

STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS ON THE ENTRY LEVEL JOB SEARCH PROCESS IN THE FIELD OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to compare those emerging professionals in the field of student affairs who engaged in a mentoring relationship and those who did not engage in a mentoring relationship. Specific areas assessed included psychosocial support (self confidence, informed level of knowledge about the field, and skill development) and career preparation in the form of job search etiquette.

The study population consisted of students who participated in a job search in the spring 2010 recruitment season. These students were accessed through the Oshkosh Placement Exchange (OPE) registration. The survey was distributed to 570 participants, and 183 surveys were collected, therefore yielding a response rate of 32%.

The study findings revealed no significant difference in whether or not an emerging professional engaged in a mentoring relationship compared to those who did not engage in a mentoring relationship in the areas of psychosocial support (self confidence, informed level of knowledge about the field, and skill development). Those who had a mentor showed no significant difference in the length of time of the mentoring relationship or the differing modes of communication within the mentoring relationship. In addition, there was no significant difference found within the comparisons of gender pairings within the mentee-mentor relationship. Finally, there was a significant difference found with job search etiquette preparation for those who engaged in a mentoring relationship compared to those who were not engaged in the mentoring relationship.

Implications for practice include supporting individuals who are embarking upon the first entry level job as this study showed a significant impact in those that were prepared through a mentoring relationship. Housing/residence life professionals should begin to spend more time on job search preparation programs as well as mentor matching as a student begins to explore the profession. There are also opportunities within the profession to enhance training for our seasoned professionals to understand the mentoring role and responsibilities. Finally, while the focus of this study was on those who did engage in a mentoring relationship, it is important to consider the impact on those who did not engage in a mentoring relationship. As professionals in student affairs, it will be important to seek out students to support who may not have access to a mentoring relationship or may not feel comfortable in approaching a mentor.