lastly an explanation for how the intended outcome was evaluated and determined accomplished.

**Intended Outcome 1:** To provide a caring, responsive, and supportive environment for students to enable them to discover or clarify their career or personal interests

**Mentors’ Role**

The academic advisors strive to have a welcoming atmosphere at the drop-in sessions by being “caring, responsive and supportive” but the atmosphere is dependent on when a student attends a session. Given there are no appointments for the drop-in sessions and they function based on the first come, first served policy, students may wait longer than they would like to on busy days. The mentors improved the welcoming atmosphere by directly assisting students who were waiting. The mentors served as additional people to
help students with their academic concerns. They were, “caring, responsive, and supportive” towards the students who sought help. Ultimately, the mentors decreased the number of students who would have otherwise gone untended during their wait for an academic advisor.

The mentors accomplished the second half of this intended outcome, “enabled students to discover or clarify their career or personal interests”, by providing an overview of the ENVS major on a one-on-one mentoring basis.

**Evaluation**

The students who received mentoring indicated the mentors who “shared their experiences helped to clarify areas in questions (for the student).” The majority (65%) of students who engaged with a long-term mentor (both fall and spring) indicated this and overall this help area was the second most helpful way the mentors assisted students.

Another helpful way the mentors assisted students was “identifying (their) interest.” The majority (55%) of students (fall and spring) indicated the long-term mentors helped them in this way. Additionally, the majority (62%) of students (both fall and spring) indicated the mentors helped them “find/utilize resources.”

**Intended Outcome 2:** To engage and connect students with each other so they develop a sense of belonging

**Mentor Role**

The mentors collaborated on a peer-to-peer level with other students at the drop-in sessions. Through these one-on-one conversations at the sessions, the students received academic support.
Evaluation

The majority of mentors (three out of four) indicated they “feel more a part of the Environmental Program.”

**Intended Outcome 3:** To provide idea and information exchange between students and faculty/staff

**Mentor Role**

During the drop-in sessions, mentors talked to the students about the students’ interests. The mentors also talked to the academic advisors in the room if the mentors were asked questions they could not answer. The academic advisors would then use their knowledge to inform the student and the mentor of the answer to the specific question.

**Evaluation**

The majority of the long-term mentors (three out of four) indicated they “strongly agree” (the other mentor indicated “agree”) that the peer mentor program staff and I provided adequate support and supervision to them.

**Intended Outcome 4:** To relieve advisee pressure on the ENVS faculty and staff

**Mentor Role**

The mentors help in serving students who attended the drop-in sessions allowed students to address their needs with an academic advisor in a time efficient manner. Mentors helped a student by working with the student to clarify the reason for the student’s visit. They addressed worked to clarify this reason by using their newly acquired
knowledge from mentor training and their personal experience. The mentor’s work helped to prepare students to have a more effective meeting with an academic advisor.

**Evaluation**

I saw how the academic advisors built upon the mentors’ work and how the mentor sessions helped the student. The mentor recapped details about their session to the academic advisor, and the student was able to advocate their concerns more clearly with the advisor than with the mentor.

The accomplishment of intended outcome 1 permits the success in accomplishing this intended outcome. Students’ feedback about the mentors’ ability to identify and clarify the majority of their academic and personal interests, validates the mentors are working to prepare students to have an effective meeting with an academic advisors. Students have a better understanding of additionally information they need or remaining unanswered questions they can address in their meeting with the academic advisor.

The academic advisors’ verbal feedback indicated appreciation for the mentors’ work to prepare the students.

**Mentor Time Commitment**

The fall 2015 mentors rose to every expectation I defined for long-term mentoring. However, I did not account for the toll it took on the mentors. The main drawback articulated by the long-term mentors was the large time commitment. One mentor explained, “I feel as though the time commitment could be challenging at times, especially for seniors pursuing theses. Perhaps widening the program and/or offering incentives.”

I became aware of the large time commitment I requested the mentors to dedicate after the peer mentor program staff and I decided two mentors should attend each two-
hour drop-in session (4 hours a week for each mentor). This was a lot to ask considering
the mentors also had their own responsibilities of school, work, and other activities. The
time best utilized the mentors’ skills developed during training to help ENVS students. I
did not foresee mentors feeling overworked because during the training sessions, the
mentors expressed eagerness to mentor by continuously asking the start date of drop-ins.
This eagerness formed a strong momentum as the drop-in sessions neared. However,
towards the end of the three weeks, it was evident the time commitment was too much for
some of the mentors. Despite this, the majority of mentors (three out of four) said it was
worth their time to be a part of the program.

The spring 2016 mentors did not indicate the time commitment was too much for
them. This group was twice the size of the long-term mentors in the fall, which allows for
more distribution of mentoring hours.

**Mentor Group Size**

The mentor’s suggestion in “widening the program” to avoid overworking the
mentors aligns with my original vision to ultimately have 21 mentors and to grow the
program over several semesters to reach that number. I did not plan to have only five
mentors be a part of the program because the mentor role has high expectations and highly
demanding tasks. Already in the spring 2016 semester, the program grew to 11 mentors
who were trained for working with ENVS 151 and mentoring at the drop-in sessions. This
is an increase to the nine mentors (untrained) who worked with ENVS 151 in the fall
semester and the five mentors who mentored at the drop-in sessions in the fall semester.

I foresee the peer mentor program continuing to grow with opportunities for more
students to become peer mentors trained to assist other ENVS students in their academic
and career pursuits. In the program’s growth of students being trained for the peer mentors position, I recommend the growth of the coordinator position to include more than one student. The title of the position would change to co-coordinator and allow for more efficient distribution of responsibilities in overseeing the functioning of the program and mentors. I foresee this change being crucial if the mentor group grew to my original vision of 21 mentors or beyond because more assistance is needed in facilitating the training sessions with a larger group. I struggled sometimes with effectively facilitating training sessions with the larger group in the spring as well as reflecting and implementing improvements to the program by myself. Two or three co-coordinators could more efficiently train mentors on the content material and help to develop the mentors personally and professionally.

Addressing ENVS Community-Based Needs with the Peer Mentor Role

ENVS Major Structure Influence on Peer Mentor Role

The individually-design structure of the ENVS major allows students to explore a breadth of topics within the environmental studies field and specialize in a topic area (concentration) they find most interesting. The six defined concentrations organize students together and guide them on similar paths, but not the same paths. Within each concentration students can approach the topic area very differently. Beyond the six defined concentrations, some students explore the seventh concentration, individually designed. In addition to this, the capstone choice options and overall course selection create varying student paths. Overall, the ENVS community at the student level, is divided due to the many
different paths students can pursue. I designed the peer mentor role to bridge the gaps between ENVS students pursuing different paths in order to unify the ENVS community.

**Peer Mentor Program Structure Influence on Mentor-Student Relationship**

I strived to create a program that expanded the trust among ENVS students to encourage them to see each other as resources who can provide support through their academic and career pursuits. I foresaw the role of peer mentors to be exemplary students demonstrating this kind of support through helping increase other students' understanding of the ENVS program structure and its subject material. I originally built the framework for the program around this; students matched with a mentor based on their mutual concentration interests and/or college/school. I foresaw the program functioning on a long-term basis where mentors met one-on-one with the student frequently throughout the school year to talk through the student's academic and professional needs. This duration serves a crucial role as I wanted to build trust between students, which takes time. Shea and Gordon (2002) described the long-term and informal mentoring structures, the mentoring structure I designed, results in a mentor-student relationship commonly described as “friendship mentoring.” Friendship mentoring is the style of mentoring I hoped to occur by launching the peer mentor program under the original design. But, with attempting to cater more towards the ENVS subject-based needs, the mentoring structure in the fall 2015 did not include the long-term aspect defined in Shea and Gordon’s (2002) definition of friendship mentoring. Despite the title of long-term mentoring, the fall semester mentors did not meet frequently meet with the same student throughout the year (the title long-term in the fall semester was used to describe the time commitment
requested of the mentors). The duration of mentoring did not affect students as crucially as the literature indicated. Students expanded their trust in each other to recognize students can serve as valuable guiding resources because 96.4% of students, from the fall 2015 and spring 2016 who received mentoring during the drop-in sessions, indicated they recommend being mentored by a member of ENN to a friend/classmate.

My focus on addressing the subject-needs of the ENVS community through peer mentoring occurred partly in the classroom with the short-term mentoring. The peer mentors work with the students of ENVS 151 for both fall 2015 and spring 2016 furthered support for peer-to-peer guidance. The majority of ENVS 151 students indicated their interest for the ENN peer mentors to be involved in the class beyond the panels in many different ways. My original mentoring plan of matching students with mentors for one-on-one mentoring received 54% of the respondents’ interest. The majority of respondents (54%) also indicated their interest in seeing a mentor on a drop-in basis for help on their major plan and resume.

However, Lewis (2010) argues the success of trust building in the classroom setting. The classroom is sometimes not the best place to build trust or get support from peers because it is difficult for students to place themselves comfortably in a vulnerable position (Lewis, 2010). The academic classroom environment in the traditional education model forces students to compete against one another for top marks in the class. This can dissuade students from utilizing other students as resources when seeking guidance and reduce the trust level between students. Although, the ENN peer mentor program was successful in building trust among peers in the classroom, I recommend mentors interact with students outside the classroom to encourage social relations beyond academics.
The ice cream social event in the fall semester provided an informal environment for students to connect with faculty/staff or other students by conversing and eating ice cream. The event’s informal, drop-in structure created an atmosphere where conversations on various topics occurred freely. The conversations I overheard between faculty and students started on the mutual topic interest of academics, but reached more social and personal topics further into the conversations. Given this, the event accomplished one of the goals I set for Fostering Community: Establish academic and social support networks among students as well as between students and ENVS faculty/staff.

Community events like the ice cream social benefit the community by allowing community members to get to know others better outside the academic constraints of the classroom. The logistics of the event require forethought and preparation; however, the mentors serve as vital links in creating a more interconnected community by hosting these events. The mentors’ role in logistics and preparation within the fall 2015 semester ice cream social was limited, but potential expansion in their role is possible. For example, the mentors can utilize their role as student leaders to inform the community of the event by making announcements in their classes and posting flyers about the event, ultimately creating excitement for the event. Mentors additional help to inform the community about event details may alleviate the stress on Ibit, Meg, and me if unforeseen challenges occur. The storm, which forced a last minute change of location for the fall 2015 ice cream social, may have impacted attendance. The active personal informing mentors can perform could have spread the news of change in event location more effectively than just the email.
Benefits of Peer Mentor Program

Benefits to Mentors

The peer mentor relationship benefits both peers individually by nurturing the development of skills each is deficient in (Wisconsin Council on Developmental Disabilities, 2006 and McDougall and Beattie, 1997). I designed the peer mentor position to encourage this skill development. The first intended outcome I set for recruiting: To provide mentors a (peer mentor position) learning opportunity so they can grow and develop further personally and in their professional careers. The success of this intended outcome is measured in the mentors’ gained skills and clarification of their abilities. By creating the training sessions and the mentoring sessions, the mentors engaged in hands-on learning experiences. On the personal level, the long-term mentors all explained they learned something about themselves. One mentor gained valuable insight and stated, “I am not as approachable as I’d like.” Additionally, the majority of the long-term mentors (three out of four) “strongly agree” they strengthen their leadership skills, which I categorize as professional growth. Another mentor gained insight upon their career path by saying, “I learned that I love working with people. I have always thought that before, but this program concretely showed me that I love peer-to-peer interaction and has helped me to discern an interest in education in the future.” This particular insight may have arisen later in the individual’s futures, but it was elicited now given the opportunity to work with other peers in the peer mentor setting.

Students’ ability to identify, clarify, and articulate their interests may be dependent on where they are within their own self-discovery journey. Students ranged in their responses
in whether they “deepened their understanding of their career path.” Between the four long-term mentors who responded to this question, they ranged from “disagree” to “strongly agree” in their perceptions of their understanding of their career path interests. This range of responses may indicate students’ understanding of their personal and professional interests varies. To better know where students are, I recommend having the mentors do ongoing personal progress evaluations. Key times to distribute evaluations are: before training begins to identify the level the students are at before their peer mentoring experience, one after training is over/before they begin mentoring sessions to know if the training content or experience overall impacted them, at the end of the program/when all mentoring sessions are complete to identify if the mentoring had an impact on them and the overall experience. To distribute evaluations in this way will allow for tracking the progress of personal and professional development for each mentor. It can allow better evaluation of the impact of the ENN program on the mentor as an individual student and indicate what parts are benefiting the mentor in their personal/professional growth.

**Benefits to University**

In October 2015, the Student Government Association of University of Vermont passed the bill entitled “Peer Advising for Learning Success Act” (see appendix 13). The bill recognized the student body’s acknowledgment of the "value of and the need for improved academic advising” at the university. The design of the university-wide peer advising program is founded on pairing first-year students with peer advisors in the same major. The program will be overseen on the level of colleges/schools. The academic unit is responsible to train peer advisors. The program will launch at a small-scale in the fall 2016 semester with a full-time peer advising coordinator and a small group of peer advisors
paired with ten same major advisees each. The projected expansion of peer advisors will reach 240 with 2,400 advisees by fall 2020.

The cross-college and individually-design structure of the ENVS major highlights the simplistic design of the new university policy. Although based within the same interest of providing students with additional advising support, advising limitations would still occur for ENVS students if college/school and major were the only factors accounted for in pairing student advisors and advisees. The original structure of the ENN peer mentor program accounts, celebrates, and most importantly supports the unique opportunities ENVS students have in exploring the multitude of different topics within the environmental studies field. The founding of the ENN peer mentor program helps to keep the Environmental Program (and the academic units hosting the ENVS major) aligned with the new university policy implementation.

Limitations

Many of the ENN program’s limitations are rooted in its evaluation methods. The intended outcomes and goals for the program did not have clear measurable ways to evaluate their effectiveness. Many of the intended outcomes of the core activities of the program were not designed for measurement. For example, the intended outcome for evaluation the program: To make the program accountable to the entities that support them, does not define accountability and how it will be measured.

Many of the intended outcomes also were not measured in any way so cannot be determined if they were achieved. Those that did have evaluations for measurable effectiveness may not have been fully evaluated. The survey questions were short and
more research would have to be conducted to know if the conclusions made are substantial. The small population surveyed also affects this. The long-term mentor results consisted of four mentors, which is an extremely small population for conclusive results. As the program grows the full effectiveness of the impact the peer mentor program is making in the ENVS community will become clearer.
Conclusion

Institutions of higher education are expected to provide students with the resources and opportunities to be successful throughout their undergraduate career and prepare them for life beyond. Academic advisors can help students identify their academic and personal interests, clarity on their definition of success, and support their career direction. Advisors are sometimes challenged to continue providing high quality guidance when student advising demands increase. The increasing number of students in the Environmental Program and the complexity of an interdisciplinary major, prompted me to found and launch the Environmental Navigation Network: A Peer Mentor Student Service. The ENN Program benefited the following groups in various ways: 1) students – mentors and mentees, 2) academic advisors, 3) the Environmental Program, and 4) myself.

Students

Mentors

Recruiting for the Environmental Navigation Network yielded 25 students who became peer mentors (16 of whom participated in formal training) to help the Environmental Program address the overall need for additional student support. This experiential learning position strengthened the leadership and professional skills of the majority of students, and provided them a stronger sense of community in the Environmental Program.

Mentees

The mentees were offered supportive guidance in their interactions with the mentors, which prepared them for their time with academic advisors. The mentors’ student
perspective helped the majority of students in their academic exploration during the pre-registration advising drop-in sessions. The mentors proved to be valuable resources in bridging the gap between ENVS students as the majority of students indicated their mentoring was of excellent quality. And the vast majority of students indicated they would recommend the peer mentor service to other students.

**Academic Advisors**

Through assisting students in the ways discussed above, peer mentors alleviated advising pressure on academic advisors. The mentors showed and provided students information about the ENVS structure and answered specific questions from their student experience during ENVS 151 and the pre-registration advising drop-in sessions. This helped prepare students to have more effective meetings with advisors, especially during pre-registration advising drop-in sessions. Meetings with the academic advisors were used for specific questions beyond the knowledge or responsibility of the peer mentor, and for review of the sessions with mentors.

**Environmental Program**

The peer mentors’ role evolved throughout the pilot program, but was grounded in addressing the Environmental Program’s academic-based needs through helping in ENVS 151, pre-registration advising sessions, and events for prospective students. The peer mentor program also addressed community-based needs through the ice cream social. The peer mentors’ assistance during the Admitted Student Visit Days additionally helped to represent the major and UVM, and to inform prospective students and their families about
the Environmental Program. The mentors shared their experiences in the program, which provided the student voice in the discussion of the opportunities the ENVS major offers. The ENN program is in transition from a pilot program to an official program for the Environmental Program and will continue to serve the ENVS community under new leadership in the 2016-2017 academic year.

**Personal Statement**

This journey has been challenging and rewarding in many ways. I worked with exceptional people invested in bettering the ENVS community. The hard work and support the peer mentor program staff and peer mentors provided me, complemented my drive to found and launch the program. In its pilot phase, it was an overall success and holds many opportunities for expansion and improvement in the future. Personally pursuing a path of success in my undergraduate time, I found the need for collaboration with others to address the complex environmental issues we face today. The ENN program provides students, faculty and staff amplified opportunities to work together inside and outside the classroom towards solutions. This project supported and nurtured student engagement, student leadership, and helped address administrative responsibilities. I strongly believe this peer mentor program can continue to serve and adapt to the ENVS community’s needs with its foundational structure I created.

**Overall Recommendations**

My experience with founding and launching the Environmental Navigation Network lent me valuable insight in ways to improve the program’s functioning. Understanding the
strengths and weaknesses of the program, I identified specific aspects to improve so that the program’s mission and goals can be better accomplished.

**Mentor Training**

- Decrease number of lectures and increase discussion and activities to offer content-based information.
- Create more structure by putting full curriculum in handbook for mentors and email detailed meeting agendas before sessions every week.
- Insist all students who want to be a part of the ENN peer mentor program be required to participate in the training.

**Communication**

- Use the ENV-Talk listserv to inform the ENVS community about ENN program events, especially community events and recruiting mentors.
- Host information sessions to inform students about peer mentor opportunities.
- As coordinator, communicate clearly the expectations for the peer mentor position to interested students.
- Create more outreach options for the mentors to collaborate informally (examples: Facebook group, listserv, group text message, etc.).

**Evaluations**

- Include more survey questions that inquire additional topics or further depth within the current topics.
• Conduct more ongoing evaluation, in addition to outcome evaluation, to track progress of the program and of the people it is aiming to serve.

• Create a “check and balance system” where the academic advisors provide feedback on the mentors’ work through use of the Peer Mentor Advising Notes.

• Add a place for mentor’s name to the Mentor Evaluation Sheets to allow mentee to provide direct feedback to the mentor.

**Peer Mentor Recruitment and Retention**

• Develop a plan to retain peer mentors from semester to semester.

• Recruit younger students who are experienced.

• Specialize recruitment efforts to encourage all ENVS concentrations and all college/schools represented by ENVS majors.

• Increase the prestige of the ENN program and the articulate the benefits to the mentors.

• Create social media pages to advertise the program.

• Increase opportunities for fall semester mentors due to fewer admissions activities in spring semester.

**ENN Coordinator**

• Hold weekly meetings with peer mentor program staff.

• Create co-coordinator positions to distribute the responsibilities of overseeing the program.
• Work with the ENVS faculty members to extend awareness of the program and build relationships for future collaboration.

**Community Events**

• Dedicate preparation time to have more effective events to foster community.

• Develop a variety of events for students and faculty/staff to engage together throughout the semester.

• Announce the events early and often using different media (posters, class announcements, emails, etc.).

**Next Steps**

• Dedicate space in Bittersweet to conduct some of the ENN program activities.

• Continue growing program by recruiting more students as peer mentors.

• Develop one-on-one mentoring where students are matched with mentors based on concentration interests and/or college or school.

• Further develop the website presence of the ENN Program and the mentors.
Bibliography


Romero A. & H. Eastwood. (2002). *Not all are created equal: An analysis of the environmental programs/departments in U.S academic institutions until March 2002.* Macalester Environmental Review


Appendix 1: ENVS Major Flow Chart

Environmental Studies Major Flowchart

ENVS 001 Introduction to Environmental Studies and
ENVS 002 International Environmental Studies
(first and/or second year)

↓

ENVS 151 Intermediate Environmental Studies
(second or third year)

↓

CONCENTRATIONS (select one)
- Ecology and Conservation
- Food, Land and Community
- Environmental Policy and Development
- Nature, Culture and Justice
- Sustainability Studies
- Environment and Health
- Individual Design

↓

SENIOR CAPSTONE OPTIONS
(select one from below)

Senior Thesis/Project Capstone
(proposal required)
- ENVS 201 Research Methods
- 6 cr. ENVS 202 Senior Thesis/Project

Senior Capstone Internship
(proposal required)
- One 200-level course relevant to the internship
- 6 cr. ENVS 202 Senior Capstone Internship

Advanced Courses Capstone
(proposal required)
- Three 200-level courses relevant to the concentration
Appendix 2: ENN Mission, Goals, and Values

Environmental Navigation Network

Mission

The mission of the Environmental Navigation Network is to provide Environmental Studies students a peer mentoring service. In collaboration with the faculty and staff members of the Environmental Studies Program, experienced ENVS students will help to carry out the Program's mission by fostering community, supporting professional development, and guiding student academic engagement based on shared interests, strengths, and values.

Goals

Foster Community
- Provide an enriching environment for the students of the ENVS program who value communication, feedback, and support.
- Develop reciprocal relationships between peer mentors and their mentees in which both can learn and grow from each other's knowledge and experience.
- Establish academic and social support networks among students as well as between students and ENVS faculty/staff.

Support Professional Development
- Assist students in transition from an academic environment to the workforce.
- Link academics, career development, and the quality of student involvement during the college experience.
- Develop leadership skills, relationship values, and self-awareness with both mentors and mentees.

Guide Student Academic Engagement
- Encourage students to seek high impact experiential learning opportunities by mentors sharing stories about their ENVS academic pursuits and extracurricular experiences.
- Engage with students to identify their unique environmental career interest and determine a clearer understanding of how to pursue it in the Environmental Program.
- Inform students of academic and extracurricular resources and connect them with appropriate opportunities, offices, and/or departments

Values

- Academic Achievement
- Career Exploration
• Diversity and Inclusion
• Environmental and Experiential Learning
• Community Engagement & Leadership
• Making the most of the college experience
Appendix 3: Diagram

Environmental Navigation Network Structure

**ENVS Faculty**
1. Directors of ENN who will oversee ENN program
2. Provide support and resources for ENN program
3. Main source of contact for ENN Coordinators

**ENN Coordinators**
1. Work closely with ENVS Faculty to ensure accurate information and resources are provided to mentors
2. Create cohesion and clarity for job responsibilities for mentors
3. Main source of contact for mentors

**Policy + Development**
- CALS Mentor
- CAS Mentor
- RSENR Mentor

**Food, Land, Community**
- CALS Mentor
- CAS Mentor
- RSENR Mentor

**Ecology + Conservation**
- CALS Mentor
- CAS Mentor
- RSENR Mentor

**Sustainability Studies**
- CALS Mentor
- CAS Mentor
- RSENR Mentor

**Environment + Health**
- CALS Mentor
- CAS Mentor
- RSENR Mentor

**Nature, Culture, Justice**
- CALS Mentor
- CAS Mentor
- RSENR Mentor

**Peer Mentors**
1. For the 6 defined Concentrations, 1 Mentor represents each of the main colleges ENVS is majored in or minor in
2. Guide mentees through academic pursuits by establishing bonds based on shared interests, strengths, and values
3. Report to ENN Coordinators

**Mentees**
1. Students interested in receiving guidance about their environmental career interests from peers
2. Participate in peer mentoring sessions for guidance

- In addition, 2 Mentors will represent the Self-Designed Concentration and will assist mentees seeking guidance in this concentration
- And 1 Mentor will represent the College of Education and Social Services and will assist mentees seeking guidance in this concentration
Appendix 4: Visions and Intended Outcomes

Program Overall Vision:

To support the Environmental Program’s commitment to student learning, the Environmental Navigation Network seeks to enhance Environmental Studies students’ experience by providing a peer mentoring service based on the mentors and mentees’ shared interests, strengths, and values.

1. Recruit Peer Mentors

- Vision
  - To obtain 21 qualified peer mentors who can execute the vision for the ENN program

- Intended Outcomes
  - To provide mentors an experiential learning opportunity so they can grow and develop further personally and in their professional career.
  - To strengthen students’ understanding and awareness of the connection to Environmental Program’s mission and their studies.
  - To provide a network of support for students in their academic and career pursuits.
  - To welcome feedback to the Environmental Program.
  - To showcase exceptional student leaders within the ENVS program and provide an avenue for them to give back to other students and the community.

2. Establish Training Program for Peer Mentors
- Vision
  - To educate new mentors on their responsibilities and expectations

- Intended Outcomes for training program
  - To provide information that will assist peer mentors on how to work effectively with their mentees
  - To celebrate the rich established history of the Environmental Program and provide insight on how to carry out its legacy
  - To present an overview of the University’s and Environmental Program’s academic policies and procedures
  - To provide peer mentors with a working definition of mentoring
  - To teach peer mentors how and when to refer mentees for additional or specialized help
  - To instruct peer mentors in the use and location of resource materials
  - To demonstrate proper recordkeeping procedures

3. Create and identify peer mentoring opportunities within the Environmental Program

- Vision
  - To connect students that are in need of academic and career development assistance with a more experienced student

- Intended Outcomes
  - To provide a caring, responsive, and supportive environment for students to enable them to discover or clarify their career or personal interests
o To engage and connect students with each other so they develop a sense of belonging
o To provide idea and information exchange between students and faculty/staff
o To relieve advisee pressure on the ENVS faculty and staff

4. Evaluate the Program

• Vision
  o Utilize appropriate assessment measures to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the Environmental Navigation Network

• Intended Outcomes
  o To gather feedback on the program to show results from the launch of the program
  o To obtain concrete feedback that can be used to improve program for future semesters/years
  o To increase understanding of effective practices in peer mentoring relationships
  o To make the program accountable to the entities that support them
  o To provide objective feedback to program staff and participants about whether they’re meeting their goals
  o Build credibility in the community that the program is vital and deserves support
  o To quantify experiences so that the program can help others
Appendix 5: Peer Mentor Position Description

Environmental Navigation Network
Peer Mentor Position Description
Fall 2015

The Peer Mentor position is a service learning, student leadership position. As a Peer Mentor, you will form a reciprocal relationship with fellow students (mentees) and guide them to develop a better understanding of their environmental career pursuits.

Responsibilities

- Attend Mentor Gathering – weekend of Labor Day (September 7th)
- Attend weekly mentor meetings – time and dates TBD
- Maintain accurate records regarding mentees during mentor sessions
- Collaborate with other Peer Mentors as a member of the ENN Program
- Encourage mentees to take an active role in the development of their own community
- Keep mentees informed of ENVS related events and activities (internship/job/volunteer opportunities, relevant guest lectures, other student projects, etc.)
- Utilize online resources for responsibly connecting with mentee (email is primary contact outside of sessions)
- Utilize active listening skills and assist mentees with individual concerns
- Respond in a timely manner to all emails or requests made of you by mentee(s); fellow mentors; Program Coordinators or ENVS faculty/staff

Qualifications

- Willing to attend and lead 2 mentoring sessions a month to have help guide mentees
- Experienced students who have completed ENVS 151 with an B+ or better and overall have a GPA of 3.2 for ENVS core courses
- Leadership experience
- Good critical thinking & analytical skills
- Commitment to social justice and multicultural awareness
- Time management skills
- Positive energy and work ethic
- Ability to work independently and within a collaborative team
- Be willing to learn and share information about the ENVS and broader UVM community, student life, and campus resources
- Demonstrate good interpersonal and communication skills
- Have a genuine desire to help their peers succeed
• Diverse backgrounds and interests

Expectations
• Demonstrate respect, dignity, and courtesy at all times with mentees, mentors and all ENVS program staff/faculty
• Represent and share the best of the University of Vermont and the ENVS Program with mentees
• Communicate effectively and in a timely manner with ENN Coordinators on mentee issues and programmatic needs and maintain confidentiality when appropriate
• Know and adhere to the university Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities
• Be accessible, available, and visible in the community
• Be open to providing and receiving constructive feedback.
• Present a positive attitude in carrying out Peer Mentor responsibilities
• Participate in formal evaluations and assessments of the program.
• Maintain confidentiality regarding mentee’s educational information and records
• DO NOT act beyond the scope of your qualification. In the event of a situation that requires higher level professional expertise, you will refer your mentee to the appropriate professional

Learning Outcomes and Benefits
• Build mentoring and coaching skills.
• Develop: leadership, technical, listening, teamwork, professional, and interpersonal skills.
• Build oral and written communication skills through presentations & formal outreach to mentees
• Define, develop and grow personal career goals.
• Learn more about the career development process through understanding job search strategies, networking, and fostering community
• Serve on a hard working team of colleagues and peers, and enjoy a creative & diverse work environment.
• Resume building (high impact learning)
• Skill building in event planning, public outreach, and writing
• Personal fulfillment gained through contributing to your community and peers
Hi ENVS students,

Along with the recent personnel changes in Environmental Program, we are excited to announce

the **New ENVS Peer mentor program** -- the ENVIRONMENTAL NAVIGATION NETWORK.

This student service is being developed in collaboration with ENVS faculty and staff, but is student-led, originating from my ENVS senior thesis. The program’s mission is for upper-level students (mentors) to share their experiences to help other students (mentees) navigate the ENVS major and explore the diverse environmentally-related opportunities at UVM and beyond.

At this time, we are seeking students who would like to be mentors. If you have completed ENVS 151, please consider the two different (short-term and long-term) opportunities below to be involved as a mentor this semester:

1. **Working with the ENVS 151 course** (meets on Tuesday and Thursday at 1:15 - 2:30)

   Roles include (may be more):

   - Talk about your ENVS concentration with students on September 17th.

   - Assist in reviewing resumes on September 22nd.
- Serve on the student ENVS Concentration Panel on September 29th.

- Help review major plans on October 6th.

If interested in this option, please email me directly (jcardoza@uvm.edu) and indicate your name, which day(s) you wish to serve, and your concentration by MONDAY 9/14 at noon.

2. Assist with spring Course Pre-Registration Advising Sessions at Bittersweet with Meg Taylor and Ibit Wright.

To prepare, you will be asked to attend weekly training meetings starting the week of 9/21.

You will be trained to:

- Explain the ENVS major and minor (incl. requirements and structure across colleges and concentrations)

- Inform students where to go for information and encourage exploration (i.e. career pursuits, high-impact learning, internships, study abroad)

- Share ENVS advising policies and culture

If interested in this option, please fill out this doodle poll (http://doodle.com/poll/sfp7srv2kxq9gyfe) for the times you are available to attend the weekly meetings by MONDAY 9/14 at noon.

Being a peer mentor is a great opportunity for ENVS students to build leadership skills, learn more about the program, and increase our sense of community. We look forward to having all interested students join us to help build this program.
Best Regards,

Jacqueline Cardoza

B.S. Environmental Studies

Concentration: Environmental Health Justice

University of Vermont, 2016

jcardoza@uvm.edu

860-885-9045
Appendix 7: List of Information Mentors Need to Know

what peer mentors do

NEED TO KNOW
- explain major and minor
- know concentrations, colleges and capstone options/process
- Know different between enviro science vs studies
- website knowledge
- student life in uvm
- jobs, internship, professional study abroad
- connection to alumni
  - familiarity with professors
Appendix 8: Curriculum - Fall 2015

September 22
ENVS Major Structure

Personal Introductions
- Name, Year, Concentration, Why you are interested in position

Introduction to ENN
- Program Mission Statement
- Program Goals
- Fall 2015 Goals – ENVS 151 involvement, Pre-cours registration advising
- Discussion of mentoring vs. advising
- Mentors Role in Pre-cours registration advising - mentoring
- Availability of pre-registration weeks (week of Nov.1 through Nov 16).

ENVS major and minor overview
(Hand out paket of info, describe what is in it, and state it needs to be reviewed for next meeting)
- Course flow chart
- Colleges to major/minor in ENVS
  - Credit differences
  - Hand out information for individual colleges
- Minor details
  - Structure differences from major
  - Credits
- Concentrations (list of the 6 with short description)
- Senior Capstones (list)

September 29
Concentrations

Personal Introductions Again
Review major material
(Group discussion/written on board)
- ENVS course flow
- Colleges and Concentrations
- Senior Capstones
Discussion – Concentrations
(Pairs discuss below questions)
- How personal concentration was picked
- What attracted them to pick it
- Where do they want to go (Beyond UVM)
- Courses they enjoyed in Concentration

Group Discussion
(Go around and state concentration and why you picked it)
- Focus group discussion - Is it helpful to have a concentration
  - How best to guide students to thinking about concentrations
    - Discuss Course/Experience where student had particular interest in specific environmental topic
    - Where could that take them? (Capstone, job)

Introduce for review website
- Website Scavenger Hunt!
  (This will be developed to allow mentors to explore the website and find what is easy to find, what could be hard to find, if the information is clear, and how to direct people to find things on the website)

October 6
Website + Professional Careers

Review Answers to Scavenger Hunt

Group Discussion
- Website as first tool for students to use!
- Accessibility to Information
  - What was the scavenger hunt question (ENVS topic) that was the easiest/hardest to find
    - Hardest – solutions to fix
- Explain/show how you got to specific scavenger hunt question

Resources to gain access to job/internships
- Catamount Job link
- SCA
- USA Jobs
- Anna Smiles-Becker Emails
- ENV talk emails
- Professors!
Mentors must find 2 jobs for each concentration by using above resources for next meeting

**October 13**

**Study Abroad + Student Life**
Ask mentors to pick one AWESOME job from list to share
- What are the requirements for this jobs
  - How can we best help students be qualified
    - Resume help
    - High Impact Learning

*Office of International Education Representative*
Discussion of Green Clubs on Campus
- VSTEP
- SEEDS
- ACRES
- Outing Club

Research Opportunities
- Professors/Faculty Members in environmentally related research

**October 20**

**Center for Teaching and Learning**

**October 27**

**ENVS Jeopardy**

Accumulation of topics discussed complied in a jeoparady game for mentors to compete and review their knowledge for the next weeks pre-course regristrarion advising sessions
Appendix 9: Mentor Evaluation

Front Side

The Environmental Navigation Network (ENN) is a **student-led pilot program** for Environmental Studies students. It is a **mentoring service** in which upper-level students (mentors) share their experiences to help other students (mentees) **navigate** the ENVS major and **explore** the diverse environmentally-related opportunities at UVM and beyond.

*We are interested in your perceptions of the impact the ENN Peer Mentors had on your pre-registration advising session.*

Back Side

1. Was the assistance and guidance from the peer mentors: (Circle one)

   Excellent  Good  Fair  Poor  Very Poor

2. How were the mentors the most helpful to you in the session? Check the following:

   ___ Identifying your interest
   ___ Helping me understand specific areas of the ENVS major structure
   ___ Sharing experiences that helped clarify areas in question
   ___ Finding/utilizing resources
   ___ Other:______________________________

3. How could your experience with the peer mentors be improved?

4. Would you recommend being mentored by a member of ENN to a friend/classmate?

   Yes  No
Environmental Navigation Network Evaluation

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey. Your response will remain anonymous and provide insight on how the ENN Program can be strengthened. Additionally, I will be using this data in my thesis to evaluate the success of the program. I appreciate your honest and open responses along with all the work you have done for the ENN Program.

On the next page you will find the ENN Mission, Goals, and Values which you may reference throughout the survey. The survey will ask questions first about the program overall then there will be a personal evaluation. Please complete both sections of the survey by January 18 at 9pm.
Environmental Navigation Network Evaluation

ENN Mission, Goals, Values

Mission

The mission of the Environmental Navigation Network is to provide Environmental Studies students a peer mentoring service. In collaboration with the faculty and staff members of the Environmental Studies Program, experienced ENVS students will help to carry out the Program’s mission by fostering community, supporting professional development, and guiding student academic engagement based on shared interests, strengths, and values.

Goals

Foster Community

- Provide an enriching environment for the students of the ENVS program who value communication, feedback, and support.
- Develop reciprocal relationships between peer mentors and their mentees in which both can learn and grow from each other’s knowledge and experience.
- Establish academic and social support networks among students and between students and ENVS faculty/staff.

Support Professional Development

- Assist students in transition from an academic environment to the workforce.
- Link academics, career development, and the quality of student involvement during the college experience.
- Develop leadership skills, relationship values, and self-awareness with both mentors and mentees.

Guide Student Academic Engagement

- Encourage students to seek high impact experiential learning opportunities by mentors sharing stories about their ENVS academic pursuits and extracurricular experiences.
- Engage with students to identify their unique environmental career interest and determine a clearer understanding of how to pursue it in the Environmental Program.
Inform students of academic and extracurricular resources and connect them with appropriate opportunities, offices, and/or departments

Values

- Academic Achievement
- Career Exploration
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Environmental and Experiential Learning
- Community Engagement & Leadership
- Making the most of the college experience
Environmental Navigation Network Evaluation
* Required

Program Evaluation

What were your expectations for the program? *

How well did the program meet your expectations? *

What was most satisfying about the mentor program? *

What was least satisfying or most challenging about the mentor program? *

How helpful were the weekly training sessions in preparing you for your mentoring experience? *

What, if anything, could have improved your training experience?
Do you think additional training for mentors is necessary? *

If so, what kind?

Please rate how effective the ENN Program was in carrying out its mission, goals, and values *
- Extremely ineffective
- Ineffective
- Somewhat ineffective
- Somewhat effective
- Effective
- Extremely Effective

I had adequate support and supervision by the program staff. *

What, if anything, could the program staff (Jacqui, Ibit, Meg) done to improve your peer mentoring experience? (Check all that apply) *
- More frequent communication
- Clearer communication of responsibilities/expectations
- Better time management of Mentor Meetings
- More structure to Mentor Meetings
- N/A
- Other:

How do you see this program expanding in the future? (Check all that apply) *
- One-on-One Mentoring
- Mentor presence on ENVS website (bios, Ask a mentor Q & A comment box, etc.)
- ENVS Information Session lead by mentors (for first year ENVS students, Undecided students, Transfer students)
- Ice Cream Socials lead by Mentors
- Admitted Student Day talk with Mentor
- N/A
- Other:

What would you suggest to improve the mentor program? *
Environmental Navigation Network Evaluation

* Required

Personal Evaluation

Expectations of me as a mentor were reasonable for the program purpose and timeframe. *

What did you do well this semester? *

What could you have done better? *

How would you rank your performance overall as a peer mentor? *

As a result of being a mentor this semester I...

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<th></th>
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<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<td>Deepened my understanding of my career path</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feel more a part of the Environmental Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feel it was worth my time and effort</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strengthen my leadership qualities</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Other outcomes that occurred for you as a mentor this semester?

What is one thing you learned about yourself? *

What do you feel are the most important qualities to have in being a mentor? *

Would you recommend this program to other students (both as potential mentors and mentees)? *

Any additional comments you would like to make?

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.
 Appendix 11: Curriculum - Spring 2016

February 1st
ENVS Major Structure

Personal Introductions
- Name, Year, Concentration, Why you are interested in position

Introduction to ENN
- Program Mission Statement
- Program Goals
- Spring 2016 Goals – ENVS 151 involvement, Pre-cours registration mentoring, ASV (Info sessions and receptions)
- Availability for ASVs
- Discussion of mentoring vs. advising
- Mentors Role in Pre-cours registration mentoring

ENVS major and minor overview
- (Go over binder)
  - Course flow chart
  - Colleges to major/minor in ENVS
  - Concentrations (list of the 6 with short description)
  - Senior Capstones (list)

February 8th
ASV Preparation

Personal Introductions Again
- Name, Year, Concentration

Review ASV sign-ups
Ibit present on expectations/ASV logistics

Discuss Active Listening
- Pass out Active Listening Sheet

Introduce “Why are you here” Activity
- In partners, decide who is the speaker and who is the listener
- Listener: Practice active listening, but not paraphrasing, just saying why are you here
- Speaker: Practices what they will say during ASV
- Switch (5 minutes)

Take Home - Make Bios for website!
February 22nd
Concentrations + Professional Careers

Reflection on ASV Day!
Discussion – Concentrations
(Pairs discuss below questions)
CONCENTRATION QUESTIONS SENT from Ibit

Group Discussion
(Go around and state concentration and why you picked it)
• Focus group discussion - Is it helpful to have a concentration
  o How best to guide students to thinking about concentrations
    ▪ Discuss Course/Experience where student had particular interest in specific environmental topic
  • Where could that take them? (Capstone, job)

Resources to gain access to job/internships
• Catamount Job link
• SCA
• USA Jobs
• Anna Smiles-Becker Emails
• ENV talk emails
• Professors!

Take Home - Mentors must find 2 jobs for each concentration by using above resources for next meeting

February 29th
Intro to Website + Student Life+Study Abroad

Ask mentors to pick one AWESOME job from list to share
• What are the requirements for this jobs
  o How can we best help students be qualified
    ▪ Encourage strong resume
    ▪ High Impact Learning to build experience and skills

Introduce for review website
• Website Scavenger Hunt! (Take Home)
  (This will be developed to allow mentors to explore the website and find what is easy to find, what could be hard to find, if the information is clear, and how to direct people to find things on the website)

Discussion of Green Clubs on Campus
Research Opportunities
- Professors/Faculty Members in environmentally related research

Take Home – Website Scavenger Hunt

**March 14th**

**Website + Fall Course Review**

Review Answers to Scavenger Hunt

Group Discussion
- Website as first tool for students to use!
- Accessibility to Information
  - What was the scavenger hunt question (ENVS topic) that was the easiest/hardest to find
    - Hardest – solutions to fix
- Explain/show how you got to specific scavenger hunt question

Review Fall 2016 Course Selection Material

**March 21st**

**ENVS Jeopardy**


Accumulation of topics discussed complied in a jeoparady game for mentors to compete and review their knowledge for the next weeks pre-course registratorion advising sessions

Reminder of ASV on Friday 25th

**March 28st**

**Pre-Registration Mentoring Week**

Check-Ins and Answering Specific Questions

- ASV (We switch to Mondays and Fridays starting week of April 11th)
• Pre-Registration Mentoring Questions
  Review “Tricky” Questions
  • Distribute list and have group discussion about how to best answer them

April 4th
  Pre-Registration Mentoring Week/ASV

Busy week
Check-In/No Meeting?

April 11th
  ASV

Check-In about ASV Days

April 18th
  Evaluations

Reflections/Feedback
  • In meeting, oral feedback on specific questions
    o What worked, what did not
    o Recommendations for next semester

Take Home – Written Feedback
Appendix 12: Peer Mentor Advising Notes

Instructions: Please complete this form for every mentoring contact and place it in the student's folder. Copies may be given to the student, or others, if action is required.

_________________________________________________  ___________________________  ________________
Student’s Name                                      Net ID                           Credits Earned

_________________________________________________  ________________  ________________
Peer Mentor’s Name                                  Date                               Time

Purpose of Visit

Questions Answered/Information Offered

Questions to Ask Academic Advisor

Next Steps For Student
Appendix 13: Peer Advising for Learning Success Act

WHEREAS, the student body at the University of Vermont recognizes the value of and the need for improved academic advising,

WHEREAS, UVM leaders have expressed similar interest in improving advising,

WHEREAS, in addition to faculty and professional advising, students recognize the importance of peer-to-peer advising and mentoring,

WHEREAS, the University of Vermont would benefit from a university-wide peer advising program in which a network of qualified and passionate student advisors provide quality peer-to-peer advising to first year and transfer students with regard to major/minor navigation, course selection, and transitioning into UVM,

LET IT BE KNOWN, that the Student Government Association of the University of Vermont passes the bill entitled the “Peer Advising for Learning Success Act” under the stipulations outlined in Attachment 1.
Mission: It is the mission of the SGA-coordinated Peer Advising Program to supplement existing faculty and professional advising systems by providing reliable and easily accessible academic and career advising to undergraduate students through a network of qualified and passionate peer advisors.

Identified need:

- **Faculty Senate:** As expressed in the Student Affairs Committee of the UVM Faculty Senate in their report on "Strengthening Academic Advising at UVM," "The present system of advising is mostly an informal one that takes place at the level of the academic unit. There are no quality standards and no uniform method of assessment. The most notable strengths are the many excellent, dedicated advisors and some excellent advising systems at the program, department and college levels at UVM. Nevertheless, qualitative and quantitative data make clear that student advising is not uniformly excellent and the present system has a number of weaknesses, especially in light of changing needs."[1]

- **Office of the Provost:** As Provost Rosowsky indicates in a memorandum to the Academic Deans on September 25th, 2014, "The President’s Strategic Action Plan and the supporting Academic Excellence Goals both place a high priority on effective student advising and the continuum of academic advising and career planning."[2]

- **SGA:** As SGA President Jason Maulucci indicates in a memorandum to the President, Provost, and Associate Provost for Teaching and Learning on April 20th, 2015, "A major priority for the 2015-2016 Student Government is strengthening advising at the University of Vermont. In addition to professional and faculty advising, students also recognize the tremendous value of peer advising. The insight students receive from their older peers is an invaluable component of the collegiate advising experience. The Student Government will provide a setting for the selected peer advisors to meet with students interested in utilizing the new resource. Several SGA recognized clubs already perform a similar function, including the CEMS Club and Pre-Vet Club. Our goal is to profoundly broaden, organize and standardize a system that provides essential services for students, by students."

---

Organization:

- An annual Commission on Peer Advising will be staffed by the SGA President, Academic Affairs Committee Chair, the Associate Provost for Teaching and Learning, the Peer Advising Coordinator, and representatives from the participating colleges will have authority over all decisions regarding the cost and scale of the program.
  - Each member of the commission will be required to report to their respective constituency.
- The SGA will employ one full-time student services professional to:
  - Facilitate the application process for new advisors.
  - Assign advisees to advisors based on curricular and co-curricular interests.
  - Maintain contact with advisors to ensure communication and productivity.
  - Receive and respond to feedback regarding the outcomes of advising relationships.
  - Conduct outreach to students regarding the services of the Peer Advisor Program, esp. during New Student Orientation and events such as “Undecided Week.”
- The responsibilities of a peer advisor include, but are not limited to:
  - Proactively make contact with all assigned advisees throughout the assigned period:
    - First Year Orientation - registration for the following fall semester
    - Provide relevant academic advising and mentorship with regard to the first year experience.
    - Refer advisees to necessary support services when their needs surpass the scope of the Peer Advising Program.
- Qualifications for peer advisors include:
  - Must have at least sophomore standing to apply and junior standing to serve as a peer advisor.
  - Must have the capability to work and communicate with a range of peers, staff, and faculty.
  - Must have previously demonstrated leadership and academic excellence.
- Selection of peer advisors:
  - Faculty from all colleges and departments will be asked to consider recommending students who meet the aforementioned qualifications to apply to the Peer Advising Program.
  - The Peer Advising Coordinator will contact the recommended students at midterm of fall semester with application instructions.
  - After reviewing applications and interviewing applicants, the Coordinator will make admissions offers before course registration for the following spring.

Dudley H. Davis Center, 590 Main Street, Burlington, VT 05405
Telephone: (802) 656-2053, Fax: (802) 656-7719
semester, so that admitted peer advisors will have appropriate time to consider enrolling in the program.

- **Training of peer advisors:**
  - After being admitted to the Program, peer advisors will enroll in a partial-credit training course during the Spring Semester.
  - Training courses will be offered by each college and taught by faculty.
  - In the event that an Advisor wishes to take a full (18 credit) course load during the semester of their training, the SGA will provide a not-for-credit alternative training course.

- **Terms and benefits for peer advisors:**
  - Peer advisors will receive a $300-per-semester stipend for their service.
  - Termination of employment of peer advisors will be at the discretion of the Coordinator upon consultation with the Academic Affairs Committee Chair and the SGA President.

- **Cost overview of program:**
  - The SGA shall, upon the approval of an adjustment to the Student Activities Fee, earmark a $170,000.00-per-year allocation through FY20 for the Peer Advising Program.
  - For every year that the operating costs of the Peer Advising Program do not exceed $170,000.00, the surplus shall be encumbered by the Student Government Association and reserved for supplementing the program's cost through FY20 as the scope and scale of the program augment.

- **FY-to-FY cost and scale-up:**
  - In FY17, the program at its initial scale will employ a full-time coordinator and 40 peer advisors to accommodate a projected population of 400 first-time first-year undecided students in the College of Arts and Sciences and the Grossman School of Business.
    - The coordinator's salary and benefits will cost approximately $65,000.00
    - The stipends for the peer advisors will cost approximately $24,000.00
    - The operating and discretionary costs of the program will cost approximately $13,000.00
    - The total cost is projected to be $102,000.00
    - The total surplus/deficit ($170,000.00 - FY17 cost) is projected to be +$68,000.00

---

3 See sub-attachment 1.1
In FY18, the program will scale-up by a projected multiplier of two: 80 peer advisors to accommodate 800 advisees. The specific scope of the scale-up will be determined by the Commission on Peer Advising.

- The coordinator’s salary and benefits will cost approximately $67,564.80
- The stipends for the peer advisors will cost approximately $48,000.00
- The operating and discretionary costs of the program will cost approximately $17,200.00
- The total cost is projected to be $132,264.00
- The total surplus/deficit ($170,000.00 - FY18 cost) is projected to be +$37,235.20

In FY19, the program will scale-up by a projected multiplier of two: 160 peer advisors to accommodate 1,600 advisees. The specific scope of the scale-up will be determined by the Commission on Peer Advising.

- The coordinator’s salary and benefits will cost approximately $68,916.10
- The stipends for the peer advisors will cost approximately $96,000.00
- The operating and discretionary costs of the program will cost approximately $24,404.00
- The total cost is projected to be $189,320.10
- The total surplus/deficit ($170,000.00 - FY19 cost) is projected to be - $19,320.10

In FY20, the program will scale-up by a projected multiplier of 1.5: 240 peer advisors to accommodate 2,400 advisees. This scale-up meets full implementation.

- The coordinator’s salary and benefits will cost approximately $70,295.92
- The stipends for the peer advisors will cost approximately $144,000.00
- The operating and discretionary costs of the program will cost approximately $28,612.08
- The total cost is projected to be $242,906.50
- The total surplus/deficit ($170,000.00 - FY20 cost) is projected to be - $72,906.50

Financing the FY19 and FY20 deficits

- The total surplus from FY17 and FY18 amounts to $105,235.20
- The total deficit from FY19 and FY20 amounts to $92,226.60
- The surplus from FY17 and FY18 will finance the deficits from FY19 and FY20 with a remaining surplus 13,008.60
• Funding the program in FY21 and beyond
  ○ After FY20, the program will run an approximately $73,000-per-year deficit.
  ○ Should the SGA choose to continue the Peer Advising Program in its full implementation after FY20, it will need to authorize a fee increase of approximately $3.65-per-semester in order to finance the program in perpetuity.

Peer Advising For Learning Success Act: Sub-attachment 1.1

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<td>Total Surplus through FY20</td>
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Assumptions:
* Faculty mentors work with PAs
* FY16 coordination by grad student
* FY16 operating incl. PA Pilot for Spring 16 semester, and recruitment and training for FY17 program
  - Inflation 2% rate for Operating costs
  - Staff salary 2% increase FY17-FY20
  - Benefit rates for Salaried Staff FY17 - FY20 (44%)
  - Benefits rates for wage staff (8%)